The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia

Tom Boellstorff

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The Gay Archipelago

SEXUALITY AND NATION IN INDONESIA

*Tom Boellstorff*

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESSPRINCETON AND OXFORD

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FOR BILL AND DÉDÉ

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Note on Indonesian Terms and Italicization

ALL NON-ENGLISH TERMS are Indonesian unless otherwise noted. Following standard practice, I italicize Indonesian terms on first use only, except for the following three terms: *gay, lesbi*, and *normal*. I italicize these throughout due to their similarity to English terms. I follow standard Indonesian orthography except that when writing *gay* language terms the front unrounded vowel /é/ (spelled "e" in Indonesian, along with the schwa) is written as "é" for clarity. Indonesian usually marks plurals by reduplication (*buku*, "book"; *buku-buku*, "books") or not at all if clear from context (*dua buku*, "two books"). I use English plural markers on Indonesian terms; for example, warias, tempat ngebers. All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

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# PART ONE

The Indonesian Subject

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# CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

TO YOU WHO HAVE OPENED THIS BOOK

If you have opened this book hoping for a traveler’s tale in gay Indonesia, you may be disappointed. Yet I hope you will do more than skip ahead to the stories I tell. While I love a good story as much as anyone else, I also realize that we live in a time where the numbing reduction of debate to sound bites reflects a deep-seated hostility to asking the hard questions. Some readers may find this book refreshingly free of jargon; others may find it full of jargon. While it’s difficult to please everyone, I have tried to write the most accessible book I can while remaining true to the following conviction: we are most human when we reflect upon the ways of thinking that constitute the very stuff of which our lives are made.

This book is written primarily to be read by cultural anthropologists—not the folks who dig up bones or reassemble ancient pottery, but those who hang out with contemporary peoples to learn about their ways of thinking and living. However, even if you are not typically interested in the theories of contemporary cultural anthropology (I just call this "anthropology" in this book), I hope you might find that wrestling with the intellectual issues I bring up can be as rewarding as good stories and can provide a better understanding of gay and lesbian life. For instance, while discussing the kinds of sex gay men have with each other in Indonesia might seem important (and I do discuss this), it turns out to be just as important to discuss how we in the West decide when two things are "different" or "the same."

Although this is not a short book, it represents only about half of the material I have published thus far on the gay archipelago. Additional articles analyze dimensions of gay and lesbian life touched upon only briefly in this book, reinforcing many points I make (the key articles are Boellstorff 1999, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e). I indicate where these additional articles might be useful.

Every word of this book is written knowing that it may someday be translated into Indonesian. For such a future Indonesian audience, my hopes are the same as for my English-speaking audience: an appreciation for the lives of gay and lesbian Indonesians, and an appreciation for the value of stepping back from tantalizing impressions of the everyday to

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ask how human social relations come to be, are sustained, and change over time. The title "The Gay Archipelago" is obviously not meant to imply that all Indonesians are gay, but that there is a gay archipelago that lies amidst the national archipelago. My use of "archipelago" in this book has no relation to the notion of "the gulag archipelago" used by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn with reference to the former Soviet Union (Solzhenitsyn 1973)—a use of "archipelago" indexing a different form of state power, and a history of which my Indonesian interlocutors were unaware.

I do not recommend policies or provide solutions in this book. Solutions are important, but the rush to solutions can be part of the problem. Solutions are helpful, but in an important way they are boring: they close doors and silence debates. While I care about finding answers and often work as an activist, for this book I am more interested in asking new questions, questions that could point toward new visions of social justice.

TERMS OF DISCUSSION

In a classic essay, Clifford Geertz identified the goal of anthropology as "a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view" (1983:68). Nowadays, however, details can be global—and structure local—as much as the other way around. In the same essay Geertz wrote about the situation in his field site—near Surabaya, one of the primary field sites of this book—by saying it was characterized in the 1950s by a "curious mixture of borrowed fragments of modernity and exhausted relics of tradition" (60). In the contemporary moment, however, neither cultural transformation nor ethnographic interpretation can be understood as "continuous dialectical tacking" or "curious mixtures." New understandings of imbrication and transfer are needed. Geertz, like myself, was writing of Indonesia, a nation that has long served as an important laboratory for social theory in anthropology. Indonesia can now highlight changing forms of social life in an era of globalization.

For some time now Westerners have tended to think they live in a world that is already globalized. From the perspective of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Friedman 2000) or *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2001) to the global war on terror, there seems to be no corner of the Earth that remains untouched, as if the most "isolated native" drinks Coca-Cola or knows of those who do. The idea that those whom anthropologists studied were ever truly isolated was a fantasy (after all, anthropologists were there to study them). However, the trope of distance and otherness persists not just in anthropology but in the social sciences and beyond. It encodes

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a set of assumptions about the production of knowledge (knowledge is knowledge of *difference*) and the nature of human being (culture is, in the end, *local*).

In this book I offer *dubbing culture* as a metaphor for conceptualizing contemporary globalizing processes, ethnographic practice in an already globalized world, and the homologies between these projects of interpretation and reconfiguration. Where "writing culture" called attention to the possibility of a reflexive anthropology that decentered ethnographic authority (Clifford and Marcus 1986), "dubbing culture" suggests a postreflexive anthropology that decenters the ethnographic project itself. "Dubbing" undermines the empiric of ethnography, predicated as it is on the authentic. The term "dubbing culture" is my own invention, but it draws upon a late 1990s controversy in Indonesia where the dubbing of Western television shows was banned on the grounds that if Westerners appeared to speak Indonesian in the mass media, Indonesians would no longer be able to tell where their culture ends and authentic Indonesian culture begins.

Surfing the boundary between emic and etic, I use this term to investigate the surprising resonances between the dubbing controversy and how some Indonesians come to think of themselves in terms of the Indonesian words *gay* and *lesbi.* More generally, "dubbing culture" provides a rubric for rethinking globalization without relying on biogenetic (and, arguably, heteronormative) metaphors like hybridity, creolization, and diaspora, which imply prior unities and originary points of dispersion. In dubbing culture, two elements are held together in productive tension without the expectation that they will resolve into one—just as it is known from the outset that the speaker’s lips will never be in synch with the spoken word in a dubbed film. "Dubbing culture" is queer: with dubbing, there can never be a "faithful" translation. It is like the relationship between voice and image in a dubbed film or television show: each element articulates a different language, yet they are entangled into a meaningful unit. It is a relationship more intimate than dialogue, but more distinct than monologue. While I intend the concept of dubbing culture to be broadly relevant, it is particularly salient with regard to gay and lesbian Indonesians because their sexualities are so self-evidently novel—in comparison to, say, "heterosexuality" in Indonesia or the West, which is no less a product of the times but is often misrecognized as natural, eternal, and unchanging.

This book is about gay and lesbian lives in Indonesia—the fourth most populous nation after India, China, and the United States—and what these lives imply for overlapping fields of inquiry including queer theory, Southeast Asia studies, mass media studies, globalization studies, postcolonial theory, and anthropology. Yet this book is an ethnography of sexual "subject positions," not persons per se, and is only occasionally about

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the Indonesian gay and lesbian political "movement," which is important but not indicative of how gay and lesbian lives are typically lived. I am interested in the social categories *gay* and *lesbi* not just because they are remarkable but because to Western eyes they can appear so mundane. I explore how these social categories have come into being, how they transform ostensibly Western concepts of homosexuality, and how they are taken up and lived in the Indonesian context. My data come largely from individual lives, and throughout I discuss the agency, freedom, and choice in how Indonesians negotiate their subjectivities within systems of power. Yet these systems of power create the preconditions for "agency" in the first place—a term that (alongside "freedom," "choice," and "negotiate") reveals more about Western ideologies of the autonomous self than the lived dynamics of selfhood. Too often discussions of agency assume structures of power against individual "negotiation," losing sight of how agency is also a transindividual social fact. A postreflexive anthropology must destabilize the figure of the preculturally agentive person that robs the ethnographic enterprise of its ability to investigate the relationship between the social and the subjective.

As someone originally trained as a linguist, I find anxieties over agency quite odd. I can, at will and as often as I please, create a well-formed sentence never before produced in the history of the English language—"I saw a black cat look strangely at an excited mouse near Redondo Avenue." Yet I cannot invent new grammars at will; my speech takes place within a horizon of language. Similarly, my agency is produced through (not "constrained by") culture. The linguistic metaphor has proven useful in addressing issues of postcoloniality: "a key question in the world of postcolonial scholarship will be the following. The problem of capitalist modernity cannot any longer be seen simply as a sociological problem of historical transition … but as a problem of translation, as well" (Chakrabarty 2000:17; see also Liu 1999). Dubbing, a translation that revels in its inevitable failure (moving lips that will *never* match the sounds of speech), opens up new ways to conceptualize relationships of similitude and difference when new incommensurabilities make "the stakes of translation seem high" (Povinelli 2002:321).

This book’s starting point is the apparent puzzle of Indonesians who use the terms *gay* and *lesbi* in at least some contexts of their lives, yet consider these to be "authentically Indonesian" (*asli Indonesia*) ways of being. Under conditions ranging from grudging tolerance to open bigotry—but characterized above all by a society that does not know they exist—Indonesians reach halfway across the world to appropriate these terms, transforming them through practices of daily life to interpret apparently "local" experiences. It is *always* clear to Indonesians of any ethnic or

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religious background that the terms *gay* and *lesbi* do not originate in locality or tradition.

However, in contrast to stereotypes of the elite, cosmopolitan homosexual, most gay and lesbian Indonesians are not rich or even middle class. Few of them speak English or have traveled outside Indonesia. Rarely have they had sex with, or even encountered, a gay or lesbian Westerner. Most have never seen Western lesbian or gay publications, nor have they read published materials produced by other gay and lesbian Indonesians. While concepts have moved to and from what is now called Indonesia for millennia, this has typically been enabled by linkages to institutional structures, as in the cases of world religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism), colonialism, capitalism, and nationalism. But no religious authority, state bureaucracy, or transnational corporation intentionally globalizes *gay* and *lesbi*: in this case concepts appear to move in the absence of an institutional framework. Importantly, what they move to is the nation-state of Indonesia, rather than specific islands or ethnic groups. *Gay* and *lesbi* are national in character; this is why national belonging appears alongside globalization as a focus of my analysis. For gay and lesbian Indonesians *understand their social worlds in national rather than simply global terms*—in surprising but often implicit accordance with the government’s "archipelago concept," which represents Indonesia as an archipelago of diversity in unity. They dub this nationalist discourse in unexpected ways. This is why I use the term "cultural logics" (of being a gay or lesbian Indonesian) more often than "discourses," since discourses are typically understood to be intentionally produced by powerful institutions.

Thus, alongside the concept of dubbing culture, a key theoretical intervention of this book is to think through the implications of *archipelagic subjectivities and socialities*, which do not hew to continental imaginaries of clear borders embracing contiguous territories. The archipelago metaphor permits understanding selfhood and sociality as not possessing sharp external boundaries, yet characterized by islands of difference. I examine how *gay* and *lesbi* are founded on rhetorics of national belonging based upon the figure of the heterosexual nuclear family—paradoxical as that may seem from the vantage point of Western homosexualities (and scholarship on the nexus of ethnicity, race, class, gender, and sexuality). How is one to understand senses of selfhood that connect and confound traditional social scientific levels of analysis (and, arguably, lived experience in the West) such as local, regional, national, and global?

This book examines a wide range of sexualities and genders, many of which have different names in different parts of Indonesia or even within one area. As a result I employ several terminological conventions. These conventions are a campy sendup of social scientific obsessions with finding

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the "right words" to label "things" assumed to exist in the social world independent of the observer. For instance, from this point onward I consistently italicize the Indonesian terms *gay* and *lesbi* to indicate they are distinct from English "gay" and "lesbian." I also italicize *normal*, an Indonesian term that refers to dominant understandings of modern sexuality. I wish to underscore that while *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians reterritorialize the concepts "gay" and "lesbian," the terms have their own history and dynamics: they are not just "gay" and "lesbian" with a foreign accent. In italicizing these terms I use a graphic device to hold them at arm’s length, defamiliarizing them while highlighting that they are lived concepts, not just analytical conveniences.

This is important because many a work in sexuality and gender studies congratulates itself for, and frets about, "discovering" that terms like homosexual, lesbian, gay, or even sexuality and gender, cannot explain non-Western contexts. This concern (which "dubbing culture" will destabilize) has a long history, which Geertz can again summarize for us:

The history of anthropology has in large part consisted in taking concepts put together in the West ("religion," "family," "class," "state"), trying to apply them in non-Western contexts, finding that they fit there rather badly at best, laboring to rework them so that they fit rather better, and then discovering in the end that, however reworked, many of the problems they pose—the nature of belief, the foundations of obligation, the inequality of life chances, the legitimacy of domination—remain clearly recognizable, quite alive. (C. Geertz 1990:77)

Claiming that concepts like "homosexual," "sexuality," and "gender" fail to explain non-Western realities misleadingly implies that the concepts are adequate in the West. It confuses modes of argumentation, mistaking interpretive frameworks for authoritative typologies. It also makes it difficult to examine how what Geertz terms "concepts put together in the West" are increasingly "put together" in non-Western contexts prior to the ethnographic encounter. Ethnographic objects that collapse the emic/etic distinction force crucial questions regarding globalization, similitude, and difference.

For this reason I am interested in intersectional theories of sexuality; that is, theories of sexuality that understand sexuality to be formed at the conjuncture of multiple cultural logics. This interest in intersectionality arises from my understanding of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, but it also arises from a sensitivity to my position as a gay white man: my own cultural background predisposes me to see sexuality as a singular domain and "coming out" as movement along a single dimension. I would argue that the very idea of sexuality requires a disavowal of other domains, particularly gender and race—indeed, that the drawing of a line around a subset of human experience and calling it "sexuality" is a foundational

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moment permitting the exclusion of gender and race. I therefore see a danger in the very idea of "sexual culture," which encodes an assumption that sexuality has an independent cultural logic, rather than existing at the intersection of multiple discourses. The theoretical architecture I develop in this book is concerned with disrupting these tendencies of the category "sexuality."

In this book the category "*lesbi* women" includes not only feminine women but masculine women who in some cases think of themselves as women with men’s souls. Both feminine and masculine *lesbi* women sometimes call themselves *lesbi*, but there are other terms.[1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns1) In much of Indonesia, including parts of Java and Sumatra, *lesbi* women use *cewek* (which in colloquial Indonesian means "female") as a term for feminine *lesbi* women (Blackwood 1999). In this book I use *cewek* as a catch-all term for feminine *lesbi* women anywhere in Indonesia. Masculine *lesbi* women are known by a range of names, including *hunter* in southern Sulawesi and parts of Java, *cowok* (male) in parts of Sumatra, the Bugis term *calalai’* in southern Sulawesi, and *butchie* and *sentul* in parts of Java. Across Indonesia these persons are also known as *tomboi* (occasionally spelled *tomboy* or *thomboy*); in this book I use *tomboi* as a catch-all term for masculine *lesbi* women regardless of whether the person in question uses *tomboi*, *hunter*, or *lesbi* or does not have a name for their sexual and gendered subjectivity. I use *lesbi* as an overarching term.[2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns2) I refer to male-to-female transvestites (best known by the term *banci*) as *warias*, the term they prefer. In the past I have referred to both warias and tombois as s/he (the Indonesian third-person singular pronoun *dia* is gender neutral). While such novel pronouns can be useful, I have come to believe that they are too exoticizing and reflect a theory of language in which "words" and "things" ideally have a one-to-one correspondence. As a result, in this book I refer to warias as "she" and tombois as "he," knowing, as they do, that social gender is productively imprecise.

I use the term "the West" ironically, with the understanding that "I refer to the effects of hegemonic representations of the Western self rather than its subjugated traditions" (Gupta 1998:36). "West" should be read as if always within scare quotes. For instance, the idea of "gay and lesbian Westerners" refers to dominant Western discourses of homosexuality, precisely the ones that would seem to be most capable of globalizing, and intentionally does not account for the great diversity in sexual and gendered regimes in the West. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, the United States is typically the West’s exemplar, but the West can include Australia and even Japan. That Westernness has a long history of slippage in the archipelago is indicated by the fact that the Indonesian term for "west," *barat*, comes from the Sanskrit and now Hindi word for India (*bharat*), the West’s "Orient."

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SUBJECTIVITY AND SEXUALITY

In this book I eschew the identity-behavior binarism in favor of a language of *subject positions* (extant social categories of selfhood) and *subjectivities* (the various senses of self—erotics, assumptions about one’s life course, and so forth—that obtain when occupying a subject position, whether partially or completely, temporarily or permanently). Focusing on subject positions and subjectivities turns attention to the total social fact of *gay* and *lesbi* selfhood. This is a basically Foucauldian framework that draws from the epistemological break between volumes 1 and 2 of *The History of Sexuality* (1978, 1985), wherein Foucault shifted from an emphasis on the "systems of power" inciting sexuality to "the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being" (1985:4–5).

