# CHAPTER SIX: Practices of Self, Tests of Faith

## NATIONAL STYLE

As noted in the last chapter, the gay or lesbi worlds are "tactical" and cannot lay claim to the physical spaces of normal society. As a result, embodied practices shoulder the burden of constituting the "islands" of gay and lesbi lives. Through practice there is more to being gay or lesbi than same-gender sex: it is a style of life. To speak of style is tricky because in the West nonheterosexual sexualities are delegitimated as "lifestyles." Interpreted on its own terms, however, the notion of style proves useful for thinking through the dynamics of gay and lesbi subjectivities. It has been important in the archipelago since colonial times and is salient to gay and lesbi Indonesians.

The term gaya (style, fashion) has already appeared in the name GAYa Nusantara (archipelago style, Indonesia style) and the groups who link themselves to this national network by appending an ethnolocalized term to GAYa. Gaya also crops up in the everyday speech of gay and lesbi Indonesians when talking about everything from a modern style (gaya moderen) to styles of hanging out (gaya kumpul), styles of having a same-gender partner (gaya pacaran), and masculine and feminine styles of acting and dressing (gaya lelaki, gaya perempuan).

Gaya and its near-synonym cara have been popular terms in the archipelago more broadly. A concern with style was central to how Indies "natives" construed themselves as distinct from Dutch colonists (Pemberton 1994:23, 65–66). The idea that style can distinguish self from Other persists in the postcolonial concept of national style, which in distinction to ethnolocalized "tradition" is modern, animated by consumerism, and oriented around the figure of the middle-class family. The concept of style has long worked to establish social boundaries: it is a performative rather than status-based logic of belonging.1

Western social theorists have found style a useful concept as well. The mid-twentieth-century "culture and personality" school of anthropological theory developed the notion of culture as a configuration of beliefs and practices that "is [no] more mystic or difficult to understand than, for example, the development of an art style" (Benedict 1932:26, cited in Patterson 2001:79). In literary theory, Hayden White has defined narrative

style as "the modality of the movement from a representation of some original state of affairs to some subsequent state" (1978:96). This notion of style as difference-across-time echoes the notion of difference-across-space developed in the work of Birmingham School theorists like Dick Hebdige, for whom style indexes signifying practices that mark difference within cultures—a middle "subcultural" ground between individual difference and difference between cultures as a whole. Building on the work of Hebdige (1979) and Judith Butler (1990), Ferguson has advanced the notion of "cultural style" in terms of "practices that signify differences between social categories" (1999:95).

This chapter examines what it means to be gay or lesbi "archipelago style," gaya nusantara. It is concerned with the nonsexual practices by which Indonesians sustain a sense of being gay or lesbi. I thus examine style in terms of performativity, a concept long linked to gender and sexuality (Butler 1990, 1993; Goffman 1971; Kessler and McKenna 1985). There is something Ferguson and Hebdige’s analyses of style share with those of Benedict, Butler, Pemberton, White, and others: across continents, disciplines, and theoretical traditions, style is assumed to be productive of difference. Understanding gay and lesbi subjectivities—and the character of life in an already globalized world—requires rethinking the grid of similitude and difference that "style" mediates. Can similitude be more than a means to difference? This is the question posed by "archipelago style"—a style that, paradoxically from the standpoint of continental thinking, deploys difference in the service of similitude.

## THE PERFORMED LESBI SELF

### The Cewek/Tomboi Boundary

A longstanding and robust conclusion of feminist scholarship has been that "very commonly the same axes that divide and distinguish male from female (and indeed rank male over female) also crosscut the gender categories, producing internal distinctions and gradations within them" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:9). On some level this is not surprising: the masculine-feminine binarism forms the structuring principle for heterosexualities worldwide, and many female and male homosexualities around the world have been shaped by this dominant framework. Yet the internal genderings of the gay and lesbi subject positions diverge.

One of the most consequential distinctions between the gay and lesbi subject positions concerns masculinity and femininity. The distinction is not an organizing principle for gay subjectivities; some gay men prefer masculine men (laki-laki yang kebapakan), but this is seen to be a matter of personal taste and does not denote a category of person. In contrast,

for most lesbi women the lesbi subject position cannot be occupied in the abstract. A sharp division between feminine and masculine structures selfhood, sexual relationships, and sociality: the norm is that sexual relationships take place between masculine and feminine lesbi women, not between two masculine or two feminine lesbi women.2 Some lesbi women (primarily but not solely upper class) do not structure their desires around this gendered divide, but it is predominant. This heterogenderal (Faderman 1992) character of lesbi subjectivity and desire might seem to be imported, since butch-femme distinctions often play an important role in lesbian communities in the West and elsewhere (Halberstam 1998; Kennedy and Davis 1993; S. Wieringa 1999a), without a clear parallel in gay men’s sexual norms. However, when gay took form in (not "globalized to") Indonesia, it did so in the context of the well-known waria subject position. The gay subject position thus came to structure "desire for the same" within the category of masculinity. Gay men and warias are often friends, but it is considered highly abnormal for them to have sex with each other. Crucially, however, no female analogue to waria existed at the time that lesbi took shape in Indonesia: masculine women and female-to-male transgenders certainly existed but were not publicly known as a category of person, as warias were. As a result, the lesbi subject position includes not only women attracted to women (of masculine or feminine gendering) but also tombois, persons born with women’s bodies who feel themselves to have the soul of a man and strive to be considered social men.

The consequences of this are manifold. The sense that tomboi and lesbi might be separate subject positions is complicated by the fact that whereas gay men and warias rarely have sexual relationships, tombois and ceweks are ideal sexual partners. Additionally, like gay and lesbi (but unlike waria), tomboi is understood to be a "foreign" concept that has been Indonesianized. Tomboi does not appear in a 1976 Indonesian dictionary (lesbian does, but gay is absent [Poerwadarminta 1976:592]); by 1991, however, it appears with the definition "an active girl, full of adventuring like a boy." That tomboi was Indonesianized by this point is indicated by the fact that the term could already occur with the circumfix ke-an to form the abstract noun ketomboian, "tomboi matters" (Salim and Salim 1991:1630). These common Indonesian uses of tomboi, however, do not mark a minoritized sexual subject position but indicate what is understood to be a temporary and benign characteristic of young girls.3 The use of the term tomboi to label an adult sexual subject position builds from this understanding in a manner that has no parallel for the terms waria, gay, or lesbi. Tomboi subjectivity thus appears to be dubbed with relation both to the West and to Indonesian popular culture.

The most important consequence of this dual dubbing is that there is active debate among tombois as to whether they are a subcategory of lesbi or a separate transgendered subject position analogous to waria. As a Balinese lesbi woman phrased it: "not all tombois are lesbi, and not all lesbi women are tomboi." In chapter 5 I described the formation of an organization in northern Bali with three leaders—one lesbi, one gay, and one waria. The idea of a fourth, tomboi leader seems not to have occurred, reflecting how tombois are seen as a kind of lesbi woman whereas waria is a distinct subject position. While warias would never list themselves in the personals section of a gay zine, tombois have listed themselves in lesbi zines. For instance, in the April 1998 issue of MitraS, "Ray," twenty years old, listed herself as "L" (lesbi) but then said "I’m a tomboy, with fair skin and medium build." In the February 1998 issue, "Wiewid Thomboy," twenty-five years old, entered a personal ad looking for a woman who "is intimate and warm." In the first of a series of pivotal encounters with mass media in Menguak Duniaku, the tomboi protagonist Hen reads about the first waria sex change operation (performed on a waria named Vivian): "in the silence of the night, I prayed to God that he would give the reverse [sebaliknya] of what he gave Vivian to me…. I wanted to tell my mother, my father, that I was the same as Vivian" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:51).

The "desire for the same" that characterizes gay subjectivity is thus more fractured for lesbi women. The border between lesbi and tomboi is so fraught that it can be difficult to know if a particular woman thinks of herself as homosexual or transgendered—as lesbi, tomboi, or both. As Rita, a tomboi originally from Central Java but now living in Surabaya, put it, "I don’t feel like a woman, I don’t feel like a man. And most of my lesbi friends feel this way." Blackwood (1999) describes how she fell in love with what she thought was a lesbi woman in South Sumatra; only after a period of time did she realize that Dayan, her tomboi lover, thought of himself as male. It would be almost impossible for someone to mistake a waria for a gay man in such a way; warias tell of being mistaken not for a gay man, but for a woman.

Thus, while being tomboi can be framed as a form of female masculinity (as when a tomboi states, "Well, I wouldn’t want to be a man. Not that I could with this body" [Graham 2001:1]), it is often linked to transgenderism. This is certainly Hen’s understanding in Menguak Duniaku; when reading about the 1981 "wedding" of Jossie and Bonnie (see chapter 2), Hen is surprised that Bonnie, a cewek who "was beforehand called normal and always paired up with a boy," did not want Jossie, a tomboi who had been called "banci" as a child, to have a sex change operation (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:306). Later he tells a cewek lover: "I’m not a lesbian [lesbian] because I play the part of a man [berperan

sebagai seorang laki-laki] when I’m with women. You’re the one who’s better called a lesbian" (265).

In this understanding a masculine "style" precludes considering oneself as a woman, an attitude I have encountered in my own fieldwork: when I once asked Sukma if any of his hunter friends felt they were men, he replied, "You don’t have to speak about my friends, I myself feel that way." While female-to-male sex change operations are rare in Indonesia (I do not know of any cases), some tombois express an interest in having them. Regardless of their views on this issue, however, all tombois to my knowledge see themselves as in some sense possessing a man’s soul in a woman’s body. This is a parallel between tombois and warias, whose possession of women’s souls is often understood to produce both the performance of femininity and the desire for men.

The question of whether tombois’ performance of masculinity produces a desire for women, or vice versa, has been a key point of discussion in the literature on lesbi women. The former causality seems to better fit the ethnographic data: "the dominance of the normative model of gender and heterosexuality persuades tombois to construct their actions and desire for women on the model of masculinity … having already established a masculine gender … [tombois lay] claim to a sexual desire for women" (Blackwood 1999:189,190). As for warias, gender nonconformity may come not only chronologically but causally before a desire for women in tomboi lives. Yet paralleling some warias’ claim that their desire for men motivates nonnormative gendering, some tombois view their desire for women as key to their subjectivities: "You don’t understand what I mean by saying I have the soul of a man [berjiwa laki-laki]. Not because of my strength, bravery, or firmness, but because the object of my love [obyek cintaku] is a woman" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:280).

Regardless of how they see the origination of their subjectivities, tombois remain linked to national culture. For instance, the ideal life course for most tombois—one they know is impossible to obtain—is to build a middle-class household along the lines figured in national discourse: "I’ve decided to live as a man, and I long to create a home [rumah tangga], have a wife and some children, even if they’re children I take from an orphanage. Don’t they understand that God didn’t just make men and women, but also people like me, like [the waria] Umi Yasumi?" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:201–202).

Ceweks and tombois tend to have distinct life courses that recall differences between the gay and waria subject positions: tombois (like warias) tend to exhibit gender nonconformity as children, whereas ceweks (like gay men) tend not to see themselves as such until their late teens or early twenties and do not necessarily deviate from gender norms. Nonetheless, movement across the cewek/tomboi boundary does occasionally happen.

Ati, a tomboi in Makassar, referred to this as "cewek can run to hunter [tomboi]" (lines bisa lari ke hunter); his tomboi friend Sukma even termed this "going to another area" (ke luar daerah). Ati and Sukma, like most lesbi women I encountered during my fieldwork, felt that tombois could not become ceweks. It may be that that the embodiment of tomboi subjectivity, as well as the early age at which most tombois begin to occupy that subject position, make leaving that "style" particularly difficult.

Comparative questions are raised by the fact that in much of Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, etc.) there are women with same-sex desires who name themselves with a term dubbing in some fashion the English term "tomboy" (e.g., Sinnott 2004). This stands in sharp distinction to male-to-female transvestites, the terms for whom are country-specific (waria in Indonesia, mak nyah and pondan in Malaysia, bakla and bantut in the Philippines, kathoey in Thailand, and so on). Even though "tomboys" rarely know there are similar persons in neighboring countries, they share many characteristics. Is tomboy a nascent translocal female-to-male transgendered subjectivity, more caught up in globalizing networks of identification than male-to-female transgendered subjectivities like waria and kathoey?

### Being Cewek, Being Tomboi

From my own fieldwork and that of other scholars, it is clear that in their dress, mannerisms, and speech, ceweks are virtually indistinguishable from normal women: they appear as "authentic women" (asli wanita). A typical cewek has "shoulder-length, permed hair, wears makeup and lipstick and has long fingernails" (Blackwood 1999:188). They "could always pass as ‘normal’ women … [they] dressed in an exaggeratedly feminine fashion, in dresses with ribbons and frills. They always wore heavy makeup and high heels. Some of them had jobs as secretaries or were selling cosmetics. Others did sex work" (S. Wieringa 1999a:217). In the words of one tomboi, a cewek is "a woman who feels like a woman, but she does not like men; she likes females who have the style of men" (Graham 2001:fn9). As a result, "there are no definite signs or ‘secret handshakes’ [to identify ceweks] … except for [gay language] expressions for lesbian like ‘Lisa Bonet/Lisbon’"(A. Murray 1999:146).

The style of being cewek is not typically performed in terms of dress or bodily comportment, but at the level of desire. Throughout Indonesia and much of Southeast Asia, there is an expectation that gender presentation will reflect sexual desire, in line with the broader pattern that "bodily behaviors—one’s posture and demeanor, the tone of one’s voice—are constantly attended to and read as signs of inner moral states" (S. Errington 1990:17). As a result, ceweks (and masculine gay men) present a greater

challenge to dominant sex/gender regimes in Indonesia than tombois (and warias): their "desire for the same" transgresses the assumption that sexuality operates across a gendered divide. Ceweks "flaunt femininity and yet rebel against proscriptions usually applied to women" (Graham 2001:fn9). This presents a challenge to theories of gender performativity, since "for much gender theory, ambiguity has become that which permits and even necessitates the formation of gender difference" (Morris 1995:570).

Just as you cannot be waria if you are born with a vagina, you cannot be tomboi if you are born with a penis. Tombois across Indonesia share the experience of movement away from normative femininity, and tombois often acknowledge that in the end their given nature (kodrat) is that of a woman: this is one of many ways that the tomboi subject position mirrors the waria subject position. These might appear to be gendered analogues, as the Western language of male-to-female (MTF) versus female-to-male (FTM) transgenderism implies. Warias and tombois occasionally talk about how they share the conditions of (1) having the soul of one gender trapped in the body of another and (2) cross-dressing, and tombois are sometimes called "banci" or "female banci" by normal Indonesians. Yet waria and tomboi are not seen as parallel in the way gay and lesbi are. This is because the waria subject position is part of public culture to a vastly greater degree than the tomboi subject position: for most Indonesians the word tomboi still refers to girls who do things boys are expected to do, like climbing trees.