I do not think that the notion of identity is useless, just that with regard to the topics of this book it is a poor fit. I think of "subject position" as a rough translation of *jiwa*, which means "soul" but often has a collective meaning: *lesbi* women will sometimes say "*lesbi* have the same jiwa"; warias will sometimes say they "have the same jiwa"; or *lesbi* women and *gay* men will sometimes say they share a jiwa. I think of "subjectivity" as a rough translation of *pribadi* or *jati diri*, both of which mean approximately "self-conception"; a *gay* man once distinguished pribadi from jiwa by saying that "every person possesses their own pribadi." *Identitas* has a much more experience-distant, bureaucratic ring for most Indonesians: one *gay* man defined *identitas* as "biodata: name, address, and so on."

This framework of subject positions and subjectivities is how I flesh out a social constructionist theory of sexuality. My understanding of the human condition is that it is not possible to have subjectivities without subject positions. Phrases like "biological *basis*" or "biological *foundation*" for sexuality are misleading. Language again provides a convenient example. There is undoubtedly a biological human capacity to acquire language, and language universals (for instance, plurality). However, no one speaks "Language": people speak Chinese, English, or Indonesian, cultural and historical entities for which no gene will ever be found. The biological capacity for language is not ontologically prior to these historically and culturally contextual practices of speaking. We have been biologically designed not to be biologically designed, to be "incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture—and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it" (C. Geertz 1973:49). The million dollar question, then, is this: Is

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being male or female, gay or straight, more like "Chinese" or "Language"? The scientific evidence supports the contention that social facts like sexuality and gender are more like "Chinese" than "Language," and thus that claims of a biological "basis" for sexuality or gender engage in a category mistake, confusing an analytical category for an experiential one. Sexualities (*gay*, *lesbi*, gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, a "man who has sex with men"), indeed all subject positions, are like English or Chinese, not "Language"—products of history and culture.

Subject positions can be occupied in myriad ways ("teenager," for instance, can be occupied antagonistically as a rebel, or normatively as a "good student"). Construing subject positions as multiply inhabitable provides a way to conceptualize agency without interpreting the metaphor of social construction volitionally—deploying verbs of concerted, self-aware action like "negotiation" to posit a sexual self that stands outside culture.

This is primarily a study of "sexuality," however problematized. I often use phrases like "gender and sexuality" to highlight how for *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, gender and sexuality are mutually defining. Yet on some level this is redundant, since sexuality is always defined in terms of gender, nation, race, class, and a host of other social categories. I thus respectfully disagree with my colleagues who claim that the analytical distinction between gender and sexuality (most famously set out in Rubin 1984) is flawed because it is not possible to conceptually separate gender and sexuality. First, it is obviously possible to separate them in certain contexts, and this is not simply a product of academic debates or globalization (as the distinction between *gay* and *waria* in Indonesia indicates). Second, a division between gender and race, or sexuality and race, or race and class, and so on ad infinitum, is also not conceptually possible on some level, yet on another level it is not only possible but enormously useful on theoretical and political grounds. In the end, everything is connected to everything, but this insight is of limited use. The danger lies not in conceptually separating cultural domains, but in ontologizing such separations so that the foundationally intersectional character of social life, and social inequality, becomes obscured.

Throughout this book I employ a relational analysis with regard to gender and sexuality. I focus on *gay* men but also address *lesbi* women, male-to-female transvestites (*warias*), female-to-male transgenders (*tombois*), and so-called traditional homosexualities and transgenderisms. Male transvestites are well known to the Indonesian public, often by the rather derogatory terms *banci* or *béncong.* They are visible in Indonesian society to a degree that has no parallel in the West, and that continually surprises

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Western visitors. Yet this visibility does not translate directly into acceptance: warias are acknowledged, but to a great extent acknowledged as inferior. I will at various points describe waria life as it shapes the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions (see Boellstorff 2004b for a more detailed discussion of warias).

Like *gay* men, *lesbi* women can be found throughout Indonesia. In fact, there appears to have been greater mass media coverage of *lesbi* women than *gay* men when these subject positions began appearing on the national scene in the early 1980s, but this is probably an artifact of the greater scrutiny placed on women’s sexuality more generally. As in the case of *gay* men, *lesbi* women can come from any class position. Since they usually come to their sexual subjectivities through mainstream mass media, as *gay* men do, it is not necessary that they be members of feminist organizations, have a high level of education, or live in the capital of Jakarta. There are many other similarities between *gay* men and *lesbi* women. Both usually describe their desires in terms of a desire for the same, and both the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are found nationwide. Historically, *gay* and *lesbi* appear to have taken form more or less together, as gendered analogues, suggesting the (sometimes fulfilled) possibility of socializing between *gay* men and *lesbi* women.

Although the bulk of my fieldwork has been among *gay* men and warias, I have spent a good deal of time with *lesbi* Indonesians. This presents me with a dilemma. I wish to particularize my discussion when it could be misunderstood as falsely universalizing to the experiences of *lesbi* women. Yet I also do not wish to footnote my *lesbi* material (Braidotti 1997); such a move would be not only methodologically suspect (given the importance of gender relationality) but politically unsound, given that *lesbi* Indonesians often identify isolation as an important issue. This dilemma is not simply due to the fact that as a man, spending time with women was more difficult: no researcher ever has equal access to all social groups within a particular field site. My path of compromise is to weave together my material on *gay* men and *lesbi* women, paying attention to points of both similarity and divergence and calibrating my work with existing scholarship on *lesbi* women. When my interpretations apply only to *gay* men, I refer only to them. When speaking of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians together, I always use "*gay* and *lesbi*" (rather than alternating between *"gay* and *lesbi*" and "*lesbi* and *gay*") to underscore that I have more data on *gay* men than *lesbi* women. This is also why this book is entitled *The Gay Archipelago* rather than *The Gay and Lesbi Archipelago.* This relational rather than monogendered approach is not a dreaded concession but a theoretical necessity: "the tendency to ignore imbalances in order to permit a grasp of women’s lives has led too many scholars to

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forget that men and women ultimately live together in the world and, so, that we will never understand the lives that women lead without relating them to men" (Rosaldo 1980:396).

FIRST PRELUDE: INDEPENDENCE DAY

Indonesia celebrates its Independence Day every August 17, but to my knowledge the first time *gay* men celebrated Independence Day in their own world was in Surabaya on this night: Independence Day’s eve, August 16, 2004. I have come to a place *gay* men call "*Pattaya*." It is named after the famed tourist beach in Thailand, a place most *gay* men have never seen but that is rumored to be full of gay men.[3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns3) Pattaya in Thailand is a beach, but in Surabaya—Indonesia’s second largest city—Pattaya is a dark, narrow lane running along one side of the Brantas River, near a small dam right in the center of town, near a shopping mall, a major hotel, and a train station. Some of the city’s poor live along the sides of the lane in wood shacks, often without electricity, while others fish in the fetid waters of the river. On many nights over a hundred *gay* men stroll along the dark lane, hanging out and talking with friends while perched on the back of parked motorcycles, or (in the darkest "center" of Pattaya) stealing kisses from a lover.

This night I have come to the best-lit portion of Pattaya at 10:30 P.M., where the most "opened" *gay* men tend to congregate. There are about forty *gay* men and a handful of warias hanging out. Several men take a blue tarp and set it out on the pavement, and a few moments later a taxi makes its way precariously down the lane, which is only slightly wider than the taxi itself. A *gay* man exits the taxi with food: yellow rice sculpted into a little mountain, fish, chicken, vegetables—foods of a celebratory feast (*slametan*). A few nights ago 5,000 rupiah (about 50 cents) was gathered from each *gay* man at Pattaya to pay for this food.

Now we all sit down on the tarp, surrounding the food, and are silent as one of the participants begins to speak:

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| --- | --- |
| Okelah teman-teman, semua, selamat datang kembali ke Pattaya … Malam ini kita kumpulkumpulnya dengan maksud, yaitu untuk merayakan kemerdekaan pada besok … bukan untuk sendiri-sendiri … tapi kita maksud bahwa kita ada di tengah masyarakat … kita double, ya. | Okay friends, all of us, welcome back to Pattaya … This night we gather together in order to cel ebrate our independence [day] tomorrow … not for ourselves … but we mean that we are in the midst of society … we are double, yes. |

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Then we close our eyes as someone else leads us in prayer: "let us pray for the souls of the heroes who have fallen for us." For these moments of prayer and remembrance, for the sake of Independence Day, *gay* men try to bring together what they call "the *gay* world" and "the *normal* world." And in this intersection, this failed intersection, they articulate the idea that their lives are "double."

Yet the linkages between being *gay* and the Indonesian nation go back much further than August 16, 2004.

*Setting*: Makassar, capital of South Sulawesi province on the island of Sulawesi (Celebes). *Place*: the waterfront. *Time*: August 17, 2000, Indonesia’s fifty-fifth anniversary. Two years ago, the downfall of the dictator Soeharto had brought new possibilities and dangers.

It is in this uncertain context that the citizens of Makassar now celebrate Independence Day afternoon. The city of over a million people sits along Sulawesi’s western coastline, looking out toward Borneo two hundred miles away. On this day the city has closed off the road running along the waterfront and set up a raised stage on one end; the normally traffic-filled street has become a walkway for hundreds. It is hot, and by midafternoon everyone is wilted. From the stage comes an announcement about a boat race; the speaker is a Dutch man who has been living in Makassar for some time. Afterwards a "traditional" drumming group performs. The music throbs in the humid air, but only a few Indonesians sit on the blistering pavement in front of the stage. Most crouch at the edge of the road taking shelter underneath makeshift tents, sipping cool sodas and trying to bear the heat.

That, however, is about to change, as the drummers end their performance and an Indonesian emcee takes the stage. He says: "Now, on this anniversary of our independence, we present to you a skit about AIDS by the group ‘Sulawesi Style.’" A pregnant pause, and suddenly American teen pop sensation Britney Spears’ international hit "Baby One More Time" fills the air. Fifteen members of Sulawesi Style take the stage wearing junior high school uniforms; they will soon present a skit in which a substitute teacher explains AIDS to her students. In this opening number, however, they dance in formation. These dancers are *gay* men, but for this performance about half are in drag. Karim, one of the most charismatic, moves quickly to the catwalk in front of the stage. His long black wig flowing in the ocean breeze, Karim struts toward the audience, hips marking the beat, lip-synching Britney flawlessly with arms outstretched, as if to take in the multitudes watching him. Multitudes? Where a few tired eyes watched the drummers minutes earlier, hundreds now pack the street to watch Sulawesi Style’s performance. The heat is forgotten as adults, teenagers, even small kids scream with delight, pointing at the drag performers and dancing along; mothers in Muslim headscarves clap along, pushing their kids closer to the stage to see. The street has become a big party and Karim is the center, standing over the crowd in all his drag glory.

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Figure 1–1. An Independence Day performance. Author’s photograph.

I climb the stairs next to the stage to snap the picture reproduced as [figure 1–1](#u10_ch01-fig1-1): the masses of onlookers smiling in approval, Karim at the end of the catwalk, one leg crossed in front of the other as he sashays to the edge, framed against a shining blue sky meeting shining blue sea. Stepping down from the stage, I happen to walk by the Dutch man who introduced the boat races. Understandably he assumes I am a tourist who has wandered into the crowd; I guess this is why he feels compelled to pull me aside and inform me that "Here, it’s not like with our culture. Here transvestites are magicians and healers." Of course, these are not transvestites, magicians, or healers, but *gay* men who hang out in the shopping mall and dress most of the time in jeans and tee-shirts. What challenges me this Independence Day is not difference but similitude: *gay* men lip-synching an American pop star. The audience believes this is just a show; they are not "accepting *gay* men." Yet I cannot imagine a Fourth of July where devoutly religious families would find this to be great entertainment for a holiday afternoon, where men in drag help to recall the independence of a nation in a state of crisis and change.

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Figure 1–2. Map of Indonesia (before East Timor’s independence). Most Western maps of Indonesia do not include the external border defined by the archipelago concept (black line). Numbers indicate the location of (1) the city of Surabaya, (2) the island of Bali, and (3) the city of Makassar. Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional (1995:17).

LOCATIONS

This book’s archipelagic analysis will challenge the concept of boundary, which "is one of the least subtle in the social science literature" (Strathern 1996:520). The boundary determining which islands are part of Indonesia is not a geographic given: like constellations, archipelagos are networks, constituted through lines of connection. Indonesia occupies the world’s largest archipelago, stretching over 3,977 miles ([fig. 1–2](#u10_ch01-fig1-2)). It is comprised of about 17,000 islands, about 6,000 of which are inhabited. (Note that all images of the archipelago in this book include East Timor as part of Indonesia; my fieldwork took place before and after East Timor’s independence, but the archipelago concept began to be promulgated before East Timor’s independence in 2002.) With about 230 million inhabitants and 670 ethnic groups, approximately nine-tenths of whom follow Islam, Indonesia is home to more Muslims than any other nation. Lying across trade routes that for centuries have linked East Asia with the Indian

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subcontinent, the Arab world, and Europe, this archipelago is anything but remote.

The imagined boundary delineating Indonesia does not correspond to any "traditional" polity or culture: it is inherited from the colonial encounter. The Dutch were the dominant power in this region from the 1600s until ousted by the Japanese at the beginning of World War II. The Dutch discouraged knowledge of their language beyond civil and domestic servants, and at independence less than 2 percent of Indonesians spoke Dutch (Anderson 1990:138, 197; Groeneboer 1998:1; Siegel 1997:13). In place of a European language, the Dutch communicated primarily through Malay, an Austronesian language that had been used for centuries in island Southeast Asia as a trade language. By the 1920s, nationalist groups had formed in the colony. While a few framed themselves in ethnic terms (such as *Jong Java* or "the young Javanese"), by the time of the "Youth Pledge" of 1928 nationalist sentiments were predicated on the assumption that independence was to be for the citizens of the archipelago, sharing a new quasi-ethnicity—indeed, an ethnocitizenship—as Indonesian; speaking Malay, renamed "Indonesian," as the national tongue.

Indonesia knew only two presidents during its first half-century as an independent nation. The first, Sukarno, worked for over twenty years to hold the young nation together in the context of communist and Islamic mass movements, conflicts in the military, and regional separatism. Getting citizens of the new nation to think of themselves as Indonesians first, and members of ethnic groups second, became a central goal of the postcolonial state. Sukarno’s forceful anti-Western rhetoric and role in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement helped sustain his rule until economic and political paralysis culminated in the bloody events of 1965–67, when an attempted coup and the murder of six generals provided a pretext for then-Major General Soeharto to seize power and eliminate the Indonesian Communist Party: it is estimated that over half a million people died.

Sukarno’s rule was followed by the so-called New Order of Soeharto, which lasted until 1998. During this time, the period in which the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions took form, development (*pembangunan*) replaced revolution (*revolusi*) as state keyword. The idea of national integration was intensified and redeployed through state ideologies, including the archipelago concept (*wawasan nusantara*) and family principle (*azas kekeluargaan*). Corruption and resistance to authoritarianism, as well as the social misery caused by the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis, forced Soeharto to step down in May 1998. The post-Soeharto "era of reform" (*era reformasi*) has seen unprecedented press freedoms and a resurgence of civil society. It has also seen a new visibility for political Islam, a rise in

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separatist movements, and the reframing of national governance in terms of regional autonomy (*otonomi daerah*), with a corresponding "rise of the local" (Aspinall and Fealy 2003:2) that would appear to renaturalize anthropology’s own methodological and ontological emphasis on locality. Nonetheless, nationalism remains deeply felt by most Indonesians.

A central goal of this book is to examine how *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are linked to discourses of the nation. On one level this might seem obvious, since the concepts *gay* and *lesbi* are not accepted by local culture, but this is insufficient, since they are not accepted by national culture either. In contemporary Indonesia the concepts *gay* and *lesbi* remain poorly understood by most *normal* Indonesians, with the links between sexuality and nation largely obscured (S. Wieringa 2002:2). How can state ideology shape *gay* and *lesbi* sexualities the state never intended to incite?

In his famous 1871 definition, Tylor identified culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1958 [1871]:1). While later thinkers have questioned Tylor’s assumption that culture is a whole, what I find curious is his displacement of the question of belonging from culture to society. Tylor sees culture as acquired by "members of society" but does not ask how "societies" are bounded so that one person acquires one culture; another person, another. Recognized membership in society appears a priori. From the beginnings of anthropology, recognition has stood as precondition for culture, and the completion of recognition is belonging.

Given nationalism’s continuing importance, it may surprise readers unfamiliar with the anthropology of Indonesia that virtually no anthropologists consider "Indonesia" to be their field site. It is possible to argue that this book is the first ethnography of Indonesians (rather than an ethnography of Javanese, Dayak, Minangkabau, etc.).[4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns4) The Indonesian absence in anthropological research is shaped by ethnolocality (see [chapter 2](#u11_ch02); Boellstorff 2002). I coin the term "ethnolocality" to name a spatial scale where "ethnicity" and "locality" presume each other to such a degree that they become, in essence, a single concept. This mode of representation originated in the colonial encounter as a means of impeding the possibility of translocal spatial scales other than colonialism (in particular, nationalism and Islamic movements). As reified in the work of the Leiden school, "custom" (*adat*) was understood to belong not to the Indies as a whole but to groups framed in terms of the equation of ethnicity and place. This assumes culture is the property of "the Balinese," "the Makassarese," "the Javanese," and so on. Although a large body of scholarship has denaturalized ethnolocality, it remains influential: national culture is often treated as a force impacting local culture rather than the possible location of culture in its own right. Indonesianist anthropology has produced an archipelago

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of literatures keyed to an archipelago of unitary cultures, discrete units *secondarily* shaped by an "Indonesia" conflated with the political, the urban, the modern, and ultimately with the inauthentic.