The performativity of tomboi subjectivity typically begins in childhood and focuses on boyish clothing, haircuts, and play activities (tombois frequently emphasize how they never liked dolls). In these respects, the trajectory of tomboi subjectivity appears the inverse of waria subjectivity, but with the crucial difference that the tomboi subject position is virtually unknown. While gender-nonconforming men can be quickly slotted into the category waria, gender-nonconforming women can play off the ambiguity between the standard Indonesian term tomboi and the less-known transgendered meaning of tomboi.4 This is why Sukma was rarely bothered on the streets of Makassar, even at night: "They might think I’m a tomboi woman, but they don’t know I’m a hunter."

Some tombois say they became tomboi because their parents dressed them like boys. One tomboi interlocutor recalled, "I’ve been masculine since I was little. All of the children were girls, so my father dressed me in men’s clothes when I was small" (see also Graham 2001:21). Others say they became tomboi after being seduced by a cewek (never by a tomboi). Most tombois claim that they dressed and acted like males before they started desiring women—often while children. Yet some of my tomboi

interlocutors also report desiring women from a young age, as does the character Hen in Menguak Duniaku: "When I was in third grade, everyone called me banci…. I understood why each and every girl that I approached—that I liked—retreated from me, pointing at me and shouting ‘You banci! You banci!’" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:263). The dominant understanding of tomboi subjectivity, however, is that one is created tomboi by God, and being tomboi is therefore one’s fate; this is linked to having the soul (jiwa) of a man.

As adults, tombois tend to dress as men twenty-four hours a day and engage in stereotypically male activities. Taking care of and protecting a cewek partner is typically seen as important to being tomboi: tombois say they are brave (berani) and responsible (tanggung jawab) toward their partners. The performance of tomboi "style" typically involves what one tomboi focus group called "identifying themselves with men and a rough lifestyle" (gaya hidup yang keras); this includes wearing men’s clothing and engaging in male activities like smoking, drinking, and riding a motorcycle alone (Blackwood 1999; Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:153). Tomboi pastimes include playing dominoes or cards. Unless they speak, some tombois are mistaken for men. Quick to laughter—punctuated with short, sharp gestures and a burst of smoke from his ubiquitous cigarette—one tomboi interlocutor in Surabaya always wore blue jeans and a button-down shirt, keeping his dark hair in a short boyish cut. After he visited me one day, my landlady remarked, "I wonder why that man uses a woman’s name."

As noted earlier, most tombois are relatively able to move about unaccompanied at night: this relative access to public space is a common feature of tomboi "style." Particularly in Bali but sometimes in Jakarta and other parts of Indonesia, tombois occasionally visit tempat ngebers, building friendships with other tombois as well as gay men and warias. Tombois have even been reputed to go to female and waria sex workers. A waria in southern Bali told the story of a person who "came into the park on a motorbike, sitting like a man and looking just like a man. We kissed for a long time and then I went to open the person’s pants and the person said ‘no,’ and I suddenly realized it was a woman."

The relative mobility of tombois made it possible for me to accompany Rita on a two-day trip to a kejawen (Javanese mysticism) pilgrimage shrine located high on the slopes of a volcano several hours south of Surabaya. A young woman with long hair and stylish clothes took a seat directly ahead of us on the bus after our departure from Surabaya; Rita was soon exchanging small talk with her as we careened down the narrow highway. When the young woman disembarked, she gave Rita her phone number. As the bus pulled back onto the highway, Rita was visibly agitated. "Do you think she was ‘sick’? She might have been. But I suspect

she thought I was a man, not a woman." I asked, "Does it offend you when people mistake you for a man?" Rita replied, "No, I’m not offended if people mistake me for a man, only if they point me out and make fun of me."

Once at the shrine Rita and I stayed in separate rooms with Dadang, a man who rented his home out to pilgrims; our traveling together elicited none of the stares or remarks that I have experienced when walking with female Indonesian friends. The evening after our arrival, Dadang’s wife and daughters stayed back in the kitchen preparing dinner as the men of the house—and Rita—smoked, drank whiskey, and traded news of the world. However, when the meal was finished Rita alone stood up to help the women take dirty dishes back to the kitchen. Rita was frequently mistaken for a man. Yet he used a woman’s name; when asked about his appearance, Rita replied he was a woman and preferred to dress the way he did.

Despite the advantages of mobility, to the degree tombois become visible they encounter discrimination. Tombois receive far more social disapproval than ceweks, not for their sexual orientation so much as their gender transgression. It is difficult for tombois to obtain employment (S. Wieringa 1999a). The purpose of Rita’s pilgrimage was to pray for a steady job: living in Surabaya as an immigrant from another province without relatives nearby, and with the additional burden of looking decidedly unfeminine, he was in dire financial straits, surviving on odd jobs. When I first met Rita he was staying at the home of a normal woman he had met while working in a salon washing people’s hair. Rita had little privacy at the home, and to make matters worse he feared the host had figured out Rita was a tomboi. Tombois face an additional difficulty in that they are more likely than ceweks to be estranged from their families of origin (as in Rita’s case), depriving them of what for most Indonesians is the most important source of financial security. One lesbi zine summed up the image of tombois: "a comedic form that sickens and nauseates; that is our people in the eyes of the general public" (GAYa LEStari Oct./Dec. 1993:4).

While tombois do not normatively have sex with each other, the performance of tomboi subjectivity often includes a masculinized sociality between tombois—taunting, joking, and discussing their relationships with ceweks (Blackwood 1999:188–189). I once encountered Ati and Sukma in a mixed group of tombois, gay men, and warias in Makassar as they were joking with each other as to who had the bigger penis: Ati insisted that his was long and thin, and Sukma countered that his was short and fat. Then an older gay man came into the room with drinks and his own joke: "I brought coffee for Ati and Sukma, because I know men prefer coffee."

## THE PERFORMED GAY SELF

### Ngondhek

Gay men new to the gay world often ask: how can you tell who is gay? In response to this question gay men with more experience speak not about sexual practices but ways of acting, dressing, and talking—the performativity of gay subjectivity.

Some gay men see themselves as consistently feminine or consistently masculine and may prefer sexual relationships with a man who has the opposite gendering, but it is not considered abnormal for two feminine or two masculine gay men to have sex with each other.5 Becoming gay thus does not involve the all-important decision between masculine or feminine that characterizes the life courses of most lesbi women. However, to "open oneself" (membuka diri) to the gay world usually means not only socializing in certain places but also effeminacy, known in Surabaya and some other parts of gay Indonesia as ngondhek.6 Opposed to masculinity (macho, maskulin, kebapakan [derived from bapak, "father"], or laki-laki asli [authentic man]), ngondhek is a male body’s performing of feminine gender at a slight remove. It is the normative but not essential "style" of gay subjectivity.

Ngondhek is manifested above all in practices of bodily comportment seen as feminine in contemporary Indonesia: this includes things like florid hand gestures, a lilting walk, or sitting with one’s knees tightly together. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia and beyond, these conceptions of femininity originate in colonial (often Victorian era) norms that postcolonial states take up and propagate as "tradition" (cf. Jackson 2003, Chatterjee 1993:116–157). To my knowledge warias never refer to each other as ngondhek or lacking in ngondhek, nor do others refer to warias as ngondhek. Ngondhek differs from most core practices of waria subjectivity in that it is made up of actions—gesture, language, clothing—that can be quickly set aside; it is not strongly linked to bodily modification. A few gay men wear light foundation makeup on their faces, tweeze their eyebrows, paint their fingernails, or wear an earring, but even gay men seen as particularly ngondhek may have no ongoing bodily modification of this kind. Clothing is also an unreliable marker of ngondhek. Gay men say they dress more neatly (rapi) than normal men; this can include button-up shirts with collars, or a belt whose end hangs down like an iconic penis. Some also wear men’s clothing with feminine accents, like long, flowing sleeves. But not all gay men dress in such a manner, and their dress overall is a male "style"—they are not warias who dress "like women."