If a goal of John Pemberton’s work (Pemberton 1994) is to demonstrate that the subject of Java is really a subject of "Java" (that is, that the notion of "Java" is a discursive formation, not a priori), my analysis works in reverse, seeking to erase the implicit scare quotes and show that the subject of "Indonesia" is a *subject of Indonesia*—amenable to an ethnographic analysis with strengths and weaknesses not fundamentally different from those found in ethnography conducted with reference to any other spatial scale. Ethnolocality marks this boundary between ruler and ruled and also between knower and known. In anthropological inquiry it became the "investigative modality" (Cohn 1996:5) demarcating the conceptual threshold between the ethnographic and the comparative. To the degree that ethnicity is understood in terms of kinship and reproduction, *heteronormativity also demarcates this threshold*. Can there be subject positions with spatial scales that are foundationally national, even if persons inhabiting such subject positions might consider themselves in terms of ethnolocality with respect to other aspects of their lives? Could one think of oneself, for instance, as "Madurese" with relation to conceptions of religion, but "Indonesian" with relation to sexuality?

The most radical theoretical and methodological intervention of this book is that I take Indonesia as an ethnographic unit of analysis. A queer reading of the category "Indonesian," it is an *ethnography of Indonesians*, not of the Batak, Buginese, Madurese, or any other ethnolocalized group. Indeed, it often seems that political scientists and anthropologists study two different objects: "Indonesia" versus "local culture." There is a theoretically sophisticated body of literature on Indonesian, the national language, as a language of the public and the translocal (e.g., J. Errington 1998, 2000; Keane 1997, 2003; Siegel 1986, 1997). Yet rarely in the corpus of Indonesianist anthropology is one reminded that Indonesian is the "mother tongue" of a growing percentage of Indonesians, learned alongside rather than subsequent to ethnolocalized tongues like Javanese or Balinese. Never to my knowledge is one reminded that millions of Indonesians (including some of my interlocutors) are functionally *monolingual* in Indonesian (Sneddon 2003:202, 205). It is not solely due to his upper-class status that Sakti, the *gay* protagonist of the hit 2004 film *Arisan*! (Nia diNata, director), speaks only Indonesian (and not also Batak, his family’s ethnolocal language).

Monolingual Indonesian-speakers are absent from the ethnographic record because they are inconceivable from the perspective of ethnolocality. They seem to belong to the archipelago but not to any of its component islands. The national motto of Indonesia is "unity in diversity," but monolingual

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Indonesian-speakers, like *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, do not seem to have any "diversity," only unity. They appear improper. Yet while I carry out fieldwork on multiple islands, I ultimately construe them as elements of a single "site." Just as someone studying a city might work in several neighborhoods but consider her or his conclusions to be reflective of that city, so my fieldwork takes "Indonesia" as its subject. In one sense my research is an example of multisited fieldwork (Marcus 1995). Yet since I take the nation-state of Indonesia as the ethnographic unit of analysis, in a fundamental sense my research is neither multisited nor comparative; it is a "multi-sited ethnography in one place."[5](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns5)

This book is based on twenty-two months of activism and fieldwork over a twelve-year time span, centered on a period from July 1997 to May 1998, with three periods of earlier work (1992, 1993, and 1995), as well as additional work in 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2004. My knowledge of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians is based on participant observation and other qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are not more micrological or localizing than quantitative ones; they illuminate different aspects of social life. When explaining this to students I tell the story of a quantitative researcher and a qualitative researcher who go to Japan to study the Japanese language. The quantitative researcher prepares a survey that can be distributed to a large, random sample, providing valuable data concerning, say, varieties of Japanese dialects. The qualitative researcher studies a far smaller sample; he or she could not learn every vocabulary item of Japanese, for instance, or every dialect. Yet through immersion in daily life this person could learn to *speak* Japanese: from a handful of individuals one can learn how to communicate with millions. Qualitative research can be effective in drawing out cultural logics that, like languages, are shared: it is an approach suited to the study of similitude. There is no necessary relationship between methods and spatial scale: it is not true that qualitative methods like ethnography are "more local" and quantitative methods "more global." As globalization becomes seen as the new default state of affairs in the world, there is a real need for qualitative studies of the global.

The complexities of *gay* and *lesbi* life present further challenges to traditional ethnographic methodologies. Despite the fact that (since at least Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma*) anthropologists question that cultures are integrated, there remains a strong sense that ethnography should portray a total way of life (Leach 1964). But there is no *gay* and *lesbi* village I could study: *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are fragmented, taking form in stolen moments in places like apartments and parks. It is not a community with the kinds of recognized leaders that anthropologists often rely upon for authoritative accounts. One reason I find the ethnographic vignette so useful in this book is that *gay* and *lesbi* lives are lived in vignettes.

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Because *gay* and *lesbi* lives are so self-consciously not a product of locality, I decided to conduct research in three sites: Surabaya in East Java, Makassar (formerly Ujung Pandang) in South Sulawesi, and Bali. I chose these sites because they are relatively close to one another yet contrast in ethnic and religious makeup, degree of contact with non-Indonesians, and position in the Indonesian nation-state. I have also spent periods from a few days to a month in Jakarta, Kediri (East Java), Bandung (West Java), Yogyakarta, Samarinda (East Kalimantan), Balikpapan (East Kalimantan), and several rural sites in East Java and South Sulawesi.

With a population of over three million, my first site, Surabaya, is the capital of the province of East Java. Located on Java’s north coast across a narrow strait from the island of Madura, it is a major port as well as a financial and commercial center. Predominantly Javanese and Muslim with a large Madurese community, there are also significant numbers of Javanese Christians, Christians from other ethnolocalized groups, and smaller numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians. Makassar, my second site, is the sixth-largest city in Indonesia, provincial capital of South Sulawesi and "gateway" to eastern Indonesia. Like Surabaya, it lies on the coast and has an active port. It has a reputation for conservative Islam. The Bugis and Makassarese are the dominant ethnolocalized groups. My third site is predominantly Hindu Bali: Denpasar (the capital, with a population of approximately 375,000), the Kuta/Legian/Seminyak tourist corridor in south Bali, and the Lovina/Singaraja tourist corridor on the north coast. Kuta, Legian, and Seminyak, on the western coast approximately seven miles south of Denpasar, were sleepy fishing villages until the 1970s, when tourism became dominant. It has remained so (Picard 1996), even after the 2002 bombing in Kuta.

Before beginning fieldwork, I expected to find fundamental differences in *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity between these three sites. Surely Muslim, Christian, and Hindu *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would differ, as would those in the tourist zones of Bali versus urban Makassar or Surabaya. However, I was continually confronted by similarity among my sites and across demographic variables. Such similarity challenges the theoretical apparatus of anthropology, attuned as it is to discovering difference.

Since being *gay* or *lesbi* is rarely linked to one’s working life, my participant observation took place mostly in the evenings. With *gay* men this meant innumerable nights hanging out in parks, discos, or apartments; with *lesbi* women my socializing, like theirs, was largely in the more domestic environments of homes and apartments, but sometimes shopping malls and other semipublic spaces as well. My participant observation also gave me ample opportunity to explore the *normal* world; that is, the dominant, heteronormative ground of national popular culture and ethnolocalized "tradition" against which the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are figured.

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I was openly gay throughout my fieldwork; this certainly aided the process of becoming familiar with those I was studying, but it gave me no privileged access (a heterosexual ethnographer could have conducted this research, though of course not in the same way). I built up relationships (often friendships) with my interlocutors over a period of years, but since *gay* or *lesbi* persons often suddenly leave the *gay* or *lesbi* world because of marriage or migration within Indonesia, I lost contact with many interlocutors over time. During the day I would conduct interviews and type up fieldnotes from the previous evening’s experiences. I also engaged in extensive HIV prevention as well as *gay* and *lesbi* rights work with nongovernmental organizations. In addition to participant observation and interviews, I conducted focus groups with *gay* men in Surabaya and Makassar. I have also done extensive textual and archival research, involving everything from items of popular culture (newspaper articles, books, magazines, television and film) to materials produced by *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians themselves (Boellstorff 2004c).

One long-standing concern in ethnographic work concerns conscious explanation: "the Ethnographer has in the field … the duty before him of drawing up all the rules and regularities…. But these things, though crystallized and set, are nowhere explicitly *formulated*" (Malinowski 1922:11). This has also long been recognized as "the fundamental task the anthropologist concerned with gender and sexual orientation must take on: dealing with diversity while challenging the transparency of individual experience" (Lewin 1991:791). Only occasionally are the cultural logics explored in this book the topic of explicit commentary: *gay* men and *lesbi* women do not speak of "dubbing culture," and rarely do they talk about a *gay* archipelago. I see my task as an interpretive one that draws out largely implicit assumptions. I find that moving beyond conscious explanation gives me greater humility regarding my conclusions: an approach that constructs ethnographic authority by claiming "they say so-and-so is the case" can lead to a false sense of certainty.

A possible misconstrual of this study is in terms of scope: have I misidentified the viewpoint of a few politicized, intellectual, or wealthy *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians for Indonesians as a whole? My goal is to describe the most dominant conceptions of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity without implying that the possible ways of living a *gay* or *lesbi* life are thereby exhausted. After all, anthropologists write all the time of "the Javanese" or even "the Javanese of the southern neighborhoods of Kediri" with the understanding that they are not ascribing unanimity to those they study. To misinterpret my claims as more overarching would constitute a "confusion of closure with scale"; ethnolocalized explanations of social phenomena

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can be as totalizing as translocal ones (Gupta 1998:12). Maintaining that *gay* and *lesbi* persons are found throughout Indonesia is not the same thing as saying that they are found everywhere in Indonesia. Even in urban centers many Indonesians with same-gender desires remain unaware of the concepts *gay* and *lesbi*. The metaphor of the archipelago is useful here: there can be "islands" of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians nationwide, yet also places "nearby" where *gay* and *lesbi* are not taken up as subjectivities.

I am often asked if those on the oppressed periphery see *gay* and *lesbi* in national terms. There are indeed persons in Aceh, Papua, and elsewhere who see themselves as *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians, as well as many ethnic Chinese. This does not mean that there are not separatists who reject the idea that they are "Indonesian"; it means that there exist Acehnese and Papuan persons who, like some Javanese, Makassarese, Chinese, or otherwise ethnolocalized persons, also see themselves as *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians. While neither I nor my interlocutors know of ethnolocalized *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivities (like "*gay* Javanese" or "*lesbi* Bugis"), my argument is descriptive, not prescriptive. Ethnolocalized *gay* or *lesbi* subject positions could form in the future, which would raise fascinating new questions. However, it seemed that my methodology should not render local what *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians have experienced as national.

Another possible misconstrual of this analysis concerns exceptionality: one could argue that *gay* and *lesbi* may be irreducible to ethnolocality, but that they are the exception that proves how most "Indonesians" are first and foremost ethnic. Yet it is clear that many persons in the archipelago who are not *gay* or *lesbi* see themselves in Indonesian as well as ethnolocalized terms. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians exemplify, not exceptionalize, emergent patterns of national culture.

I hope to leave the reader with some sense of the great camaraderie, joy, and creativity of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds, but these are also worlds of heartbreak and pain, and what the future holds for *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians remains uncertain. Therefore, I have gone to great lengths to protect the confidentiality of my interlocutors. All names except for that of Dédé Oetomo are pseudonyms, and details of persons, places, and situations have been altered.

SECOND PRELUDE: NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS

*Setting*: Surabaya, capital of the province of East Java. *Place*: near the Joyoboyo bus terminal, not far from the city zoo. *Time*: Saturday, October 18, 1997, ten o’ clock at night or so.

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I have come here via minibus with some *gay* friends after watching a performance by male transvestites at the Taman Remaja amusement park. Paying our fare of 450 rupiah, we exit the terminal—an open space filled with over a hundred minibuses—and walk down a narrow street that runs alongside the Brantas River, a still sweep of inky water winding through Surabaya to the sea on the north edge of town. Under blue tarps, sellers in stalls lit with harsh fluorescent light watch over shoes, shirts, and music cassettes. Past the stalls the street gets quiet; almost no traffic here. To the right minibuses are lined up like locomotive cars, drivers sleeping in front seats or ambling to the river with plastic buckets, gathering brown water to rinse away a day’s dirt and dust. A railing runs along the left side of the street, four feet high and made of horizontal metal bars with vertical supports. Two working streetlights filter dimly through the branches of large trees lining the road. Beyond the trees, the river slides along silently, streaked with white and gold from the lights of the shantytown on the other bank, wooden houses perched on stilts right over the river. A child laughs in the distance.

The bus station now at a safe remove, we see the expected groups of men extending down the street for a hundred yards or so, sitting or leaning on the barrier, half-hidden in shadow from the trees above. *This* left side of the street, past *this* bus station, along *this* railing, at *this* time of night, is *Texas*. Under this name, which plays off the term "*terminal*," Texas has been one of the best-known places for *gay* men to meet in Surabaya since the 1980s. Its popularity has ebbed and peaked over the years (men desirous of other men have met in this area since at least the 1920s), but in the late 1990s Texas was quite popular. Like most of these places in Surabaya, Texas is named for a locale outside Indonesia. When you come here you are also, in a sense, elsewhere.

The first groups of men we encounter at Texas stare with hungry interest; only one or two smile in recognition. This part of Texas nearest the bus station is usually dominated by closed (*tertutup*) men; they generally come here once a week at most. Toward the middle of Texas the groups of men get larger and denser. While men in this area are sometimes looking for a sex partner, most seek conversation; indeed, many come here with friends or lovers. As a *gay* man put it one night, "I like to go to Texas because even if we have a partner we can still feel alone, feel how narrow this world is!"

Entering the central part of Texas I see a man I’ll call Anwar, someone I saw year after year; he’s been coming to this spot since the early 1980s. Anwar is the kind of person you could talk to about problems in your life—about a boyfriend who is having sex with another man, about pressure from your family to marry a woman (or your own desire to marry), about missing a partner who’s moved elsewhere in search of work. You

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could also depend on Anwar to entertain you with his effeminate clowning around. Swishing from side to side, exaggerating his hip motion in a hilarious way, he will wag his finger at someone, berating them good-naturedly and then suddenly breaking out in an a cappella song before returning to a monologue. One thing that seems to make him so hilarious is that he can poke fun while bringing up larger issues. On this night I find Anwar in the midst of a group of about twenty *gay* men, engaging everyone in uproarious conversation, when suddenly his head snaps to the right and he turns his attention to a space about ten yards down the road where a large tree provides shelter from the feeble street lamp—a darker periphery of Texas. Anwar has noticed a young man sitting on a motorcycle, someone no one knows. The young man sits in shy silence, watching the scene with apparent fascination and discomfort.

Never one to let an opportunity for drama slip by, Anwar takes the young man’s shyness as a challenge. Dropping whatever line of commentary had been occupying him to that point, Anwar walks right up to the young man, who now appears positively embarrassed as all the eyes of Texas turn to see what Anwar will do. Anwar begins with a few short, teasing sentences, each of which contains a term in *gay* language: "my, isn’t he young (*brondong*)!" "You are so handsome (*cucok*)!" The young man responds with a fetching but silent smile. Anwar concludes that the young man doesn’t know *gay* language, is too shy to speak, or both. Clearly, more effort will be required to obtain the desired entertainment effect.

Anwar suddenly stands up straight and formal as a government official, turns one fist into an impromptu microphone, raises his voice to just below a shout so all Texas can hear, and taking on the measured and mellifluous tones of a television reporter, says "Are you new here?"

The young man answers haltingly into Anwar’s "microphone": "Yes, this is my first time at this place."

Anwar’s voice shifts to that of a cheery game show host: "well, you just keep coming back here, okay? Come back here tomorrow and it will be even more busy. This place will make you happy. Just bring your National Identity Card and we’ll get you a second, *gay* National Identity Card. Bring some forms and two photographs and fifteen thousand rupiah and we’ll get it for you." The audience bursts out in laughter: one shouts "What will he get with his new *gay* National Identity Card?" and Anwar answers: "A man!"

GLOBALIZATION, SIMILITUDE, AND DIFFERENCE

Similitude is the ultimate challenge both homosexuality and globalization pose to social theory; in both cases we appear to be confronted with a

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"desire for the same." As a result, a central theoretical project of this book is to develop an archipelagic framework for understanding similitude and difference. It is not enough to ask if globalization is "making the world more the same" or "making the world more different," because how we decide when two things are "the same" or "different" is itself part of what is being globalized. Our rubrics for determining similitude and difference are not exterior to the object of study—globalization itself. It is in recognizing this fact that the anthropological study of globalization has the potential to move beyond, on one hand, the diffusionism that remains a legacy of the Boasian tradition (and indeed goes back to Herder), and, on the other hand, the scientistic evolutionism that comes down to us from Tylor and Spencer, among others.