Ngondhek is also practiced though gender play. Occurring anywhere in the gay world, from tempat ngebers to koses, this includes things like men teasing each other about really being waria, lesbi, or simply a

woman. Some gay men joke about being "a man above the belt, but a woman below the belt," or vice versa; one night at Texas a gay man humorously explained, "My whole body is man except for here [making a circle with his hands around his crotch]: here I’m locally a woman (lokal perempuan)." One man will come up to another and reach for his breasts in jest, exclaiming "it’s a waria!" to which the man being accosted will respond in mock seriousness "asli lho!" ("authentic, of course!"). In such joking the undercurrent is that masculinity and femininity are contextual. Some gay men (and warias) suffer from (or engage in) latah, a "culturebound syndrome" usually associated with women that results in sufferers blurting out obscene words or mimicking those around them when startled. For some gay men, latah is a source of amusement and is seen in positive terms (hal yang positif).

The ultimate expression of ngondhek is to wear women’s clothes and makeup; gay men often refer to this as déndong (a gay language variant of dandan ["put on makeup" or "groom oneself"]). Warias also use the term déndong, but for most gay men déndong holds no potential to blur the line between gay and waria. This is because gay men déndong in circumscribed contexts of performance internal to the gay world like drag shows. They do not déndong in the normal world or a more public node of the gay world like a tempat ngeber or shopping mall; above all, they do not déndong to attract sexual partners. One gay man in Bali explained that "What surprises me is that when I’m dressed up as a woman, I don’t want to be bothered by men. For instance, if I’m dressed up and a man approaches me, I don’t like it. I feel like I’m being insulted and disrespected." For gay men, déndong is not typically associated with sexual desire because they understand themselves as "desiring the same"; the kind of men who would respond to déndong (as opposed to the subtle markers of ngondhek) are men interested in sex with warias, not with other men. Déndong marks the outer limit of ngondhek.

Most gay men have conflicted views on male effeminacy. It plays an important role in gay desire because it is a key way to signal to gay men and especially to normal men that one is interested in sex. It is associated with being gay, helping to "tactically" constitute sites of the gay world. Yet ngondhek is often denigrated. Most gay men do not find effeminate men attractive; effeminacy weakens their "desire for the same." Gay men will criticize each other for being too ngondhek and usually emphasize they are attracted to men who are "macho." This is another point of similarity with effeminacy in Western gay male cultures, where effeminacy, camp, and drag are both valorized and disavowed in line with a broader devaluing of women.

Most gay men believe that they can display or hide their ngondhek practices with a fair degree of control. In tempat ngebers and other sites of the gay world, gay men often switch between effeminate and masculine mannerisms. During a discussion between a group of gay men in Makassar, one man asked what one should do if people made negative comments at the mall because one was effeminate. Other men responded that one should just ignore such slights, but then the man asked further: "What if I’m effeminate on purpose? For instance, if a cute man walks by?"

The way in which ngondhek skirts the boundary between visibility and invisibility has consequences for gay sociality. Most gay men believe that ngondhek practices are a sign of gayness that allows them to identify many, but not all, gay men. One gay man in Surabaya talked about how he could tell who was gay "from their style [gaya], their way of walking, talking, things like that." At Surabaya’s Texas, Anto said that "I am masculine, but when I’m here at Texas I become feminine so I won’t be such an object of desire, since I know all these people already and don’t want to have sex with any of them." Anto also talked about the signs of gay men, emphasizing speaking "style" (gaya ucapan) and a feminine presentation. But he noted emphatically that "only 50 percent of the men are like that. There are also those who are masculine." Another man, who was active in a gay organization and also worked part-time as a clerk, was concerned that:

At my work I’m very afraid that people will find out I’m gay. I’m worried that I’ll be gossiped about, or that a ngondhek man will telephone for me at the office … so I have to be smart about the way I hold myself, about the way I express myself. Fortunately, I’ve been able to do that. My life is 50–50. If I’m with a gay group, sometimes I have to be ngondhek. And I really like that; I like being able to express myself like that. But in the hetero life I have to guard myself. Sometimes I can get away with being ngondhek a little bit; after all being hetero is not authentic for me. I think that I’m living in two worlds…. My shrieking and carrying on is really an expression from my gayness [ekspresi dari kegayan saya sendiri]. If I was a real man [laki asli] it’s not possible that I would shriek like that.

During my fieldwork such joking was extended to myself. I would be described as ngondhek when purposively acting in ways seen as effeminate, but gay men also commented that I was sometimes ngondhek due to being "carried along by the environment" (terbawa lingkungan), as was often the case for them as well. On the other hand, it is well known in the gay world that there are gay men (and normal men interested in sex with men) who are not effeminate. Such men are often idealized sexual partners, but identifying them can be difficult, particularly outside the gay world. One gay man in Surabaya recounted how he seduced a former boyfriend:

I met him at the mosque. I was actually interested in his younger brother; he was very cute and I thought "he might be like me," judging from the way he held himself when he prayed and walked around. So I went up to him and talked to him, and eventually got invited to his house. But when I went to his house it was his other brother who opened the door! He introduced himself and we talked for a while and became friends. He was very handsome and masculine, so I thought to myself, "He’s a real man, he can’t possibly be homo." We started spending lots of time together … eventually we went to a drumming competition one night, and it was the first of two days of the competition, so he told me, "Don’t go home; just stay with me tonight at my grandmother’s house which is near here." So we went there and slept together in one bed. I still didn’t have any idea, I just couldn’t believe he would be interested in men. We were in bed and he said, "Hey, there’s no pillow here, can I use you as a pillow?" I said "yes," and he threw his leg over me. Oh my! My heart started pounding and racing; it felt like it’d jumped into my throat. I just sat there … then he said, "Hey there’s no blanket here, can I use you as a blanket?" I said "yes," and he came toward me and kissed me. We started kissing and making love. I couldn’t believe it! He was interested in me! So from that time on we became lovers.

Gay men draw a distinction between being an authentic man (laki-laki asli) and an authentic gay man (gay asli): gay men can become authentic men in the normal world through marriage (see chapter 4; Howard 1996) yet perform their gayness in the gay world through ngondhek. There is a pleasure in this expression of the gay self through effeminacy; it is an enjoyable practice often conceptualized in terms of performance. There is also danger in ngondhek: it becomes a habit and thus ever in danger of surfacing inappropriately outside the gay world. As I once heard a group of gay men in Makassar put it, there is a need to "look at the situation" (lihat situasi) when acting ngondhek. Ngondhek is a style: of speaking, of hanging out (gaya kumpul), of acting in the world that surfs the border between visible and invisible, authentic and inauthentic, local and global, masculine and feminine. It dubs culture in the sense that it holds feminine practice and male embodiment together over time without conflating them (like dubbed language and filmed mouths that do not match up), unlike the practices of waria subjectivity, which fuse—symbolically and literally—femininity and male bodies.

Like the geography of the gay world, the practices of ngondhek seem to invite comparison to Western homosexualities of the early twentieth century: "in the right context, appropriating even a single feminine—or at least unconventional—style or article of clothing might signify a man’s identity as a fairy" (Chauncey 1994:51). It is easy to posit a homosexual

identity that is forced into marginal places (parks, public toilets) and marginal practices (covert codes of behavior) until socioeconomic conditions permit it to be liberated. In the absence of an anthropology of similitude, such an evolutionist and determinist timeline may seem the only analytic option. With the historical and cultural context of gay subjectivity in mind, however, it seems clear that even when structures of power create superficially similar conditions of marginalization, the differing dynamics of those structures of power result in quite different practices and desires. For instance, gay effeminacy takes place in an Indonesian postcolonial context with a specific set of linkages between manhood, marriage, and national belonging.