Anthropologists have tended to see sameness as a threat and difference as a solution, the self-prescribed medicine for what ails both anthropology (with its poorly thought-out evolutionisms) and Western culture (with its racisms and sexisms). In this sense anthropology has been (and remains) largely heteronormative, in the etymological sense of *hetero* as "different." It seems that we have reached a point of theoretical and political exhaustion with this trope of difference. The idea that we should value difference is nowadays either taken up as self-evident by all parties (even the Religious Right, for instance, talks about the value of difference) or imagined to be an inadequate formulation for the post–9/11 world. The multiculturalist trope that asks for the recognition of difference meets its limit when it encounters forms of incommensurability that refuse the sameness upon which that difference depends (Povinelli 2002). Our failure to realize that the sameness/difference binarism is also our "folk" model contributes to this conceptual logjam. An unfortunate consequence of the focus on difference within anthropology and cultural studies has been the ceding of similitude to sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, permitting these reductive and deeply compromised modes of inquiry to lay claim to categories of encompassment—the human, the universal, the panhistoric. And if languages of difference were central to the colonial encounter (Stoler 1995), experiences of postcoloniality are marked by rubrics in which difference reacquaints itself with similitude, regarding it with the skeptical familiarity of a long-lost love.

The task is not to reclaim sameness or the universal, but rather to scrutinize the very sameness/difference binarism and imagine alternative rubrics for knowledge that sidestep this binarism altogether. How can we use the methodologies and theoretical insights of cultural anthropology to do more than call for context? During "gay marriage" debates of the early 2000s, for instance, anthropologists intervened largely by showing that heterosexual monogamous marriage is not the only form of marriage worldwide. How could anthropology have contributed in ways other

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than this demonstration of difference? What may push anthropology toward new relevance and insights may be not just the call for valuing difference, but a challenge to the implicit logics of sameness and difference that structure both the knowledge claims of anthropology and the systems of inequality that operate through the management of difference. Systems of oppressive power do not always obliterate difference; they also work through producing difference. I am thus interested in the theoretical and political possibilities of an anthropological deployment of the Other not predicated on difference. Contemporary dynamics of globalization demand an anthropology of similitude that does not reinscribe dominant subject positions (be they white, male, Western, heterosexual, or elite).

My analysis reexamines four binarisms shaping the literature on globalization and nonnormative sexualities and genders outside the West. The first binarism concerns genres of this literature. One focuses on political mobilizations that recall Western gay and lesbian movements. This genre tends to produce stories of convergence, assuming that terms like *gay* or *lesbi* are spread through international activism. The second genre focuses on "traditional" nonnormative sexualities. At its most romanticizing, such work takes the form of ethnocartography, "looking for evidence of same-gender sexuality and gendered ambiguity in ‘other’ societies … [this] ‘salvage anthropology’ of indigenous homosexualities remains largely insulated from important new theoretical work on postcolonial relations" (Weston 1993:341, 344). A second binarism consists of two recurrent reductionisms. The first—the reductionism of similitude—sees these persons as "just like" gay and lesbian persons in a homogenized West. They represent the transcendental gay man or lesbian woman, characterized by a supposed essential similitude that has been there all along, hidden under a veneer of exotic cultural difference. The second reductionism—the reductionism of difference—assumes these persons suffer from false consciousness and are traitors to their "traditional" sexualities, victims of (and, ultimately, collaborators with) a global gay imperialism. They represent the Westernized, inauthentic gay or lesbian. From this perspective these persons have an essential difference that is masked by terms like *gay* and *lesbi.* The third binarism concerns spatial scale: nonnormative sexualities and genders outside the West are seen as foundationally local phenomena (altered or not by globalization), or as foundationally global phenomena (altered or not by local contexts). The fourth binarism concerns celebratory or pessimistic attitudes toward globalization.

The four binarisms tend to line up as follows: gay and lesbian movements, structured by similitude, are assumed to be globalizing and positively affected by globalization, while traditional and indigenous cultures, structured by difference, are assumed to be localizing and negatively affected by globalization. This produces the two dominant tropes of globalization and sexuality, which I term "Gay Planet" and "McGay" (as in "McDonald’s-ization") ([table 1–1](#u10_ch01-tab1-1)). I set these up intentionally as straw men; while there is much work on nonnormative sexualities and genders outside the West that demonstrates a much more subtle understanding of globalization (including most of the works cited in this book), these tropes remain prevalent in academic and everyday discussions of sexuality and globalization. Both tropes oversimplify. The limitations of the Gay Planet trope are evident in its teleological assumption that nonnormative sexualities and genders worldwide will converge on Western models of identity and politics. Less discussed are the limits of the McGay trope’s doggedly pessimistic interpretation of globalizing processes.

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## TABLE 1–1.Two tropes of globalization and sexuality.



The possibility of a nonthreatening and nonantagonistic relationship to processes of cultural globalization is almost completely absent in the literature on globalization and nonnormative sexualities and genders outside the West.[6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns6) This reflects a common misconception associated with the reductionism of difference: namely, that gay men and lesbian women are products of the executive, jet-setting classes. Here the cultural effects of globalization are thought to correlate with class in a linear fashion: the richer you are, the more you are affected by globalization, and thus the less authentic you are. The proletarian becomes the new indigene. As any Nike factory worker in Indonesia could tell you, however, class is poorly correlated with the degree to which someone is impacted by globalizing forces. Often it is precisely the rich who have the time to acquire "tradition" (for instance, by learning "traditional" dances and music).

Understanding *gay* and *lesbi* lives will require reconfiguring the binarisms that structure the tropes of Gay Planet and McGay. A central goal of this book is to develop a third way of conceptualizing the apparent globalization of "gay" and "lesbian" that avoids these tropes. A first step is to reconsider what "globalization" means. A useful preliminary definition is "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social

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and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (Waters 1995:3); in other words, who you are is less determined by where you’re at. Globalization, however, is more than a definition; it is a narrative—a story with settings, a cast of characters, and a plot that moves through time. Gibson-Graham (1996) notes its similarity to rape narratives: both present a masculinized entity (the rapist, global capitalism) as always already in a position of dominance and a feminized entity (the rape victim, the local) in a position of weakness. This is more than a metaphorical parallel: as narratives about relationality and transfer, stories of sexuality are stories of globalization and vice versa. Gibson-Graham hopes that "a queer perspective can help to unsettle the consonances and coherences of the narrative of global commodification" (144). This narrative of globalization as rape underlies the McGay trope.

My analysis deconstructs the reductionisms of similitude and difference by insisting that the issue is not the world’s becoming more the same or more different under globalization (neither homogenization nor heterogenization per se), but the transformation of the very yardsticks by which one decides whether something is the same or different in the first place; that is, reconfigurations of the grid of similitude and difference. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1970) characterized shifts in Western European thought in terms of conceptualizations of similitude and difference. What analytic purchase might be gained by positing, under some circumstances at least, a postcolonial order of things in which relationships between same and other were characterized not as boundaries transgressed but as boundaries blurred, not as borders crossed but as borderlands inhabited, not as spheres adjoined but as archipelagoes intertwined?

In other words, what is needed is an approach that recognizes how conceptions of similitude and difference do not stand outside the globalizing processes they seek to describe.[7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns7) The very notion of "cross-cultural research" must be rethought when the cultures in question have been "crossing" in advance of the ethnographic encounter. This challenges dominant theories of knowledge, since difference typically constitutes the "Aha!" moment justifying knowledge production in the Western academy. *Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities break the equation of "the local" with similitude and "the global" with difference. This is not a cosmopolitanism by which national subjects (usually urban elites) imagine themselves as part of a community transcending the nation. Nor is it a diaspora in which gay or lesbian selves disperse from an originary homeland, or a hybridity in which two prior unities turn difference into similitude via an "implicit politics of heterosexuality" (Young 1995:25). Careful attention to *gay* and *lesbi* lives will show conceptions of selfhood, desire, and belonging that transcend the tropes of McGay and Gay Planet. This shows the limits

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of approaches that frame the emergence of postcolonial gay and lesbian subjectivities in terms of dualisms of rupture versus continuity, indicating instead how "what is happening in Bangkok, Rio, and Nairobi is the creating of new forms of understanding and regulating the sexual self, but it is unlikely that they will merely repeat those forms which were developed in the Atlantic world" (Altman 2001:100; see also Jackson 2004). In this regard my analysis shares a theoretical agenda with anthropological work on Indonesia that is concerned to "avoid the pitfalls of both … an essentialized native identity celebrated for its heroic resistance to the incursions of externalized powers—or of the complete loss of self in which cultural alterity would be thoroughly subsumed, dominated, and erased" (Spyer 1996:27). Like Spyer and others, "What I hope to show instead is a third possibility, one in which the inescapable insertion within a wider world is infused and, at times, unsettled by the sense of coming from a ‘different’ place" (Spyer 1996:27).

THIRD PRELUDE: AT THE RESTAURANT

*Setting*: the north coast of Bali, where lush southern vistas give way to dry slopes of the great Agung volcano. *Place*: a tourist zone outside the city of Singaraja. *Time*: Monday evening, slow and quiet, a sky of brilliant stars save a black wall to the south where Agung lies as if in wait.

Ita’s family runs a restaurant at the end of a lane snaking toward the ocean, lined with shops hawking the familiar paraphernalia of any tourist area in Bali—souvenirs, film processing, guided tours. Like many tourist restaurants, the main dining area is an open pavilion, with the kitchen and owner’s home in back. Tonight Ita has Tracy Chapman, one of her favorite lesbian Western singers, on the stereo. Save for a Western couple eating dinner, the restaurant is empty of patrons. This is one of the main places that *lesbi* women along this stretch of the coast come to socialize. Tonight there are ten *lesbi* women sitting around an empty table at one end of the restaurant, including Ita and her lover, Tuti. Ita, thirty years old, has been with Tuti for ten years. "When we met Tuti was still in high school and I had just graduated. I moved here from my village a couple miles away when my parents built this restaurant. Tuti works at her parents’ souvenir shop just a few buildings down; that’s how I met her. For almost ten years I didn’t go back to my village, even though it’s so close you can walk there. Because whenever I’d go back, people would always pester me about getting married: ‘Where’s your boyfriend?’ And they would tell me that I was ruining the family name, and stuff like that. Now I go back, because they don’t pressure me to marry anymore."

Tuti sits with Ita, noticeably affectionate in the safety of the restaurant: one hand holding Ita’s hand, the other on Ita’s knee. Tuti says: "I’m

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twenty-seven years old and was raised in this village. My parents are still here too; I work at their art shop down the street. From the moment I saw Ita I wanted to be with her. I was afraid she’d be mad at me and reject me, so I approached her slowly, got to know her, and soon it was clear that the feelings were mutual. Now we sleep together every night, either here at her house or mine. My parents still pressure me to get married, but they know about us and are okay with our relationship. I think they’re just used to it because we’ve been together so long. The only one who doesn’t accept it is one of my older siblings. He still gets really mad. So if he comes to the art shop, Ita runs back to this restaurant. I’d like to coordinate the *lesbi* women here, but it’s hard. But what does happen is that we get together in the evenings, like we’re doing right now, to give each other advice. And I’ve found work for a couple *lesbi* women at my parents’ souvenir shop. Most of our *lesbi* friends here are very closed. When we meet as a group, it’s always at my souvenir shop, or here at the restaurant, because the others are too afraid to have us over as a group. *Lesbi* women have a hard time getting a job around here, especially if they look masculine. It’s hard for us to meet each other, find out about each other, because women can’t go out alone at night."

Irma and her girlfriend have been sitting next to Ita and Tuti this whole time. They’ve come to the restaurant tonight to ask for advice: Irma’s parents have threatened to throw her out of the family unless she ends the relationship. Irma says, "I said I had stopped seeing her, that now I come to the coast just to work. Now I’m due to go back to my village and they’ll expect me to bring back presents as proof that I’m working. But of course I’m not working and I don’t have any money. So what should I do?" Ita talks to Irma about what she calls the "right to love": "You should tell her parents, ‘If you say I can’t be with her, why don’t you just kill me at the same time and be done with it.’ Maybe that will make them realize how you feel." This night, as so many other nights, *lesbi* women talk about belonging. It might sound at first like a language of tradition: parents, villages, and shame. Yet these women call themselves *lesbi*, talk about the "right to love," socialize not only with each other but with *gay* men, and find it perfectly reasonable that a gay Western anthropologist, not unlike the occasional gay or lesbian Western tourists they meet, should want to join them at the restaurant for a night’s conversation.

POSTCOLONIALITY AND POSTMODERNITY

[Part 1](#u09_pt01) of this book, "The Indonesian Subject," lays the groundwork for my cumulative argument. Following this introduction, [chapter 2](#u11_ch02) addresses the history of "homosexuality" in Indonesia up to the 1980s. [Chapter 3](#u12_ch03) brings together the fact that most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians

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come to their sexualities through mass media, and a recent debate in which the dubbing of foreign television shows into the Indonesian language was banned on the grounds Indonesians would no longer be able to tell where their culture ends and the West begins, to analyze how the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions shape the lives of those Indonesians who take them up as lived categories of experience.

[Part 2](#u13_pt02), "Opening to *Gay* and *Lesbi* Worlds," turns in greater detail to the everyday lives of contemporary *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians. [Chapter 4](#u14_ch04) explores desire, sexual practices, and romantic relationships, as well as the fact that most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians marry "heterosexually" and may not see this as inconsistent with being *gay* or *lesbi*. I continue my theorization of an anthropology of similitude through these ethnographic materials and discuss how the shift from arranged to "love" marriages in modern Indonesia, and the link between this shift and ideals of the good citizen, has powerfully linked heterosexuality and choice with national belonging. [Chapter 5](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u15_ch05) explores the differing geographies of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds, their intersections, and how they are influenced by Indonesian national culture. [Chapter 6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u16_ch06) examines the "style" of being *gay* or *lesbi*, from gender performativity to language use. It links this to the idea of "national style" and explores the relationship between practice and subjectivity. I also address the place of religion in *gay* and *lesbi* lives.

[Part 3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u17_pt03), "Sexuality and Nation," builds on the ethnographic, historical, and theoretical work of [parts 1](#u09_pt01) and [2](#u13_pt02) to examine the imbrication of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities with national discourse. [Chapter 7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u18_ch07) examines how the "archipelago concept" and "family principle," two key ideologies of the postcolonial nation-state, have shaped the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians stand as the greatest success story of the postcolonial Indonesian state—the truest example of national subjectivities, irreducible to ethnicity, locality, or tradition. Yet as success stories the state never intended to facilitate into being, they are also doomed to failure since they cannot be ethnolocalized. They are of the "archipelago" but ultimately belong to no "island" and thus do not "belong." This shows how discourses of race and ethnicity are pertinent not just to the United States, but to that subset of the "new queer studies" that examines sexuality outside the West (Manalansan 2003:6). [Chapter 8](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u19_ch08) summarizes the theoretical and ethnographic arguments of the book, addressing its broader implications for sexuality, national belonging, and globalization.

While the term "postcolonial" can be problematic (Shohat 1992), I find it crucial for understanding the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions: "its theoretical value … lies precisely in its refusal of this ‘here’ and ‘there,’ ‘then’ and ‘now,’ ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ perspective" (Hall 1996:247). My theorization of Indonesian postcoloniality begins from a dilemma: not only Indonesia’s

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boundaries but much of its bureaucracy, economic structure, and even "cultural" elements were produced through the colonial encounter. The dilemma is one of authenticity: is "Indonesia" nothing more than a new label for the Dutch East Indies; is it merely a derivative discourse (Chatterjee 1986)?

Postcolonial rhetoric unites state and nation: the country is no longer occupied by a foreign power; rulers and ruled are one. Postcolonial states share with their former overlords a use of "the family" not only as metaphor but as "a cheap and efficient surrogate for the state" itself (Mosse 1985:20). As Mosse notes in his study of nationalism and sexuality in Europe, the family is particularly useful for inculcating and monitoring notions of sexual propriety in a context where respectability is seen as crucial. In the Indonesian context, concerns over respectability often take the form of debates over authenticity and belonging.

Beyond a foundation in heteronormativity, perhaps the only common element all postcolonial contexts share is an understanding of modernity as the goal toward which the nation-state should strive while preserving its unique "traditions." *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians themselves speak of being "*modern*," a highly visible concept in Indonesian public culture. Increasingly, anthropologists and other social researchers have taken up modernity as a topic of investigation under the rubric of "alternative modernities." In doing so they seek to transcend an earlier modernization paradigm that framed the modern as the realization of a historical teleology based in the West, in favor of exploring how modernity is reconfigured in non-Western contexts. The body of scholarship is so large as to constitute "modernity" as a new ethnographic present—increasingly, it stands in for "culture" itself (Rutherford 2003a:93). I thus locate this book within a larger field of interest in modernity within Asian studies. Asians are consuming modernity (Breckenridge 1995), inhabiting modernity (Chakrabarty 2002), making modernity (Das 2000), swallowing modernity (Mintz 1998), performing modernity (Schein 1999), overcome by modernity (Harootunian 2002), entangling with modernity (Spyer 2000), messianicially modern (Rutherford 2003b:137–171), suitably modern (Liechty 2003), or simply "being modern" (Vickers 1996). Modernity in Asia is at large (Appadurai 1996), alternative (S. Brenner 1996), translated (Liu 1995), with its mediums (Morris 2000), imagined (Rodgers 1991), linked to matriliny (Stivens 1996), or simply "other" (Rofel 1999).[8](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns8)

There has been little critical attention to this interest in modernity; for instance, Steedly’s review on the state of culture theory in Southeast Asia makes no mention of it, despite its importance to her own work (Steedly 1999, 2000). The growth of interest in "alternative modernities" demands an exploration of how this very notion of a fractured and reconfigurable

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modernity is postmodern and can thus destabilize the normative Western white heterosexual male subject (Massey 1994:215). Postmodernity is a specific, if debated, historical phenomenon linked to the loss of faith in human perfectibility and progress in the wake of world wars, decolonization, and a shifting global economic order (Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991; Lyotard 1984). One aspect of the collapse of metanarratives is the possibility of multiple modernities, "alternative" to each other and with no overarching expectation of synthesis. There has been a striking retreat from the anthropology of postmodernity, perhaps induced by the lamentable vulgarization of "postmodern" from a specific theory of political economy, representation, and culture to an epithet hurled at methodologies or writing strategies one finds difficult to apprehend.[9](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns9) Yet what is the anthropology of alternative modernities if not an anthropology of postmodernity? I wish to banalize *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians and indicate their embeddedness in the general trajectories of Indonesian public culture. For these Indonesians *difference* is no longer isomorphic with *distance. Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are imagined not in terms of concentric spheres of decreasing familiarity, but archipelagically; someone thousands of miles away might be "closer" than someone next door who is not *gay* or *lesbi*. An ethnographic investigation of *gay* and *lesbi* experience holds the promise of illuminating how a "modern" way of being persists at the intersection of postcoloniality and globalization. A stance of respect toward the Indonesian subject is the precondition for any such investigation.

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# CHAPTER TWO

Historical Temptations

WHO NEEDS HISTORY?

Subject positions, the topic of this book, do not always have names, but like any aspect of culture they always have a history. They come into being at a certain period of time, which shapes them, and they also change through time as long as they persist. Subject positions also always contain spatial scales within them (N. Brenner 1998; Harvey 2000). To be a "Yale student" has a different spatial scale than to be a "New Yorker" or "Japanese." The various subject positions through which one lives at any point in time may not have isomorphic spatial scales: one’s sense of self as a youth could be global, as a man local, and as a laborer national, all at the same time. Or to be a youth could be both local and global at the same time, intersecting. Thus, three crucial issues in the ethnographic investigation of subject positions are (1) their historicity (that is, the way they are shaped by their embedded notions of their own history and what counts as history); (2) their spatial scales; and (3) how they intersect with other subject positions and the histories and spatial scales of those other subject positions. This chapter focuses on the first of these issues.

Only since the 1970s or so have people in Indonesia called themselves *gay* or *lesbi*, yet many Westerners seek a clear temporal trajectory connecting *gay* and *lesbi* with "indigenous" homosexualities. This deep-seated desire for unbroken history has many precedents in the Western tradition, most notably the Old Testament chains of "begats" that establish legitimacy through a patriline. While on rare occasions I have encountered *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians who share this concern with a clear temporal trajectory, what demands explanation is that most do not. It is not a *meaningful* connection; for *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, belonging, recognition, and authenticity are legitimated not through history but by the performance of good deeds (*prestasi*) in the present. Since this chapter concerns the historicity of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions, it is built around an empty center, a McGuffin—Hitchcock’s term for a plot element that is of intense interest (to Westerners, in this case) but has no content. The point is not to unearth the hidden past of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities, but to explore contingent contexts of homosexual desire in the archipelago—and why such "history" matters to the Western reader, where notions of

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the "archive" as scene of legitimation remain powerful, and archives are often mined for their content without attention to the affective assumptions embedded in their form (Derrida 1996; Stoler 2002a).

"Indonesia," after all, is a self-consciously novel concept. The postcolonial nation came into being with the *proklamasi* (proclamation) of Sukarno on August 17, 1945; nationalism dates back only another forty years or so. The term "Indonesia" was coined by George W. Earl in 1850 and first used by his colleague James R. Logan that same year, but it was not used as a political term by "natives" of the archipelago until April 1917 (Avé 1989:220; R. Jones 1973:100–103; Nagazumi 1978:28). It is quite certain that no one in the archipelago called themselves *gay* or *lesbi* in the year 900, 1400, 1900, or probably even 1960. Yet by the early 1980s *gay* and *lesbi* existed in the archipelago as nationally distributed subject positions. These subject positions challenge narrativizing; their "history" seems to be all change and no continuity. This threatens the dualism of change (modernity) and continuity (tradition) that has been a motif of Indonesianist historiography (Benda 1972).

This problem—"can there be a history of sexuality?"—is not unique to Indonesia; it has been the topic of debate in scholarship on Western sexualities. But it takes on new urgency when globalization and postcoloniality are brought into the discussion. The most careful scholarship on Western homosexualities takes continuity into consideration while foregrounding "the irreducible cultural and historical specificities of the present" (Halperin 2002:17). In a postcolonial context, it can appear that without an unbroken historical timeline one must view gay and lesbian non-Westerners as derivative, converging on a single global conception of homosexuality.

One response to the problem of radical change accepts the premise that an unbroken historical timeline is needed to establish authenticity. Since the nation-state form is deeply bound up with conceptions of modernity, the idea of tradition is a central paradox of national thinking: nation-states are young, but they imagine themselves as of great antiquity (Anderson 1983:5). Tradition is the shadow modernity casts back in time to see itself whole. Often it is postcolonial nation-states that display a particular concern with an unbroken historical timeline because this appears to bracket the colonial encounter. Although one does not assume that a Western man born in 1980 is first shaped by conceptions of homosexuality dominant in the 1920s before calling himself "gay" in 2001, this response suggests that gay and lesbian non-Westerners are first and foremost products of indigenous locality—as if the history of a person repeats, in miniature, the ostensible history of a society. This developmentalist perspective assumes that non-Western "homosexualities" like *gay* and *lesbi* originate in homosexualities and transgenderisms of the past. It

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makes it difficult to understand how a *lesbi* woman in northern Bali could say "I don’t know of any cases in the past where there were actually women having sex with each other" and not find this a cause for concern.

A more theoretically informed response to the problem of radical change questions the need for "the narrative continuity of history and identity" (Clifford 1988:341). Can there be a subject position without a direct historical predecessor? Is such a subject position necessarily less authentic? How can one think historically about the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions without assuming that what came before is the foundation of what comes after? Concerns for "discovering gay and lesbian history" sometimes participate in the widespread assumption that such history always already exists; that its real or apparent absence is inevitably problematic; that its existence by definition has validating effects; and that these effects are necessary to the sexualities in question. This tempting chain of reasoning creates the desire for narrative continuity and delegitimates sexualities for whom such continuity really does not exist (and is not only waiting to be uncovered).

I am not saying that historical research on nonnormative sexualities and genders is misguided, but that tradition is not the same thing as history and that proper historiography requires being open to a variety of causal relationships between the past and present, including no relationship at all. There may be no "perfect path" between past and present, just as there may be no *genealogical* lineage between "gay" and "lesbian" sexualities in the West and non-West (Boellstorff 1999). A less reproductive and heteronormative metaphor is needed in place of the genealogical grid. One such metaphor I develop in this book is that of the archipelago.

Forging histories of nonnormative sexualities and genders outside the West presents methodological as well as theoretical challenges. While the barriers to historical research on homosexuality in the United States may only "appear, at first glance, to be unusually daunting" (Chauncey 1994:365), outside the West much more than appearances are involved. The available documentation is often so minimal that one is forced to make do with limited sources and craft the best narrative possible (Jackson 1999a:369). Written documents by persons from the archipelago now called "Indonesia" are primarily limited to courtly texts. These sometimes address homosexuality and transgenderism, but not in a sustained manner; it is unclear to what extent they reflect everyday life outside royal circles. One can often read between the lines of colonial documents to find data concerning homosexuality and transgenderism (e.g., Proschan 2002). In Indonesia, the remarkable lack of colonial documentation on male (and female) homosexuality underscores how Dutch civil law paid little attention to sodomy until the end of the three-century presence of the Dutch in the archipelago. Stoler (1995:96) notes that her own "silence

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on this issue and the prominent place I give to heterosexuality reflects my long-term and failed efforts to identify any sources that do more than assume or obliquely allude to this ‘evil,’ thereby making the other ‘lesser’ evils of concubinage and prostitution acceptable."[1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns10)

This chapter examines past nonnormative sexualities and genders in what is now called Indonesia without assuming that this past contains the present in embryonic form. *Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities can represent an innovation, even a radical break, with understandings of sexuality in Indonesia and still be authentic if they are conceptualized in terms of conjunctural, "dubbed" histories of homosexual desire.

RITUAL AND DRAMA

Scholars of sexuality in what is now called Indonesia have tended to focus on what might be called "indigenous" homosexualities and transgenderisms. The best known is probably the *bissu* subject position, associated with Bugis culture in southern Sulawesi. Bissus are linked to pre-Islamic traditions and first entered the Western written record with the visit of Antonio de Paiva to Sulawesi in 1545. They appear in sources from the 1600s, as well as the travelogue of the "white raja" James Brooke in 1840 (Andaya 2000:41; Bleys 1995:117; Pelras 1996:56).

At present it is typically assumed that bissus are male transvestites (Hamzah 1978:6; Pelras 1996:165–167), but female bissus appear in Bugis mythology (Pelras 1996:83), and historically the majority of bissus were apparently women (in the *I La Galigo* myth cycle, for instance, thirty-two of the forty original bissus were women, including We Tenriabeng, twin sister of the cycle’s hero Sawerigading).[2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns11) To the present day there are women bissus (known by the terms *bissu makkunrai* or *core-core*) whose presence is required for certain rituals (Lathief 2004:48–49). Although refraining from sex has long been a way for bissus to protect and increase their power, and despite the fact that bissus sometimes married women, since at least the sixteenth century most bissus have been male transvestites who engage in sex with men (Pelras 1996:83).[3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns12) Following what is usually at least three years of training (Lathief 2004:43), bissus historically engaged in a lifelong profession of guarding royal regalia and conducting rituals for nobles, particularly for life events like childbirth and weddings, as well as rituals for the fertility of the rice fields. In performing these activities, bissus would dress in an androgynous fashion, combining men’s and women’s clothing. One of the best-known bissu rituals involves trance proven through *maggiri*, where bissus attempt to stab themselves with ceremonial knives (*krises*); if the bissus’ bodies are truly possessed by gods (*dewatas*), the knives will not be able to enter

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(Graham 2003). At present, however, this ritual is not performed by all bissu groups (for instance, it is not performed in the Bone region; Lathief 2004:75).

For several hundred years, bissu rituals coexisted with the Islamic faith now followed by virtually all Bugis. This changed radically with the rise of the Islamic fundamentalist movement of Kahar Muzakar in South Sulawesi in the mid-1960s. One element of this movement, "Operasi Tobat" (Operation Repent), took aim at practices considered un-Islamic, particularly bissu practices. It was also claimed that bissus were in league with the Communist Party of Indonesia, which was in the process of being eliminated by Soeharto’s New Order government. Sacred regalia were burned or thrown in the sea, rituals forbidden, and bissus offered the choice of death or leaving the bissu profession, dressing and working like "normal" men (Lathief 2004:79–80). As a warning, the head bissu of the Bone region, Sanro Makgangke, was decapitated and his head publicly displayed; many other bissus were killed as well.

Since the late 1990s there have been attempts to revitalize bissu practices. In part this reflects the refetishization of *adat* (traditional custom) across the archipelago in the wake of Soeharto’s fall in 1998, supported by new government policies of regional autonomy. This has included the production of at least two documentary films by Westerners on bissus. However, it appears that these attempts to revitalize bissu practices are failing. Bissu rituals have been radically simplified (for instance, the *Mappalili* agrarian ritual in the Segeri region that once took forty days is now conducted in a single night), many rituals are now performed only for tourists, and the rice fields that were once given to the bissu community for income have been taken away and sold (Lathief 2004:69, 87–89, 83–85). Few persons seem interested in becoming bissus any more (Lathief 2004:92); for instance, in one region of South Sulawesi the arrival of a young apprentice to the head bissu was greeted with hope, but the apprentice soon had a falling out with the bissu and left.

In general, the distinction between "bissu" as a ritual professional subject position and "waria" as a male transvestite subject position seems to be breaking down in contemporary South Sulawesi (Lathief 2004:47); virtually all persons now sometimes called "bissu" in reality make their living through bridal makeup (a national occupation for warias) and as traditional healers, not through rituals. What ritual function remains for bissus has largely shifted from serving nobility to conducting a wide range of rituals for commoners—from insuring a safe pilgrimage to Mecca to a successful harvest (Graham 2003). It appears that contemporary bissus are being caught up in the same state rhetorics of belonging that are central to waria, *gay*, and *lesbi* subjectivities. Good deeds on behalf of "the people" are what *gay* men, *lesbi* women, and warias term *prestasi* and see

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as the means by which they can become accepted members of Indonesian society. The bissu subject position, repackaged as adat (in other words, as Bugis "custom" or "tradition," rather than the property of a privileged class of courtly elites), can act as one of the "islands" of local uniqueness that national culture incorporates into its archipelago of diversity. The irony is that once freed from the hallows of the courts (the number of which was limited) and transferred to the populist realm of adat and its virtually unlimited clientele, the possibility exists for there to be more bissus than ever before (traditionally the number of bissus in any region was limited to forty).

Bissus have often been interpreted as a third gender (e.g., Andaya 2000:34–38) because bissu rituals often involve the combining of male-and female-gendered characteristics. Some Bugis believe that "while bissu[s] are human, on their descent to earth they did not divide into man or woman, but remained a perfect combination of both. This combination ensures bissu[s] retain their connection with the spirit world" (Graham 2003:186). However, the "third gender" concept is theoretically inadequate for conceptualizing most transgenderisms, including bissu. For instance, it does not explain why most contemporary bissus are male or why being bissu does not involve continual transvestism. A better parallel is the fact that "nurse" is assumed to be a female occupation in the West. One must usually specify "male nurse" (like one specifies "female bissu"), but this does not mean that "nurse" or "bissu" is a gender. "Bissu" is a profession, not a sexuality, for which a particular reading of Bugis cosmology implies transvestism if the person involved is seen as male-bodied. Unlike being male or female, you have to have a special calling and engage in training (memorizing phrases and rituals, for instance) to become bissu. That one occasionally encounters the phrase "men, women, and bissus" does not imply that "bissu" is a gender on par with "man" and "woman," any more than the English phrase "men, women, and children" implies that "children" is a third gender.

A different situation occurs in the *warok-gemblak* relationship, which is found in the Ponorogo region of eastern Java. Contemporary persons occupying the *warok* subject position are male actors in a Javanese drama genre known as *reog*. According to legend, the reog drama was created in the thirteenth century by Kelono Sewandono, a prince of the Bantarangin kingdom (near Ponorogo). He proposed to a princess from the Doho kingdom (near Kediri in Central Java), Dewi Songgolangit, who said she would marry him if he created a performance different from any that existed before (Wachirianto 1991:3). Thus the defining practice of waroks is intended to enable heterosexuality. Wearing a tiger mask (the *singabarong*) weighing over one hundred pounds, waroks are identified with bravery,

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pride, aggressive masculinity, and mystical knowledge (S. Murray 1992:166; Wilson 1999). However, in the past waroks could be women as well as men. In one story, a man went to a coffee shop on the side of a quiet road near Ponorogo and flirted improperly with the woman running the shop, who just smiled in return. After asking the woman for a light for his cigarette, the woman went to the back of the shop and then reemerged holding a hot coal in her bare hand. The story "shows how waroks in Ponorogo were not only men" (Hardjomartono 1961:16–17).

Like bissu, the warok subject position still exists and is now identified with men. At present, as seems to have been the case in the past, the mystical power waroks possess depends on avoiding sex with women. While most waroks marry later in life (and thereby lose true warok status), while active as waroks they take on younger men between about eight and sixteen years of age (known as *gemblaks*) as understudies and domestic partners. Historically this was welcomed by the families of gemblaks, as the warok provided gifts (e.g., a cow every year the boy was a gemblak), and the gemblak welcomed the gifts of clothes and schooling given to him the warok, not to mention the chance to participate in reog drama.