Gay men typically see ngondhek (and déndong) as something gay men do across Indonesia, but that distinguishes them from Western gay men, whom they assume to be more masculine. One night at Texas I was speaking with Anwar and another gay man about differences between Indonesia and America when suddenly Anwar exclaimed: "Take the Indonesian style [gaya Indonesia] back to America!" When I asked, "What do you mean by the ‘Indonesian style?’" Anwar replied, "You know, ngondhek, like this [moving his arms in a wavy, effeminate manner]. In America the gay people are all macho, right?" This common view that Western gay men are masculine is somewhat surprising, since portrayals of Western gayness transmitted through Indonesian mass media usually emphasize effeminacy. Some gay men say they developed this view from seeing Western gay pornography, commenting on how men in these films are macho even when they play the anal-receptive role in sex. Since zines document that the view of Indonesian gay men as more effeminate than Western gay men has existed since at least the early 1980s, it may draw from the legacy of colonial discourses that oppose a feminine Asia to a masculine West.

My initial reaction to Anwar’s request to "take the Indonesian style back to America" was to deny I took styles anywhere. Reflecting on his words later that night, I realized he had insightfully summed up the ethnographic project in an already globalized world. It is a dubbing project of forever-imperfect translation in the wake of—not preceding—forms of contemporary globalization that are unequal, but no longer novel.

### Opening and Closing

During the period of my fieldwork, the vast majority of gay Indonesians did not know the phrase "come out of the closet," and there is no Indonesian-language equivalent. Gay Indonesians use a variety of metaphors for becoming gay, including terjun ke dunia gay "falling into the gay world" (Howard 1996), but the most common metaphor is "opening to the gay world." Like the Western metaphor of being "in" or "out" of the closet,

this spatial metaphor is bi-directional: one can be in a state of being opened or closed (terbuka, tertutup) and can open or close oneself (membuka diri, menutupi diri); one can also speak of the abstract condition of openness (keterbukaan). Like the concept of world (dunia), the concept of being open (buka) or closed (tutup) originates in the normal world: one can speak of a neighborhood unreceptive to outsiders as tertutup (S. Brenner 1998:47), or speak of a terbuka Muslim.

This dynamic of opening and closing is a theory of performativity specific to the lifeworlds of gay men (and to some extent feminine lesbi women), but it draws upon notions of public propriety found in Indonesia’s normal world and elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Jackson 2003). Warias usually feel their selfhood originates in disjuncture (between male body and female soul, between a desire to wear women’s clothes and a male body), a disjuncture that is unambiguously marked on the body in all contexts of their lives. They do not speak of being open or closed because their social interlocutors usually recognize a waria as such day and night, at home or in public. In contrast, being gay is not explicitly embodied: normal Indonesians often miss the subtle signs of gay effeminacy. The disjuncture lies not between body and soul, both of which are male, but between appearing normal and "desiring the same." This is a "style" deployed and managed, something that can even slip from control and manifest itself out of place, like at work or at home.

Being gay is about practices as much as internal states. Dominant Western traditions typically assume that the body is less important than the soul. The notion of coming out of the closet builds on a confessional discourse that begins from an interior self and works outward to body, family, and society: "In our folk psychology, between inner subjectivity and outer form lies a radical break, a disconnection that can be disguised, but not overcome, by self-conscious and instrumental manipulation" (S. Errington 1989:76; see also Foucault 1978). Not all Westerners subscribe to this discourse—there are Western men who have sexual relations with other men without any expectation of "coming out"—but it holds a dominant place in the structuring of Western sexualities; persons that reject confessional discourse are in some way resisting or rejecting a structure of power. Multiple notions of exterior and interior are certainly present in Indonesia as well, originating in "traditional" beliefs, religious doctrine (like the Islamic distinction between lahir and batin), and the translocation of Western discourses. However, an apparent point of continuity across Indonesia and much of Southeast Asia is a sense that the boundary between inner and outer self is weak, and each can be affected by the other. Since Western confessional discourse does not appear to have translocated to Indonesia to any great extent as the gay subject position was dubbed into its contemporary configuration during the 1980s and 1990s,

this sense of a porous boundary between embodied and interior self continues to shape gay subjectivities.

In Indonesia (and much of Southeast Asia) importance is placed on a match between social presentation and interior self: "Although in English we may speak of a ‘well-balanced personality,’ we have no expectation that that fortunate person will have good posture; but in [much of Indonesia] … balance or centeredness is taken literally" (S. Errington 1989:76–77; see also Jackson 2003:61; Keeler 1983). This presents special difficulties for the disjuncture between the relatively normative gender presentation of gay men and their "desire for the same." It is not that waria subjectivity is "gender" and gay subjectivity "sexuality," that being waria is something one "is" while being gay is something one "does." The distinction lies rather in visibility-to-society, in recognition. The nonrecognition of the gay subject position in the normal world results in a reciprocal relationship between practice and place. Practices define places: what makes a place gay is not physical features or an official permit; practices—speaking gay language, evincing gay mannerisms, caressing another man’s hand—transform places into nodes or islands of the gay world. Places define practices: gay men are recognizably gay only when they are in the gay world; when in the normal world, gayness is visible only to those who know how to read its subtle signs. This reciprocal relationship between practice and place means that not only the gay world but the gay self is, in a certain sense, archipelagic—it is a selfhood exercised intermittently, first at one place and then at another, but not in the space between.

Particularly when "exterior" embodiment is not assumed to be the expression of an "interior" subjectivity, persons embodying the same style need not have the same subjectivities, beliefs, even "culture"; style is not necessarily the "expression" of a preexisting subjectivity: "Not all British punks were alienated, nor are all Zambian localists ‘traditional"’ (Ferguson 1999:97). This dynamic was neatly summarized for me one day in Surabaya when I showed Ali, a young gay man, a copy of the GAYa Nusantara zine, which features photographs of gay men on the front cover. In our earlier conversations Ali had spoken about how he didn’t like being gay and wanted to be cured. I was thus surprised when he leafed through the zine with interest, pronouncing, "I’d like a photo of me to be on the front cover someday." When I replied, "I thought you said you didn’t want to be gay and wanted to be cured," he looked at me blankly, seeing no contradiction between wanting to become normal and also wanting to be on the cover of a gay zine: "I said that right now I’m gay. But in eight years, when I’m twenty-seven, I will get married. So if I do things like appear on the cover of the zine maybe I’ll be able to use up my gayness [menghabiskan kegayan saya]."

Some gay men are aware of the concept of "coming out" because they are wealthy, well educated, or have worked in HIV prevention. When I asked one such interlocutor how "coming out" differed from "opening oneself," he answered, "Opening oneself [membuka diri] is more toward the group [kelompok], but the term has been equated [disamakan] with ‘coming out’ by some AIDS groups, which is rather dangerous…. What’s meant by opening oneself is how to access the groups that exist."

This has direct consequences for how gay men conceptualize national belonging. Abdul, a gay man in Makassar, referenced these intermittent practices when he once said you can tell who is "gay from their style" [gay dari gayanya]. Practice is key to the gaya of gay men, the "archipelago style" by which they imagine their place in a gay world distributed throughout a national body politic. In place of the status-based discourse common in Western sexuality and gender rights movements, gay men emphasize actions (perilaku); a common phrase is that society’s potential future acceptance of gay men will "come down to our actions" [kembali ke perilaku kita]. The three keywords that link gay men’s discussions of selfhood and belonging are "good deeds" (prestasi), "society" (masyarakat), and "to be accepted" (diterima): through good deeds, society will accept them, but since they are not visible to society as gay men, their good deeds are not recognized as such, and without recognition belonging lies beyond reach. The notion of being "opened" to the whole world is nearly unthinkable for most gay men and appears primarily when discussing impossibilities: "The majority of gay men aren’t open as gay [terbuka sebagai gay] and able to say ‘oh, I’m gay, I can’t get married.’"