Since sexual asceticism is key to warok power, waroks usually insist that they do not have sex with gemblaks; one contemporary warok claimed "with gemblaks the most that can happen is a bit of harmless kissing and cuddling" (Wilson 1999:7; Hardjomartono 1961:17, 24). However, it is well known that other sexual activities can take place between waroks and gemblaks, before the gemblak comes of age, marries heterosexually, and stops being a gemblak, or the warok retires from the stage to marry heterosexually. It appears that during some historical periods "the people of Ponorogo allowed these same-gender relations without any reaction," but gemblaks may have become social outcasts upon reaching adulthood (Hardjomartono 1961:24). Waroks have come under attack from the Dutch colonial period (when reog performances were outlawed), to the beginning of Soeharto’s New Order in the 1960s (when, like bissus, waroks were labeled communist sympathizers and mystics), to the contemporary period, in which a desire for sanitized "tradition" has led to gemblaks being largely replaced in reog dances by young women.[4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns13)

BEYOND THE INDIGENOUS: ETHNOLOCALITY AND ETPS

Bissus and waroks are the kinds of ethnographic objects Westerners like to discover.[5](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns14) Seeming to fit well-established assumptions about culture, tradition, and locality, they appear *indigenous*, which is assumed to mean "different from the West." *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians seem tainted by

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comparison. This underlies three common Western responses to my research on *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians: (1) "Aren’t homosexuals more tolerated in traditional Indonesian culture?" (2) "Here in the West we think in binarisms; they can teach us about fluidity," and (3) "Aren’t *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians mostly Westernized, rich cosmopolitans, not really part of any Indonesian culture?" These responses partake of deeply embedded tropes concerning difference, authenticity, and sexuality that took form through the colonial encounter. For instance, the idea that "Western culture" is trapped in the dualism of two genders while "elsewhere" there are three or five genders says more about Western fantasies of multiculturalism than it does about non-Western gender regimes. Such tropes act as implicit theories of indigenity in gender and sexuality studies: "the researcher’s theoretical perspectives remain embedded in apparently straightforward reports from the field. In effect, the absence of theory becomes the submersion of theory" (Weston 1993:344).

In what appears to be an already globalized world, it is crucial to ask why the category of the "indigenous" is so attractive in the study of non-Western sexualities. While it is obvious that bissus and waroks deserve respect and support, justifying the recognition of sexual and gendered diversity because it is "indigenous" carries two risks. The first is that if one justifies tolerance of bissus or waroks because they are "indigenous" to "Bugis culture" or "Javanese culture," then what is to be done when there are "indigenous cultures" that do not contain such diversity, or are hostile to it? In southern Sulawesi the Makassarese are an ethnic group so closely intertwined with the Bugis that many persons in the region call themselves "Bugis-Makassar" (e.g., Abdullah 1985). Yet in "Makassarese culture" it is said that should a waria pass under the threshold of one’s home, forty days and forty nights of bad luck will follow. If one valorizes bissus (most of whom are warias) in "Bugis culture" based on a discourse of indigenity, there remains no Archimedean point for challenging the denigration of warias in "Makassarese culture" except for a universalizing notion of "human rights," which is precisely the kind of concept "the indigenous" relativizes into nonexistence. The second danger is that the concept of "the indigenous" leaves us with no way to conceptualize self-evidently modern subject positions: they appear as impositions. If indigenity is the lens used to examine non-Western sexualities, *gay* and *lesbi* remain outside the scope of analysis.

Two theoretical steps are needed to transcend conceptions of indigenity as they apply to sexual subjectivities. The first, which is applicable to social inquiry more generally, is a critique of what I term "ethnolocality." The second step is to use the concept of ethnolocality to reconceptualize so-called indigenous or traditional homosexualities. Both for analytical precision and to ironize the empiricism prevalent in many discourses of

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indigenity, I will refer to these as "ethnolocalized homosexual and transvestite professional subject positions," or ETPs for short.

"Ethnolocality" is a concept that links people to place, but in doing so it links them to time as well: the concept plays a central role in the fetishizing of "tradition" that makes it seem necessary for the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions to display historicity. Ethnolocality, which I discuss in more depth elsewhere (Boellstorff 2002), appears to have originated in the colonial encounter, where it was shaped by fears that people living in the archipelago might identify with broader spatial scales like Islam or nationalism. It occupied a middle ground between the "racial dualism" of colonizer versus colonized (Van Doorn 1983) and the myriad localities of the village (Breman 1982). People living in the archipelago would, in theory, be permitted no other forms of spatial imagination. This colonial project of localization is the "sovereign exception" that "traces a threshold" between inside and outside (Agamben 1998:19).

Following Indonesian independence, the spatial scale of ethnolocality lived on through legal, political, and cultural structures that were retained by the postcolonial nation-state. This is exemplified above all in the "archipelago concept," illustrated by Jakarta’s Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park—with its pavilions representing local culture arrayed around an artificial lake with a miniature set of islands representing the Indonesian archipelago—that has captured the imagination of many scholars (e.g., Pemberton 1994; Rutherford 1996; Spyer 1996). Ethnicity and locality are drawn together so as to presuppose each other, and this conjunction becomes the linchpin of state rule (and thus the presumptive ground for "ethnic" or "regional" resistance to state rule). It has become a "doxa"—an apparent isomorphism between a discourse and the world that discourse claims to describe (Bourdieu 1977:164). Anthropological inquiry in Indonesia and elsewhere draws upon this spatial scale: ethnolocality dovetails with dominant conceptions of "the field" that produce anthropology’s subject of study (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). For instance, the Leiden school of anthropology historically delimited Indonesia as a "field of ethnological study" in a purely comparative vein: this field was not the "field" in which one did fieldwork (Josselin de Jong 1977).

Following the collapse of Soeharto’s New Order, some scholars have critiqued "Indonesian studies" for reifying Indonesia as a unit of analysis (Philpott 2000). As far as anthropology is concerned, it seems that the danger is not going far enough—not taking Indonesia seriously as a unit of ethnographic analysis, no more or less problematic than any other spatial scale. It is certainly insufficient to assume that persons within the nation-state of Indonesia see themselves as "Indonesian" in all circumstances. However, it is equally problematic to fall back on ethnolocality as the default mode of representation for culture, naturalizing a spatial

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scale that was not just a result of colonialism, but "the very form of colonial rule" (Mamdani 1996:185).

This possibility is of particular import in the current historical moment, when the future of Indonesia is under debate. This is because ethnographic arguments against the cultural reality of the nation-state bear a disconcerting resemblance to colonial ethnology’s refusal to grant people living in the archipelago the possibility of identifying in terms of spatial scales beyond that of ethnolocality itself. Anthropologists of the region can therefore find themselves complicit with social movements predicated on ethnic absolutism (Gilroy 1993a). While the state is often an oppressive and violent force, at issue is that persons within the nation-state of Indonesia identify in terms of spatial scales beyond ethnolocality, and understanding their "culture" requires taking all of these spatial scales into account, without assuming that any one spatial scale has ontological priority. For instance, chronological priority does not necessarily mean ontological priority: a subjectivity shaped by "global" forces (like Islam) may be experienced as more foundational than one shaped by "local" forces (see Gibson 2000:53). Additionally, showing the necessity of the foreign object or discourse to social life should call ethnolocality itself into question.

It goes without saying that there will be differences between different islands and ethnic groups, just as there is always difference between households or neighborhoods. At issue is the critical analytical moment when the ethnographer determines the boundaries of "the field," deciding at what point the threshold from similitude to difference has been crossed. This is a culturally located act, and in the context of this act, this heuristic compromise, it seems methodologically sound to take into account our interlocutors’ senses of inhabiting subject positions with translocal spatial scales. James Siegel names this compromise when he says, "I want to stress how various Java is. Whatever claims I make about it should be understood to refer to [the city of] Solo alone, relieving me of the tiresome duty to qualify my statements in every instance" (1986:11). Although Siegel is certainly correct in pointing out Java’s diversity, the problem of spatial scale is one of not only overreaching but underreaching. It appears unlikely that Indonesians in Solo, even if ethnically Javanese—living in a city where one main cruising area for *gay* men is known as Manhattan—"refer to Solo alone" in their own cultural worlds. What Siegel points out is the ethnographer’s tiresome duty of looking not only for solid data but also for a methodological and theoretical construction of the field site pitched as closely as possible to the cultural geographies of those whose lives the ethnographer seeks to interpret.

For Indonesian studies, "writing culture" has tended to mean "writing ethnolocality": in the implicit "I was there" move establishing ethnographic

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authority, "there" has indexed an ethnolocalized spatial scale (Rabinow 1986:244). Ethnolocality makes an ethnographic approach to Indonesia appear to overgeneralize by definition—how could we speak ethnographically of "Indonesians"? What about Aceh, troubled by insurgency and natural disaster, or the highland peoples of Sulawesi, or any group "distant" from the physical site where the ethnographer conducts research? This way of thinking elides how all ethnographic work is based upon discerning broadly held cultural logics from intensive work with a limited number of interlocutors and then qualifying one’s claims accordingly. No ethnographers ever speak to all persons within the spatial scale that they use to conceptualize their work, be that "Torajan," "Acehnese," or a subregion. To critique ethnolocality is not to deliver an apologia for the nation, nor is it to deny the importance of the conceptual work ethnolocality performs in contemporary Indonesian life. It is, instead, to write against the foreclosure of debate, to open a space from which to imagine new geographies of identification, to equip oneself to respond better to an already globalized world.

The concept of ethnolocality permits a more precise definition of subject positions like bissu and warok. I have called these "indigenous" homosexualities and transgenderisms, but a more accurate (and appropriately playful) term is "ethnolocalized homosexual and transvestite professional" subject positions (ETPs). Bissu and warok illustrate features of ETPs throughout Indonesia: they are found only among some ethnic groups; are linked to ritual or performance; and are usually for men, for part of the life span, and do not absolve the persons who take them up from "heterosexual" marriage. It is a misnomer to speak of ETPs as "sexualities" since they are above all professions (usually involving sexual asceticism), not categories of selfhood organized around sexual desire.

When beginning my fieldwork I supposed many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would have originally identified themselves in terms of an ETP, since they are so prominent in the Indonesianist literature on homosexuality. This led to the corollary hypothesis that as a result of such identifications, I would find differing *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions based upon the ETPs prevalent in any one area. I was mistaken. In only two cases have I known someone who saw themselves both in terms of an ETP and as *gay* or waria; most of my interlocutors were not aware of ETPs even if they existed among their ethnic group. Often it is only through the scholarship of Western academics that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians know of ETPs at all (Petkovic 1999). I have occasionally heard *gay* men or warias talk about how society should accept them because bissus or waroks have existed "for hundreds of years." This is not surprising given that "the narrative continuity of history and identity" remains a crucial way to claim authenticity.

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What stands out is how rarely such claims are made: after all, these Indonesians see themselves not as bissus or waroks but as *gay* or *lesbi*. This lack of a link to conceptions of indigenity demands theorization—more than just "globalization" is at work. One reason there has been so little scholarship on *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians is that if we view the archipelago through an ethnolocalized lens, they (and many other aspects of contemporary Indonesian cultures) are rendered invisible.

COURTS AND TRAVELERS

Outside of ETPs, what little documentation of homosexuality exists appears primarily in Javanese courtly texts. Some examples come from the *Serat Centhini*, an epic poem of which the oldest known manuscript dates to 1616 and the longest version was completed in the early nineteenth century. Providing "detailed descriptions of sodomy, fellatio, mutual masturbation, multiple-partner intercourse, and transvestism," this text shows "that male homosexuality at least was an unproblematic, everyday part of a highly varied traditional Javanese sexual culture" (Anderson 1990:278), at least among elites. Anderson’s analysis of a scene in which a nobleman anally penetrates two male heroes and is then himself penetrated by one of them shows how within the text’s logic a man can be "a skilled professional in every aspect of sexual intercourse between males, without ever losing his control or manhood" (282). Some texts written during the reign of Pakubuwana II in the early eighteenth century decry male homosexuality. Often framed in terms of Islamic prohibition, these texts address homosexuality at court, for instance, the same-gender affairs of Urawan, brother-in-law of Pakubuwana II, which drew the Dutch East India company’s attention (Ricklefs 1998:69, 110, 183–185). Male sodomy was condemned and even punished in these contexts when it interfered with the reproduction of royal families (Ricklefs 1998:222). Sexual relationships between women appear less frequently in these courtly texts, but there are discussions of sex between royal concubines in the Javanese courts during the nineteenth and preindependence twentieth centuries (Blackwood and Wieringa 1999:41–42, 44; Gayatri 1996:90; S. Wieringa 2000:451).

Courtly texts rarely concerned themselves with the world outside the royal residence. What is known of homosexuality among commoners prior to independence comes mostly from merchants, missionaries, ethnologists, and colonial officials. These travelers wrote more frequently on transgenderism, probably because it was more visible to outsiders. Most colonial references to "pederasty," "sodomy," and "homosexuality" (after that term was coined in the 1860s) are actually to ETPs or the

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archipelago-wide male transvestite subjectivity banci (waria), not homosexuality per se. One finds primarily fleeting and dismissive reference to "native" homosexualities. The *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie*, for example,

stated matter-of-factly in 1919 that in the Indonesian archipelago "*paederastie* is widespread. The Balinese, under the name *menjelit*, indulge in this perversion in a major fashion…. in Atjeh, the *sedatis*, children between the ages of nine and twelve, who probably hail from the island of Nias, make a business out of participating in this vice publicly [like the *gandroengs* in Bali]…. On Madoera, pederasty occurs in public, without shame, and it is also practiced as a profession on Java." (Gouda 1995:181)

Colonial ethnologists like George Alexander Wilken and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje wrote in similar terms of "immorality of the worst kind," though "discussion assumed a calmer tone by the end of the colonial period" (Anderson 1990:277–278). One such calmer scholar was Hendrik Chabot, who also provides a rare glimpse of female-to-male transgenderism. In his research village near Makassar in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Chabot found "a woman … who did not feel at ease with those of her own sex. She wore her hair like a woman, but her sarong like a man…. She carried burdens on a yoke on her shoulders the way a man does, and she would go alone to markets and on roads. Her kin accepted these transgressions of the sex-role prohibitions without further ado" (1996:190–191). There are also brief accounts of women dressing as men whether or not they engaged in sex with other women (S. Wieringa 1999a:216); in Java these women were reportedly called *wandu*, a word now synonymous with waria and used outside Java. The following narrative provides rare documentation of late colonial female non-normative gender and sexuality:

Last Saturday [February 11, 1939] two women went to the village headman of Alahan Panjang [a highland village about fifteen miles east of Padang in West Sumatra] and asked to be married to each other. Of course this request got a very, very strong rejection. Two women asking to be married to each other! Soon thereafter a mass of people had surrounded the office of the village headman. It’s understandable that those people wanted to know as well what the decision would be, and how things had ended up like this.

One of the women, Rakit, lived near Alahan Panjang. She had been a widow for eight years and had never married again, and her actions had never been any cause for suspicion. But she was a close friend of a young woman named Tinur, the child of an Islamic scholar in the village. They had been friends for eight years. The young Tinur didn’t want to be married to a man; in fact she didn’t like men. With no warning she had asked to be married to the widow

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Rakit. Her parents did not want to grant this request, because Tinur was a woman. Since she was small she’d always been a woman. She’d gone to school as a woman. Up to the present people knew that Tinur’s way of speaking was that of a woman. Apparently she didn’t want to accept the decision of her parents, and had gone directly to the village headman and asked to be married to Rakit. When she arrived she’d cut her hair short, like that of a man.

What was the style of the connection of these two?

They explained they’d already been together as husband and wife as long as they’d been friends. When they were together, the masculine character of the young Tinur was like that of a male duck.

Of course the village headman couldn’t just accept this explanation. Right away he telephoned the doctor of Solok [a small town a few miles west of Alahan Panjang] to ask for some clarification about this abnormality. The doctor himself thought all this strange. For that reason, the two women where sent by the village headman to the doctor to be inspected further.[6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns15)

Tinur seems similar to tombois, currently found not only (like Tinur) in contemporary West Sumatra but throughout Indonesia. That both Tinur and her lover Rakit were "sent to be inspected" implies that Rakit was seen as a woman with incorrect desires; this appears to be the first documentation of cewek (effeminate *lesbi*) subjectivity outside courtly texts. Intriguingly, the story centers on an attempt to gain official recognition for a same-gender relationship through marriage. Issues of marriage, particularly "love" versus "arranged" marriages, will prove central to the dynamics of belonging for contemporary *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians.

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the mid-1970s, Ulrich Kratz discovered in the National Library of Jakarta the three-hundred-page memoir of "Sucipto," a Javanese man who lived during the final decades of Dutch colonialism.[7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns16) This is the only autobiographical narrative to my knowledge by a person from the archipelago with a homosexual or transgendered subjectivity before 1980, when the first mass media article by a *gay* man appeared. The text was radically edited and published in 1992 by the historian Amin Budiman under the title *Jalan Hidupku* (Path of My Life); it was originally titled *Jalan Sempurna* (The "Perfect" or "Completed" Path).[8](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns17) Few inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies produced autobiographies, even among the small educated class (Budiman 1992:x), making the existence of Sucipto’s text all the more remarkable. *The Perfect Path* reflects a genre of late colonial literature that framed modern society and modern personhood in parallel terms (Rodgers 1995:7; C. Watson 2000). It is unfortunate that no other memoirs or secondary

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sources from the 1910s and 1920s currently exist to corroborate and clarify *The Perfect Path*. *The Perfect Path* does not provide a direct prehistory to *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions: certainly no *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians knew of this text before its publication in 1992. Yet there are clear resonances between Sucipto’s world and the contemporary *gay* world.

Sucipto was born in 1910 and lived in eastern Java. In his writings he never used *gay* or any other term, even when discussing the existence of a community of like-hearted men in some of the cities where he lived. The memoir covers the years 1919 to 1927, but its pivotal event takes place less than ten pages into the narrative, in 1919, when Sucipto is attending primary school in Sitobondo on the north coast of East Java. Walking past the town square on the way to school, Sucipto meets a boy about fifteen years old. After a series of long stares and forced smiles—including a moment when, "because it had already been willed by God," Sucipto drops his handkerchief and the gallant older boy retrieves it for him—they speak briefly. The boy asks Sucipto if they could be friends, and Sucipto struggles with unaccustomed feelings of desire for another man.

Wondering about the boy he has just met, Sucipto cannot focus on school that day. The teacher explains there will be a celebration at the town square to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dutch coronation and encourages the students to attend. During the festivities that night a storm comes up and Sucipto hides from the downpour with other onlookers on a verandah where a stage play had been performed. The lights go out and it is pitch black as Sucipto gropes through the crowd. Suddenly there is a hand upon his shoulder: "Watching the show?" It is the boy Sucipto had met earlier that day. Sucipto implores him not to get too close because he is soaking wet, and the friend suggests they return to his house so Sucipto can borrow dry clothes. Sucipto agrees and they make their way to the boy’s house, which is empty because his parents are on vacation. They lie down together on a bed in a darkened room, illuminated only by moonlight streaming through an open window. Their mutual lust becomes increasingly apparent until Sucipto asks the boy if he has ever slept with a woman. "Not even once," the boy replies:

"Listen. I want to tell you a story. Now you have become my friend. Before, when I lived in Kediri[9](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns18) and was only as big as you are now, there was a Javanese man who fell in love with me. He worked as a doctor. At that point, just like you, I didn’t understand. I was of the opinion that only a woman could fulfill a man’s desire. After I became acquainted with this doctor, he spoke to me of many things. Finally he told me that desire could be fulfilled by a man with a man. We fell in love with each other; then after a time he moved away. After he left, I did as he had…. It’s the same way with my friends; many of them do this same thing …"

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"How is it done?" I asked, smiling.

He didn’t answer with a single word, but kissed my cheek while his hand caressed my body. At that point I couldn’t hold in my desire any longer; I forgot myself and returned his kiss. "This is what I’ve been waiting for," I said in my heart. He grasped my thigh and then slowly took hold of my sarong, until his hand found my ——— [ellipsis in original]."

"Apparently you like me, yeah?," he said while smiling.

At that point I couldn’t explain any longer how strong was my desire …

"You are now my sweetheart" he said; his body trembled as he climbed on top of me. In that way, he satisfied his desire on top of my chest … Then he fulfilled my desire by using his hand. "Is this what the feeling is like?," I said in my heart … Then he held my hand and said: … "let us make a promise to each other. You will not forget me. And I will not forget you. The moon that shines upon us is our witness." (Budiman 1992:12–19)

This scene offers clues concerning male homosexual subjectivities in the late colonial period. First, the older boy who becomes Sucipto’s lover was initiated into the practice of same-gender love in the early 1910s by a "Javanese doctor" who apparently claimed to be sexually interested only in men. There is clearly a history to this unlexicalized subject position, at least in Java. Second, the earlier lover of Sucipto’s boyfriend was a physician, a powerful symbol of modernity in Indonesian literature. This hints at the possibility that educated people who lived in the archipelago encountered notions of homosexual subjectivity from the Western sexological and psychiatric literatures that were beginning to circulate through the colonial world. Third, the physician and the boyfriend belong to a community of men with similar interests—"it’s the same way with my friends"—and they assume they will find such men elsewhere in Java. Fourth, while sexual desire is clearly a powerful factor in Sucipto’s life, love (not desire in isolation) drives the narrative: the boyfriend and his earlier Javanese doctor had fallen in love, and the romance between Sucipto and his boyfriend begins with an oath of remembrance—witnessed like oaths of marriage, but here by the moon. Fifth, Sucipto holds the colonial presence at arm’s length. It provides a background for the narrative—sometimes explicitly, as in the celebration of the queen’s coronation anniversary—but Sucipto never identifies with (or against) nationalism and never mentions the nationalist movement. Additionally, Sucipto does not feel any sense of sin or remorse; indeed, references to God’s role in Sucipto’s homosexuality appear throughout his narrative:

Life is following habits. If someone is used to eating, without food he’ll become hungry … If someone’s used to using a woman, he’ll feel less happy or a lack of desire if he uses a man … I feel happy with men … For that reason I’ve got to habituate myself to it, because that’s the best thing for me … In this way God is indeed a generous being towards His creatures. For all bad things on this

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earth He has provided weapons to turn them into something good (Budiman 1992:26).

After several months Sucipto’s lover leaves Sitobondo, and soon Sucipto runs away from home because of family conflicts unrelated to his sexuality. Making his way to Surabaya, Sucipto lives as a homeless youth; many of the parks and other places where he spends his time are the same as those used by *gay* men eighty years later. He has a sexual relationship with a Dutchman; when that ends he becomes a prostitute and decides to spend time only with certain groups of people:

I carried out my promise to myself. I didn’t socialize at all with boys who liked women. I continued my habit of strolling about at night [looking for sex work] without end, adding more and more friends with the same intentions as I. But not all of my friends who liked to "search around" were really like me. There were some who did it just for the money. If they succeeded in getting some, they used it to get a woman. I didn’t really spend much time with them … Besides that, there were lots of boys who were really and truly interested in men, but their behavior was exactly like that of a woman. I also didn’t like hanging out with them, because their disposition was too visible to other people (Budiman 1992:140).

Sucipto divides his homosocial world into (1) men who like women, (2) men who like men (and sometimes have sex with men for money), (3) men who have sex with other men for money but really like women, and (4) men who like men (and sometimes have sex with men for money) but act like women. One might anachronistically term the first and third categories as heterosexual or *normal*, the second as *gay*, and the fourth as waria. However, Sucipto’s concept of male homosexuality does not appear to imply a female counterpart. This is only one of several apparent differences between Sucipto’s subject position and that of contemporary *gay* men. There appear to be no linguistic, sartorial, or gestural practices associated with men "of the same intentions" as Sucipto. He writes of a broadly shared assumption that such men will *not* marry women. This diverges from the understandings of most contemporary *gay* men, suggesting that the marriage imperative is not simply "traditional." Above all, he betrays no sense of an archipelago-wide or global community. Not only is there no mention of men "of the same intentions" elsewhere in the Indies, but Sucipto first reacts with bewilderment when a Dutchman, "of a different race" than he, evinces sexual interest in men. If, as a thought experiment, Western gay sexuality were held constant, the change from Sucipto’s sexuality to contemporary *gay* sexuality could be interpreted as one of divergence, not convergence, with the West.

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THE DUTCH LAST GASP

In his introduction to *The Perfect Path*, Budiman claimed that in the 1930s "for the first time in several Indonesian cities a large number of *gay* people started to make themselves visible" (1992:x). I do not know the evidence upon which Budiman based this claim; Sucipto’s narrative ends in 1927. While the persons Budiman describes as "making themselves visible" certainly did not identify as *gay* (if Sucipto’s memoir is any guide, they did not have lexicalized sexual subject positions at all), it may be that by the second and third decades of the twentieth century men who desired sex and romance with other men began creating informal groups in the metropolises of the colony. A new relationship to the West was in the making as well. By this time the Indies had experienced significant advances in transportation technology—in particular the emergence of steam shipping following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869—as well as the final consolidation of Dutch rule. These changes facilitated a growing population of Western men and women unaffiliated with the colonial government. While some of these Western women probably had sex with each other or women from the archipelago, our primary documentation at present concerns Western men who settled in the Indies in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in Bali, had sex with each other or men from the archipelago, and sometimes saw themselves as homosexual. To my knowledge there are no recognized links between these male homosexual Westerners and the emergence of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions in the 1970s and 1980s. I have never heard *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians indicate any knowledge of this prewar expatriate community. It is of interest not necessarily as a progenitor but because it shows how sexuality and state power articulate in the formation of nonnormative sexual subject positions.

Our knowledge of this community comes primarily from a sinister turn of events. In 1938, toward the end of Dutch rule, the colonial government at the instigation of the final viceroy of the Netherlands initiated an archipelago-wide crackdown on colonial "pederasts." The crackdown is reputed to have begun in Bandung, when an Indonesian student claimed to have been raped by his European teacher (Bijkerk 1988:70). One of the first victims of the crackdown appears to have been Fievez de Malines. This colonial official from West Java was fired from his post but then arrested later in Makassar as he was departing the Indies, charged with sex with someone under the age of consent, and sentenced to a year and a half in prison (Bijkerk 1988:70–71). Also arrested at this time was Assistant Resident Coolhaas, a member of the colony’s new parliament, the Volksraad (Budiman 1992:x). While some officials disagreed with the crackdown (for instance, H. J. van Mook, who subsequently became the

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last lieutenant governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies), it received broad government support and seems to have been most intense on Bali (Gouda 1995:181–182; Rhodius and Darling 1980:43–45). In Batavia (Jakarta), police apparently rounded up street youths and paraded them before lineups of European men; if the youths pointed to any of the men, indicating a claim that the men had had sexual relations with them, the men were arrested (Bijkerk 1988:71). The "native" men involved were usually assumed not to be homosexual (Simons 1939:5579). The crackdown continued into the following year, involving many wellknown expatriates such as Roelof Goris and Herman Noosten. Budiman claims that "in Surabaya the police got pretty good results. This need not surprise us since from the 1920s there were lots of gay Dutchmen in this city" (1992:xi).[10](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns19)

The most famous target was the German painter Walter Spies (1895–1942), who began living permanently on Bali in 1927 and became a major force in the artistic life of the island. Margaret Mead termed the affair a "veritable witch hunt" and spoke at Spies’s trial in support of Spies’s "continuing light involvement with Balinese male youth": "she argued that Spies was seeking a ‘repudiation of the kind of dominance and submission, authority and dependence, which he associated with European culture.’ [Mead claimed that] on Bali homosexuality was not a matter for moral condemnation, simply a pastime for young unmarried men" (Vickers 1989:106).[11](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns20) At this point K’Tut Tantri (alias Manx, alias Surabaya Sue)—the British woman whose exploits during the independence struggle made her a controversial figure (Lindsey 1997)—owned a hotel of questionable repute in southern Bali and was a friend of Spies. During the crackdown "Manx" tried to protect Spies and her other homosexual friends, even as the tourist industry suffered. In fact "[i]t was probably only because Manx was not homosexual, and had the support of a number of aristocratic guests, that she herself was not jailed or banished from Bali, given establishment claims that ‘Manx’s Place’ was a brothel" (Lindsey 1997:92). The script for K’Tut Tantri’s never-produced autobiographical film contains an unintentionally humorous adaptation of these events:

SPIES: K’Tut, the Dutch are looking for me! …

K’TUT: But what on earth have you done?

SPIES: They’re rounding up homosexuals. No one is exempt….

K’TUT: Where will you go?

SPIES: To the Western part of the Island…. I may be safe there till this all dies down.

K’TUT: I’ll drive you.

SPIES: No. K’Tut. You must not be seen with me. It’s too dangerous.

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K’TUT: Then Wayan will drive you. You are too good a friend of Bali to be allowed to suffer at the hands of the Dutch.

In spite of Mead’s and Tantri’s efforts, Spies was convicted and "imprisoned from 31 December 1938 to 1 September 1939 on charges of having had homosexual relations with minors" (Lindsay 1997:64). It is said that Spies’s Balinese lover sang to the accompaniment of a *gamelan* orchestra outside the walls of Spies’s prison. What little additional information exists concerning "native" reactions to the crackdown comes from the testimony of Europeans:

Rudolf Bonnet [mentioned in a letter] that the Dutch police had also treated the Balinese in an unduly harsh manner, who "do not understand any of this. They look like frail, frightened birds: after all, a homosexual relationship is nothing special to them!" As the American anthropologist Jane Belo reported in February, 1939, sexuality between men did not constitute a violation of Balinese *adat*: to be *salah mekoerenan* (wrongly married) entailed men’s relations with animals, with young girls who had not yet reached maturity, or with higher-caste women. As a result, Belo wrote, the Balinese thought that "the whole ‘white caste’ had gone stark raving mad." (Gouda 1995:181–182)

The state of homosexual subjectivity in the Indies during this period is an area in which further research is needed, not least because at this point homophile movements existed in many Western metropoles. It seems Spies and his European compatriots understood themselves as "homosexual" as that concept was typically used in Western sexology, and they may have communicated this concept in some fashion to the men from the archipelago they befriended and loved. In 1940 Spies was rearrested, this time as an ethnic German when Germany invaded the Netherlands at the beginning of World War II. He died in 1942 when his prison ship was sunk near Sri Lanka; on the same boat was Hans Overbeck, the never-married German literary scholar of Malay who lived in Surabaya and whose servant, and possibly lover, was none other than Sucipto.[12](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns21) The very existence of the Dutch crackdown suggests that homosexuality was visible enough to catch the eye of the colonial apparatus at a time when the colony’s future was increasingly in doubt. Even though reproduction and thus miscegenation was not a possibility, sex between men seems to have become seen as threatening the racial hierarchy upon which colonial authority rested. Before giving way to the postcolonial polity it shapes to this day, the colonial "administrative state" (Benda 1966, Anderson 1990:94–96) framed sex between men as the product of global connection and a threat to social order.

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HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE YOUNG INDONESIA, 1945–1980

Documents relating to sex between men or between women from the late 1940s to the 1970s are scarce, and little archival work has been undertaken to explore how the early postcolonial state regarded homosexuality. While the European presence in Indonesia during the early postcolonial period was minimal and decreased further with the conflict over the absorption of Irian Jaya into Indonesia in the 1950s, some European men spent time in venues like parks, where they formed sexual and affective relationships with Indonesians. A waria from Makassar born in the 1930s recalled that by 1959 "there were already lots of homo men; I already knew lots of homo men from the Japanese [World War II] and Dutch times, and lots of *lesbi* women too, both those who were hunter [tomboi] and lines [cewek]." Andre, a lower-class Javanese man, recalls this time fondly:

A: I first came to Surabaya in 1948. Actually the difference was not that great, except that we weren’t as visible as nowadays. There weren’t any people brave enough to have long hair or an earring or wear effeminate clothing. There wasn’t anyone at all like that…. At that point I hung out with my friends at Taman Imbong Macang [a park in Surabaya]. There were Dutch men there too … some of them from Ambon [in the Moluccas] or Manado [in North Sulawesi]…. So I would go there with my [Javanese] lover. This was around 1950…. Every night I’d go out…. Every night and I never got bored for fifteen years. Until 1965.

Andre’s reference to 1965 marks the period when Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president, was toppled from power. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians died in the ensuing unrest; since Surabaya and its environs were a major scene of this violence, it is not surprising that Andre and his friends stopped going to the parks. As noted earlier, many persons with ETPs, like bissus and waroks, were substantially impacted by this violence. It is also in connection with the events of 1965 that women’s homosexuality entered public discourse in a frightening manner, with the massacre of Indonesian women involved in the women’s Communist Party organization Gerwani. Accusations that Gerwani members had sex with each other played a role in the government campaign to justify discrediting and even murdering these women (S. Wieringa 1999b, 2002). Male homosexuality does not appear to have been targeted, but the turbulence of the transition to Soeharto’s New Order meant that men involved in homosexual activities strongly curtailed their public presence.

After a few years a renewed park life began to emerge: Andre notes that "beginning around 1970 there were already very many [of us]. More

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and more people like me. I felt the worries of my life were reduced a little because I had those friends like me to hang around with." Other interlocutors corroborate Andre’s narrative of park socializing with Indonesians and Westerners in the 1950s, severely curtailed in 1965. From the point when park socializing picked up again in the 1970s until the present, there has been a reduced presence of Westerners in parks and other public places of *gay* life: most contemporary Westerners either go to tourist sites or socialize largely with expatriates. There appears to have been a further shift around 1980, when some people began identifying as waria on an ongoing basis in public (as opposed to more circumscribed contexts like theatrical performances) and some men began using the term *gay*. The first edition of the *All Lavender International Gay Guide* in 1971 has a single entry for "Jakarta, Indonesia"—the "Cosy Corner" on 9 Nusantara Street. However, while the terms *gay* and *lesbi* were certainly in existence by the early 1970s, at least in the capital, they do not appear to have been in widespread use before the 1980s, and there is little evidence for a sense of nationwide or worldwide homosexual affiliation before that point.

Through a critique of ethnolocality and the concept of ETPs, it is possible to navigate the historical temptations associated with the study of nonnormative genders and sexualities outside the West. The history of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions does not conform to Western prejudices concerning narrative continuity. Prior to *gay* and *lesbi* there is little evidence for archipelago-wide sexual subject positions; their appearance is intertwined with Indonesian nationhood. The assumption that the past stands in a causal relationship to the present does not capture the conjunctural manner in which these subject positions have come into being.

WARIAS, NATIONAL TRANSVESTITES

So far I have made occasional reference to male transvestites (warias). Since the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions "globalized" to Indonesia in a context where the waria subject position was already well known, the existence of warias has profoundly shaped the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions and indeed accounts for some of the most significant differences between *gay* men and *lesbi* women, as discussed at several points later in this book. A brief summary of waria subjectivity will thus help illuminate the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions (see Boellstorff 2004b for a more detailed discussion of warias).