The crucial point is that homosexuality (like any other cultural logic) "globalizes" (or "translocates") not as a monolithic discourse but as a multiplicity of beliefs and practices, elements of which can move independently of each other or not move at all. In comparison to the religious, colonial, and mercantile infrastructures that drove "globalization" in the past, and the "print capitalism" that made nationalism possible (Anderson 1983), contemporary mass media and other aspects of late capitalism make possible the kinds of fractured and contingent translocations I term "dubbing culture."In the case of gay and lesbi, the notion of homosexual selfhood has moved, but other aspects of the dominant Western discourse of homosexuality have not. Foucault’s genealogy of homosexuality in the West locates the intersection of power and knowledge at the confession. Identity reveals and renders intelligible an interior, private self but is not authentic until exteriorized to an authority who interprets and acknowledges this confession. Only then is the person "out of the closet," even in the remarkable case of the "intralocutor" operative in "coming out to yourself." Many theorists have shown how this model construes homosexual identity as a constant, iterative process of articulation and reception,

an incitement to discourse that contributed to the "reverse discourse" of the gay and lesbian rights movement.7

But when the terms gay and lesbian moved to Indonesia, this conjunction of sexuality and confession neither preceded nor followed it. While psychoanalytic discourse has found its way into Indonesia through academic and pop psychology, the mass mediated translocation of concepts of homosexuality to Indonesia has been too fragmentary for this discourse to have had a formative role in the constitution of the gay and lesbi subject positions. As a result, the ontological status of gay and lesbi subjectivities does not hinge on disclosure to spheres of home, workplace, or God. Construed not as coming out but in terms of opening and closing oneself, these subjectivities are additive rather than substitutive; opening them does not necessarily imply closing others. In English the term "closet" is etymologically related to the adjective and verb "close," but what is opposed to the closet is presumed to be the world in general. For gay and lesbi Indonesians, however, being opened or closed is typically in reference to the gay or lesbi world; confessing to other worlds in society is irrelevant. When gay men speak of someone being terbuka, they index participation in tempat ngeber and not, for instance, telling family or coworkers of homosexual desires. One finds not an epistemology of the closet but an epistemology of life worlds, where healthy subjectivity depends not on integrating diverse domains of life and having a unified, unchanging identity in all situations, but on separating domains of life and maintaining their borders against the threat of gossip and discovery. It is this epistemology, for instance, that makes it thinkable that a gay man can be opened in the gay world yet married to a woman in the normal world.

As with practices of ngondhek, gay and lesbi notions of being opened or closed to the gay or lesbi world may call again to mind the work of George Chauncey and other scholars on the history of Western homosexuality (Chauncey 1994). In early twentieth-century New York, for instance, the term coming out, derived from the notion of a debutante ball, implied coming out to a select community, not to all spheres of life. Furthermore, many homosexually identified people married and did not see their doing so as incongruous. Nonetheless, I would caution against a teleological reading of Indonesians as followers in these footsteps and against a structuralist reading of contemporary Indonesia and historical New York as presenting a mutual set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Such interpretations beg the question of how similitude and difference are measured in the first place. Contemporary gay and lesbi subjectivities diverge in important respects from earlier Western homosexual subjectivities, not least because they imagine themselves situated in an transnational archipelago of gay and lesbian persons. Crucially, their "desire

for the same" has been formed in a postcolonial context: it sexualizes the "deep, horizontal comradeship" associated with nationalism (Anderson 1983:7).

### The Gay/Waria Boundary

For the most part, gay men never feel they are warias, though they have typically been familiar with warias since childhood and may have been called banci (waria) by children or adults in their midst. This is because most gay men feel their gayness is motivated by a "desire for the same," not a desire to wear women’s clothes or a sense they have a women’s soul. Some gay men say that warias are really gay men who are forced into that role because of social norms. While this may be true in some cases, given that the waria subject position is much better known than the gay subject position, warias themselves state quite consistently that looking like a woman and the experience of having a woman’s soul is what makes one waria, not the "desire for the same" that characterizes gay subjectivity.

However, there are many linkages between the gay and waria subject positions. Both are assumed to co-occur with male bodies, both share practices of effeminacy like déndong, and in many parts of Indonesia they socialize with each other to the extent that phrases like "the gay and waria world" (dunia gay waria) or that gay man and warias "become one" (menjadi satu) are common. As a result of these linkages, there are men who see themselves as simultaneously gay and waria. In some cases they will identify as gay for a period of months or years and then switch to waria for a time, as in the case of one gay man from Surabaya who wrote about becoming a waria for six months while living in Kalimantan because his friends there were waria and it was easier to find male sex partners as a waria (Faisal 2003). One night I was watching waria show with several gay men and a few warias. Agung, a gay man, introduced me to Tina, a waria I had never met before, noting that "last month she was gay, now she has become waria" [sebulan lalu dia hémong, dia sekarang jadi waria]. I asked Tina why she had changed and she replied, "I was tired of being gay. Now below [pointing to her genitalia] it’s asli [authentic] and above [pointing to her made-up face] it’s spesial." Here gender play served to indicate humorously how being waria was a kind of addition to a male self rather than a third gender.

Occasionally men navigate between gay and waria on a daily basis. Vera was unusual: she almost always wore men’s clothes and used the term gay during the day. One day I asked Vera if she had dressed as a woman since last week and she replied, "No, I only become waria one night a week; I like both." She saw little point in trying to rank one over the other: "I adapt."

Tensions over the gay/waria boundary can be seen in excerpts from letters written to the gay zine GAYa Nusantara in response to the question: Is it proper that gay men make themselves up (déndong)?8

"Gay déndong?" Go right ahead … just don’t do it forever. [Gay men] have to remember that they were created as gay and not as waria. So if you want to déndong, just do it in the correct proportion and context. Don’t do it to the point it becomes a daily occurrence.

It’s clear that I have objections if gay people déndong. Their name is gay after all, so they have to have the attributes of men in their daily appearance. Although there are a few gay men with feminine characteristics, they still have to look like men so that they can be differentiated from warias. Especially because the wider society equates gay with waria, even though we’re very different. So if there are gay men that like to déndong, automatically they exemplify and justify society’s view that gay is the same as waria.

"Gay déndong?" Please do, it’s not forbidden! Just do it occasionally, for instance when taking the stage for a dance or drama … don’t do it when looking for men; if it’s like that then I don’t agree with it. Then it’s not necessary to become gay, better to join a waria organization.

The gay/waria boundary, however, can be a source of pleasure as well as anxiety. For Vera, movement across the boundary was experienced as an enjoyable ability to adapt, providing the benefit of sex with normal men who did not "desire the same." The pleasures of the gay/waria boundary are also indicated in a semi-autobiographical narrative written for me in October 1997 by Yanto, a gay man from Surabaya who was married to a woman and whose first child had been born one month earlier. Entitled "A Doll Behind Glass" [Boneka Dalam Kaca], the narrative reveals a complex relationship between gender, sexuality, and desire:

When I made the gay world my own world, what I experienced seemed like the usual thing. In fact, I sometimes felt fed up with matters of sex, those same old things without any challenge…. Maybe it was for this reason that I wanted to wander, to become something different, to do things that other people would not want to do. I started thinking about crazy things and my attitude became extremely desperate. I wanted to study a life of the night that was darker and rougher than the one I found when I became gay.

I had already prepared my outfit with its déndong attributes and only now needed to wear it to begin my new adventure. When I wore my outfit I became aware that beginning from that day I was no longer gay but WARIA. Aah … I enjoyed my beauty privately in a mirror and only needed to change my speaking accent to fit my new path. I did a pretty good job and it made me laugh at myself. That night I took off with a friend who had also changed himself into a waria.

On the streets I bowed my head to keep down the feelings of shame that flamed up inside when a person passed by, laughing and teasing me. "This is my challenge," I thought to myself until I reached the place…. I’d been sitting on the curbside for more than an hour when suddenly from out of nowhere a man sat down next to me. "You’re beautiful, like a doll behind glass," he said while looking me over. I inspected him in turn … aah, how handsome, fair-skinned, with a thin moustache and still young. "What’s your name, Sir?" I asked shyly. "Call me Jono." With his answer I was even more awestruck at his handsomeness. We exchanged formalities and then Jono asked me to service him. I was confused as to where we could fool around but Jono invited me to follow him into the bushes. Apparently Jono was a spontaneous person, because as soon as we were in the bushes he took off his shirt and pants. "Take off your shirt," he said. I was stupefied to see his clean and broad-chested body. "Oh, no," I said, refusing to take off my shirt. Jono didn’t force things and straightaway we started to make out….

That’s how easy it is to get a man, as easy as turning over the palm of your hand. This eventually made me comfortable continuing my adventure. Every Saturday night I would change myself and become a waria [aku merubah diriku jadi waria] and from these adventures I learned a thousand lessons.

This narrative indicates how the gay/waria boundary can be unstable, but in terms of movement between gay and waria, not their conflation. A common theme is that when déndong is linked to places like sex work areas or outdoor public areas, rather than entertainment events, the border between gay and waria becomes defocused. When the made-up doll leaves her display case, the border between gay and waria can, for some, become a line to be transgressed across the frontier of gender.

Since the late 1990s or so, the term "gay waria" has appeared with increasing frequency. While still rare, this term for warias appears to ontologize gay over waria, despite the fact that waria is the historically prior term and the one with greater public recognition. Should this term become more common, it would reflect an increasing presence of the concept gay in Indonesian public culture, and perhaps also the influence of HIV/AIDS discourse, which with its concept of "male sexual health" tends to regard warias as a type of gay man. Interestingly, when on occasion the terms waria and tomboi are combined with reference to masculine women, the phrase is waria tomboi (not tomboi waria), reflecting how there remains uncertainty as to whether tomboi is a subtype of lesbi or a distinct subject position.

### Gay Language and the National Voice

Gay men often emphasize that they have a way of speaking in the gay world that differs from speech in the normal world: "gay language"

(bahasa gay). Gay men not only informed me of the existence of bahasa gay but eagerly taught it to me. I also observed such men teaching bahasa gay to other Indonesian men who were new to the gay world. I explore this "gay language" (bahasa gay, also sometimes called bahasa béncong) in detail elsewhere (Boellstorff 2004a, 2004e); in this section I review how speaking bahasa gay contributes to the performance of gay subjectivity and its linkages to national culture.

To date, the fundamental condition of bahasa gay’s existence is that although some terms transform words from ethnolocalized languages like Javanese or Balinese, at the overall grammatical level bahasa gay is always based on Indonesian (bahasa Indonesia), the national vernacular. Bahasa gay is a self-consciously nationwide way of speaking. Gay men sometimes explicitly comment on the national character of bahasa gay, as in the case of Eddy, an ethnically Bugis gay man in Makassar who emphasized there was no such thing as a bahasa gay Bugis (Bugis gay language,) but only a bahasa gay Indonesia.

The significance of bahasa gay’s founding in Indonesian is a consequence of the unusual position of Indonesian in the nation-building project. Language played a vital role in the state’s enormous effort to build a sense of nationalism among the denizens of the Dutch East Indies. At the time of independence in the late 1940s, many of these groups shared little more than the Dutch colonial encounter, which itself exhibited great regional variation in length and intensity. One core element of most nationalisms is the belief that to be modern and authentic, nations need national vernaculars (Anderson 1983). What would become Indonesia’s mother tongue? Dutch clearly would not have sufficed, not only because of its association with the colonizing power but also because of Holland’s antipathy toward having its subjects speak the colonial language. As noted in chapter 1, at the time of independence, after 350 years of Netherlands rule, less than 2 percent of Indonesians spoke Dutch. Javanese, spoken by almost 40 percent of "natives," seemed a logical choice, but selecting any ethnolocalized language had the disadvantage of privileging one group.

A solution was found in Malay, "the language of certain courts and of villages, though not the language of the largest groups of the archipelago" (Siegel 1997:14), the lingua franca of the Dutch East Indies. Due to prior centuries of trade in which Malay had become distributed not only across the Indies but as far away as the Philippines, Japan, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar (J. Errington 1998:52), Malay was construed as a placeless, peopleless tongue. A lingua franca like Malay produces something "not completely foreign or completely domestic" (Siegel 1997:8–9), something "dubbed":

The lingua franca was exterior to all speakers in that no one thought it originated with them. It existed merely, as it were, between them. Of course, all languages mediate. But the lingua franca is always, by definition, a language in some way foreign to both the speaker and his interlocutor. It contains the possibility, therefore, of changing the "I" of the original language into a second "I," an "I" incipient in dual form in the other as well as myself. (Siegel 1997:32)

For Malay to become a language of nationhood, a concerted effort was needed to transform a language of colonial domination into one of national unity, transforming the plural society (Furnivall 1944) into a nation by constructing a paradox—an authentic lingua franca. Since under colonialism Malay/Indonesian had been contrasted with languages seen as native, to this day its "un-nativeness crucially enables and informs its place in the Indonesian national project" (J. Errington 1998:3). There is a misunderstanding that Indonesian is an invented language; what has been invented is its speech community. This language frequently appears in grammars as "Malay/Indonesian": the slash simultaneously linking and separating Malay from Indonesian marks a shift not just in grammar but in the manner of imagining community—from a lingua franca of trade and colonialism to the archipelagic key in which the new nation’s authenticity would be played.

The spread of Indonesian testifies to the success of the New Order state’s educational initiatives: "[Indonesian was] intimately bound up with the New Order’s fortunes, as is clear from one of Soeharto’s very first unilateral decisions: a 1965 Presidential Instruction which mandated the government-supervised building and staffing of elementary schools throughout the country, particularly in rural areas" (J. Errington 1998:59). As a result, "among the New Order’s most enduring effects on the Indonesian landscape [was] its success in propagating Indonesian-ness with and through the Indonesian language" (J. Errington 1998:2). The success of Indonesian language planning has been seen as a "greater miracle" than the revitalization of Hebrew: "It has taken on the aura of an omnipresent verity, viewed and experienced as reaching back into antiquity and forward into eternity as a component of the Indonesian genius" (Fishman 1978:227, 338).

For my interlocutors, Indonesian is a feature of everyday life (J. Errington 2000:209). All of my interlocutors speak Indonesian, as does almost 90 percent of the Indonesian populace, approximately 15 percent of whom now speak it as their first language. This percentage is increasing, and the use of Indonesian as a first language is increasingly linked to middle-class identity (Hill 1996:208; Oetomo 1996b). For decades many Indonesians have taught Indonesian, not an ethnolocalized language, to their children as a mother tongue (e.g., Robinson 1989:32). Indonesian is the language

of national belonging (Keane 2003), and for some it is also the language of family intimacies, romance, and emotion; for most of my interlocutors it is learned from the earliest years of life, and in some cases it is the only language they speak. The enduring power of ethnolocality is indicated by the fact that the existence of monolingual Indonesian-speakers is almost never acknowledged in the anthropological literature.

While gay Indonesians sometimes say that bahasa gay is a secret language, its actual pragmatics appear to reflect more closely the second consciously articulated ideology about it: bahasa gay is a "slang" in the sense of a language of association and sociality (bahasa gaul). Several pieces of ethnographic evidence indicate that bahasa gay is not a secret language. The first is that not all gay men know it; they are not all privy to the "secret." Gay men who avoid gay places (for instance, interacting only with a small circle of friends) may have little or no knowledge of this form of language. Second, whole clauses of bahasa gay are rare. Bahasa gay is usually formed by altering only a single foregrounded word in the utterance, as with "hungry" in the example below.

Standard Indonesian: Saya sudah lapar dua jamI already hungry two hours

Bahasa gay: Saya sudah lapangan dua jamI already open field two hours

Here lapar is replaced with lapangan, an Indonesian term for "open field." The result is somewhat like an English speaker saying, "I’ve been Hungarian for two hours." But this makes bahasa gay rather easy for outsiders to decipher: the meaning of I’ve been Hungarian for two hours soon becomes clear to someone overhearing the phrase. The fact that only one or two lexemes per utterance are typically changed into bahasa gay—often lexemes that do not reveal sensitive information—makes doubtful the argument that it serves primarily as a secret register.

A third reason why the "secret language" ideology seems insufficient is that bahasa gay is usually spoken in the gay world, when outsiders are not immediately present—in a deserted corner of a park, in an apartment, on a bench in a shopping mall. It is rarely spoken in mixed company as a social screen; it typically acts not to distinguish but to include. When this happens (I have heard it used on a bus to comment on an attractive man, for instance), it may temporarily mask the content of what is being said, but such utterances attract rather than deflect attention by their oddity. Finally, bahasa gay cannot act as a secret language because it is increasingly appropriated by Indonesia’s normal world. While friends and family often do not know if someone is gay, gay men can sometimes be openly gay in the presence of normal Indonesians, especially if they work in a

salon. These interactions make it possible for bahasa gay terms and even derivational patterns to become part of a national vernacular or bahasa gaul. In the normal world, the register created by switching a word or two in an utterance to bahasa gay appears to invoke an Indonesian public culture of freedom from official stricture. In recent years the dissemination of bahasa gay has been extended by the entry of bahasa gay terms into mass media.

Bahasa gay appears to act most often to invoke a sense of the gay world in a context where many gay men can socialize extensively in civic spaces like parks but have almost no institutional infrastructure—no places to call their own beyond the corner of a town square, no social recognition beyond the occasional (and often lurid) gossip column. Language here works to stabilize social relations, creating a sense of similarity and shared sociality.

Since the story of the Tower of Babel, difference has been central to understandings of language, as it has long been central to understandings of style. This has been demonstrated by work on language ideology showing the importance of "the ideas with which participants frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and the differences among them, and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them" (Gal and Irvine 1995:970, emphasis added), and by work showing how register "construes differences of speech habit as emblematic of differences in identity, employing language to motivate differences in social identity" (Agha 1998:168, emphasis added). But how can language constitute not only difference but belonging, beyond the mere fact of shared membership in a linguistic community? This is one key question raised by bahasa gay, both in its use in the gay world and in its use in popular culture.

Gay Indonesians might seem to epitomize difference: they seem to lie radically outside the norms of Indonesian society. Within the gay and normal worlds, however, bahasa gay appears as a register of belonging, not one of hierarchy or distance. The "social stereotyping" (Hervey 1992:195; Agha 1998:168) that co-occurs with bahasa gay consistently points toward inclusion in national culture, not ethnolocalized cultures. Nowhere do gay Indonesians think that the concept gay comes from Javanese or Balinese "tradition." And nowhere do gay Indonesians think that there are persons outside Indonesia who speak bahasa gay. While bahasa gay is neither necessary nor sufficient for gay subjectivity, it concretizes nodes of the daily gay world, as well as a sense that these nodes are linked in a national network. When normal Indonesians use bahasa gay, they are seen to be hip, not queer; it marks them not as gay but as in tune with popular culture. One possibility is that the "national" character of bahasa gay can be delinked from its original association with homosexuality

in this manner because gay subjectivity is so strongly linked to national culture in the first place.

The increasing ease with which bahasa gay has moved from parks and other sites of gay life to Indonesian popular culture suggests it is shifting from a "genre register," linked to context, to a "social register," linked to "stereotypical personality types" (Hervey 1992:198). Its referent is coming to be "user" more than "context of use." Bahasa gay can index two domains that appear opposed: the world of gay life, still lived largely in secrecy and shadow, and the dominant world of popular culture. What these two worlds share is that they are national worlds. The "stereotyped personality types" bahasa gay invokes are no longer necessarily homosexual, but they are necessarily national.

The desires of normal Indonesians are understood to operate across difference—female for male, and male for female. Normal, waria, and tomboi desires are understood in "heterogendered" terms. This is what gay (and lesbi) Indonesians have to offer Indonesian society: they alone articulate a "desire for the same," one that bears uncanny resemblances to the "imagined community" of the nation. What leaks from bahasa gay as it is appropriated into the national vernacular is a sense of similitude, of shared identity across islands of difference. Bahasa gay sometimes indexes homosexuality, but like the archipelago style of gay and lesbi Indonesians more generally, it registers belonging; this is its "style."

## TESTS OF FAITH

For most gay and lesbi Indonesians religious belief is important, but few can or wish to link that faith to the gay or lesbi world (I discuss gay Muslims more extensively in Boellstorff 2005). In postcolonial Indonesia religion is ever present; it is never simply a matter of personal belief. It is linked to family, society, and state: the first of the Pancasila, or Five Principles of the state, concerns belief in a single God (Tuhan yang Maha Esa). Understanding the place of religion in the gay and lesbi worlds demands distinguishing orthodoxy from lived religious experience. Gay and lesbi Indonesians find the domain of religion conflated with the normal world. Yet as they move through the gay and lesbi worlds, these Indonesians do not leave their faith behind. As a result, there is a need to approach gay and lesbi religious experience in a manner that takes into account how doctrine travels and is reinterpreted in different contexts.

In Islam, the religion of most gay and lesbi Indonesians, the central concept organizing sexuality is that of marriage (nikah) between men and women. If asked directly, most Indonesians say that Islam disapproves of

sex between men or between women. In practice, however, historically homosexuality has not represented a major concern in Indonesian Islamic thought. While Islamic thought acknowledges and celebrates the sexuality of women, properly controlled, women are often understood as the receivers of sexuality rather than initiators. Since homosexuality in Islam tends to be defined in terms of penile-anal penetration, it is unclear to what degree various erotic practices between women are classed as "sex" at all. Many lesbi Muslims struggle with a sense of sin. Yet lesbi women across Indonesia find ways to live with, if not reconcile, faith and desire, from tombois praying on the men’s side of a mosque to deciding that their desires are the result of God’s plan (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:427, 122, 250).

As also appears to be the case for lesbi Muslims, gay Muslims take two main stances with regard to their sexuality. At one extreme are those who see their sexuality as a serious sin. One gay Muslim in Bali, citing the story of Lot, said, "Being gay is a big sin in Islam, one of the sins that cannot be forgiven." However, most of my gay Muslim interlocutors either did not see being gay as sinful or understood it to be a minor sin easily forgiven by God. The starting point for these men is a belief in the God’s omnipotence and omniscience. Given that God is all-knowing, all-wise, and all-merciful, most gay Indonesian Muslims conclude they were created gay by God, and thus that their subjectivities and sexual practices are not sinful. In this view, nafsu or desire is planted in each individual by God and represents an irresistible force that cannot be denied, a common view among Indonesian Muslims (Siegel 1969; S. Brenner 1998:149–157). Gay and lesbi Indonesians face these tests of faith as they face the other challenges of their lives, and through practices of self they find ways to live within the gay archipelago.