The waria subject position is far better known in contemporary Indonesia than any ETP, or indeed the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions themselves.

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Virtually everyone in Indonesia knows what "banci" or "béncong" (derogatory terms for waria) mean. It appears that the waria subject position took form during the mid-nineteenth century in metropolitan areas (the now-common term "banci" does not appear in early nineteenth-century versions of the Javanese chronicle *Serat Centhini* [Anderson 2001:xiv]). From the beginning it was assumed that warias could be found anywhere in the archipelago, and from the beginning warias were associated not with ritual but with lowbrow entertainment, petty commodity trading, and sex work.

Since the waria subject position is so well known, most warias begin identifying as such while children. You cannot become waria if you are seen to have been born with a vagina: waria subjectivity is an attribute of male bodies. Waria almost never describe themselves as a "third gender" but see themselves as men with women’s souls who therefore dress like women and are attracted to men. They usually have sex only with "real" men and are the only major class of persons beyond the disabled who are not typically pressured to marry heterosexually. Many warias enjoy being anally penetrated by their male partners, but it is clear from interview data as well as HIV/AIDS-related sexual behavior surveys that warias often penetrate their male partners anally (Oetomo 2000). In comparison to the *activo/pasivo* sexual regime attributed to much of Latin America, where penetrating is conflated with masculinity and being penetrated with femininity (see Kulick 1998: [chap. 3](#u11_ch02)), it appears that in Indonesia, bodily presentation is more important than sexual act in determining gender, a state of affairs that may exist across much of Southeast Asia (cf. Manalansan 2003:26).

Before the late 1970s warias dressed as women primarily at night or when on stage, but at present most warias dress as women all day long, and many ingest female hormones (in the form of birth control pills) or inject silicone to give their bodies a more feminine look. They rarely have sex-change operations, due not only to the cost but to the fact that they ultimately see themselves as men. By the early 2000s warias had become increasingly visible in public life, from their common role as beauticians to appearances in television shows. This visibility has not translated directly into acceptance, but it does underscore how these national transvestites contribute to the complex sexual landscape upon which the *gay* archipelago has taken form.

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# CHAPTER THREE

Dubbing Culture

MOMENTS OF ORIGIN

It should be clear from the last two chapters that ethnolocalized homosexual and transvestite professional subject positions like "bissu" are distinct from the waria subject position, and that both are distinct from the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions. This chapter focuses on *moments of origin* for the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions: (1) on the social level—the historical context in which they first appeared; and (2) on the personal level—how particular Indonesians come to see themselves as *gay* or *lesbi*. I foreground the crucial role of mass media and ask how these moments of origin illuminate the mutually constituting conjunction of sexuality and nation in contemporary Indonesia. In doing so I also develop a framework for rethinking ethnography in an already globalized world. I call this framework *dubbing culture,* where *to dub* means, as the Oxford English Dictionary phrases it, "to provide an alternative sound track to (a film or television broadcast), especially a translation from a foreign language."[1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns22)

With regard to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, my goal is to develop a theory that can account for a contingent, fractured, intermittent, yet powerfully influential relationship between globalization and subjectivities. Two additional requirements for such a theory are as follows. First, it must not mistake contingency for the absence of power; it must account for relations of domination. Second, such a theory must not render domination as determination; it must account for how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians transform this contingent relationship in unexpected ways.

The framework of dubbing culture is crucially concerned with agency: it questions both deterministic theories that assume the hailing of persons through ideology and voluntaristic theories that assume persons "negotiate" their subjectivities vis-à-vis structures of power. As a result, it aims to provide a more processual understanding of subjectivity: it gives us a new way to think through the metaphorical construal of hegemonic cultural logics as "discourses." To "dub" a discourse is neither to parrot it verbatim nor to compose an entirely new script. It is to hold together cultural logics without resolving them into a unitary whole.

I see this analysis as linking queer theory and mass-media theory, partaking in a "new queer studies" that highlights "the political stakes in positing a particular understanding or vision of the global" (Manalansan

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2003:6). In much the same way that print capitalism presents a general precondition for national imagined communities, but in a manner open to reinterpretation (Anderson 1983), so contemporary mass media present a general precondition for dubbing culture, but not in a deterministic sense. I thus examine ways in which mass-mediated messages that might appear totalizing (because of their association with powerful political-economic actors) are, in fact, susceptible to contingent transformation. Just as the dubbed television show in which "Sharon Stone speaks Indonesian" does not originate in the United States, so the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions I examine are Indonesian—not, strictly speaking, imported.[2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns23) Yet just as the range of possibilities for a dubbed soundtrack is shaped by images originating elsewhere, so the persons who occupy subject positions that are dubbed in some fashion cannot choose their subjectivities just as they please. I move from a literal, technical meaning of dubbing to a more speculative, analogical usage as a way to explore the relationship between social actors and the modes of subjectivation (Foucault 1985) by which such persons come to occupy subject positions.

The theory of dubbing culture developed in this chapter is central to my analysis of the paradoxes of sexuality and nation in postcolonial Indonesia. The ultimate goal of this chapter, however, is to speak at a broad level to the state of culture theory. Might it be that dubbing culture occurs in the context of globalizing processes not directly related to mass media, sexuality, or Southeast Asia? How, for instance, is the relationship between English "gay" and Indonesian "*gay*" like the relationship between English "beauty" and the concept of *biyuti* employed by Filipino gay men (Manalansan 2003:15)? Indeed, at the end of this chapter I ask if the dubbing of culture Indonesians perform when they constitutively occupy the *gay* or *lesbi* subject position is all that different from the ethnographic project in an already globalized world. This chapter, then, has a reflexive (indeed, postreflexive) dimension. It asks if the ways in which much contemporary ethnography holds together, in tension, multiple cultural logics (like "the local" and "modernity")—in such a way that they are coconstitutive, not just juxtaposed—might not be productively interpreted in terms of dubbing culture.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE *GAY* AND *LESBI* SUBJECT POSITIONS

In what measure are sexual perversions analogues of incorrect speech? … Might there be elements of homosexuality in the modern theory of language … in the concept of communication as an arbitrary mirroring?

—George Steiner, *After Babel:Aspects of Language and Translation*

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As noted in [chapter 2](#u11_ch02), subject positions, like any other aspect of culture, have a history. One reason the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions present such a quandary for social analysis is that, like homosexual subject positions in the West, they are quite recent. The Dutch crackdown in the 1930s, and the strong influence of Freudian psychology in Indonesian social science (Gayatri 1996:90, A. Murray 1999:142), make it possible that some Indonesians could have started calling themselves *gay* or *lesbi* (or some other term like *homo* or *homoseks*) before 1960.[3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns24) Whereas about one-third of Sucipto’s *The Perfect Path* from the 1920s is devoted to a commentary on Javanese mystical texts, Indonesian texts on homosexuality or transgenderism from the 1970s onward often invoke outdated Western psychological theories. However, I know of no evidence of Indonesians terming themselves *gay* or *lesbi* before the 1970s. Since I am interested in the emergence of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions (not in, say, how a handful of Indonesians that might have learned of Western gay and lesbian subject positions in the 1950s or 1960s through travel to the West or an intimate relationship with an expatriate Westerner), this means that *gay* probably took form as a widely (if imperfectly) known subject position between the early 1970s and early 1980s, a decade or two later than in some other Southeast Asian nations such as Thailand (Jackson 1999a). The *lesbi* subject position appears to have a similar time frame, and *lesbi* communities existed at least in large cities by the early 1980s (S. Wieringa 1999a:215). The appearance of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions in Indonesia in the 1970s to 1980s is corroborated by a range of archival and oral historical data. One of my interlocutors, an older *gay* man living in Surabaya, noted that "there was a big change around 1978–79. Globalization [*globalisasi*] came in, the mass media came in … there were some Western gay magazines that were imported; they had small parts of them summarized and translated into Indonesian so they would sell here. These publications pushed people to be more open; they would read them and realize that ‘I’m not alone.’ "

That this man is highly literate probably explains why he is the only one of my interlocutors in any of my field sites to describe Western gay magazines being imported. Such imported magazines could not have circulated frequently or broadly enough to have contributed significantly to the formation of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions; it is clear that general mass media played the central role. The earliest study of contemporary Indonesian homosexuality to my knowledge, Amen Budiman’s 1979 book *Lelaki Perindu Lelaki* (Men Who Yearn for Men), notes that

in this decade [the 1970s] homosexuality has increasingly become an interesting issue for many segments of Indonesian society. Newspapers, both those published in the capital and in other areas, often present articles and news about

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homosexuality. In fact, *Berita Buana Minggu* in Jakarta has a special column, "Consultation with a Psychiatrist," which often answers the complaints of those who are homosexual and want to change their sexual orientation. It’s the same way with pop magazines, which increasingly produce articles about homosexuality, sometimes filled with personal stories from homosexual people, complete with their photographs. (Budiman 1979:89–90)

Budiman added, "It is very interesting to note that homosexuals who originate in the lower classes often try to change their behavior by seeking advice from psychiatric or health columnists in our newspapers and magazines" (116). A similar timeline appears in the *lesbi* autobiography *Menguak Duniaku* (Revealing My World), published in 1988. Here the author reprints an "interesting piece of writing" by a doctor that "relates to my world," one linking mass media, sexuality, and national "style":

About ten years ago [1976 more or less], Indonesian newspapers and magazines discovered a new issue that sold well with readers. This was the problem of adult men who wanted to become women, and though the total was less, women who wanted to change themselves into men.

Nevertheless, before and after that issue circulated as a social issue, what was set forth was the problem of homosexuality [*homoseksualitas*] and lesbianism [*lesbianisme*]. Stories and reports were offered about the social condition of these things in industrial nations, together with commentary from sleazy Indonesian mass media. From time to time it was implied between the lines that even in Indonesia things like this had emerged.

After home electronics entered the consumer market in Indonesia, not all films with sex scenes were censored, because the form of sale was through video cassettes. So Indonesian films became colored by erotic and sexual scenes. The reaction of the Indonesian public varied. Some linked the showing of these films, including those that offered homosexual [*homoseksual*] or lesbian [*lesbian*] scenes, with the "invasion" of foreign values…. But those who talked about this didn’t really know what was being discussed…. A nation that must be made smart becomes a gullible nation. Such a gullible nation is a nation that has a *label*, but does not possess an identity [*identitas*]…. So it has happened with homosexuality and lesbianism, or with the problem of "changing ones genitals," and other problems that are connected with a style of life [*cara hidup*] that is "strange but stimulating" [*"aneh tetapi merangsang*"]. (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:481–482)

In July 1980 an anonymous author, "X," published a story in the magazine *Anda* (You) entitled "I Found My Identity as a *Homosex* Person." This to my knowledge is the first time *gay* subjectivity appeared in mainstream mass media. The author wished to "provide a picture of what the life of homosex people is like" and "for those who are homosex/*lesbi*, to

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encourage them to go to experts so maybe they can change. And if they cannot change, to accept themselves." He described a sexual awakening marked by encounters with mass media. When he was eleven years old (in 1964) and beginning to experiment sexually, "I read in a magazine about the meaning of the word *homosex*. I began to compare that explanation of *homosexualitas* with my own situation, but wasn’t yet sure." At this point the author claimed the term *gay* was not yet in use. As a young adult in college in 1977, "by coincidence I saw a book entitled *Homosexual Behavior among Males*, which explained that homosexualitas was proper and normal. I slowly developed a positive attitude concerning homosexualitas."[4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns25) This author is Dédé Oetomo, one of a handful of Indonesians willing to identify themselves publicly as *gay* or *lesbi*:

One of my friends from kindergarten was a psychology student at the University of Indonesia. He had connections at this popular psychology magazine called *Anda* and suggested I write my story. That must have been the spring of 1980. I thought I’d use my real name, but my aunt said "why don’t you use a pseudonym for the time being." So we settled on the name "X." It was published in July 1980 and the editors forwarded about fifteen letters from people who wanted to contact me. That was around October 1980. Most people were supportive, saying things like "I’m glad you are so honest; I hope you can be happy now."

Among my *gay and lesbi* interlocutors whose memory extends back to the early 1980s, there is wide agreement that the entry of *gay* and *lesbi* into mass media, and in a sense the beginning of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds, originates not in the *Anda* article (of which most are unaware), but in the unofficial "marriage" in Jakarta of two *lesbi* women, Jossie and Bonnie (respectively, twenty-five and twenty-two years old at the time). The event took place on the night of April 19, 1981, and was covered soon thereafter by two weekly magazines with a national readership, the May 31 edition of *Tempo* and the June 6 edition of *Liberty*. The Liberty article was that week’s cover story ([fig. 3–1](#u12_ch03-fig3-1)) and began as follows:

FIRST IN INDONESIA: A LESBIAN MARRIAGE, ATTENDED BY 120 GUESTS

In a luxurious building in the Blok M Kebayoran Baru district, a large crowd met in the Swimming Pub Bar…. The guests coming to this place turned their gaze to the young "groom and bride," both of whom smiled unceasingly…. The groom, Jossie, wore a white jacket and a blue tie with red blowers, while the bride, Bonnie, wore a long red gown…. The wedding cake was cut by Bonnie’s soft hands; over a hundred witnesses, including both sets of parents, watched as they fed each other a mouthful. This celebration of marriage went smoothly. Among the guests who came that night were several friends from the Police….[5](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns26)

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Figure 3–1. "First in Indonesia: Lesbian Wedding, Attended by 120 Guests," with picture of Jossie and Bonnie. *Liberty* magazine, cover illustration for June 6, 1981, issue.

The *Liberty* reporter covering the event was fascinated by how Jossie appeared masculine and Bonnie feminine. The reporter claimed Jossie had been examined by doctors and found to have 75 percent male hormones and only 25 percent female hormones, while Bonnie was *normal* and "once had a boyfriend." When asked how she and Bonnie had sex, Jossie turned aside the question by referring to mass media, saying "It’s precisely like you have seen in imported books."

Even at this early point in the history of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions, there was great interest in belonging, productivity, and love, themes tightly interwoven with national rhetorics of the good citizen. The reporter underscored Jossie’s unemployed status at the time of the wedding—a disgraceful position for a new head of household—and asked Bonnie if her relationship with Jossie was based on emotion, sex, or love. Bonnie replied, "We want to have an eternal love."

It was the public consecration of Jossie and Bonnie’s relationship—their "official" wedding "with invitations, guests, fine clothes, and members of both families present"—that engendered the most anxiety for the media. The *Tempo* article contained a sidebox entitled "There They Have Laws for Them," which spoke about social recognition of homosexual relationships in the West, describing, for instance, how the United States had antidiscrimination laws and gay pride marches. This is the first occasion

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to my knowledge that Indonesian mass media directly compared *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians with gay and lesbian Westerners. The *Liberty* reporter openly pondered the social consequences of recognition:

This event is indeed unique, not least because it is the first time something like this has occurred in Jakarta, maybe in Indonesia, or even the whole world—that the marriage of two people of the same sex is formalized openly, without anything to cover it…. If the relationship by Jossie and Bonnie were tied together … with an ordinary reception in the presence of their peers, anyone could have done it. It would have been no different than a birthday party. What is unique … is a *lesbi* wedding formalized with a joyous ceremony, and thus constitutes a new "dilemma" in Indonesia. Viewing the life of these two young *lesbi* women, it is apparent that they have a different way of thinking about how to solve the problem of lesbianism in our Republic. In our estimation, both of them want to become pioneers for their people who are not small in number. And with them both standing in front, their hopes openly revealed, who knows what will happen.

Why did the *Liberty* reporter see the wedding of Jossie and Bonnie as a new dilemma? Crucially, it was not just the presence of the parents, the lovely cake, and the 120 guests that formalized the marriage, but the coverage of the event in the mass media. These mass media provided the incitement to discourse that inscribed the ceremony in a public sphere, marking it as a problem of the Republic but also part of a globalizing media environment rendering the Republic’s boundaries uncertain. Many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians recall the mass media coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s reception as life-changing (not the reception itself, which few attended). In making the existence of a specifically Indonesian *lesbi* subjectivity public, the coverage of the reception holds a place in Indonesian popular culture roughly analogous to the coverage of Darrell Berrigan’s 1965 murder in Bangkok (Jackson 1999a). When *Lambda Indonesia*, the first *gay* activist organization, sent out its press release in March 1, 1982, one Western gay magazine noted that its "founding resulted in part from increasing coverage of lesbian and gay issues by the straight press, particularly the public marriage of two Jakarta lesbians in May 1981."[6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns27) In the novel *Menguak Duniaku*, the tomboi Hen recounts how while at a friend’s house he "picked up a copy of *Tempo* from a pile of magazines in the corner. I flipped through the pages and my eyes froze when I saw an article ‘The Story of Jossie and Bonni[e],’ like what I had read a few months earlier." Hen then provides what appears to be a full transcript of the article, which identifies Jossie and Bonnie as "the first female couple, properly called lesbians, in Indonesia to publicize themselves through a reception" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:303). The author of a report on *lesbi* women written in the early 1990s stated that "Ten years

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after their marriage, the echo from the wedding of this female homosexual couple still reverberates. Their marriage is the only lesbian marriage to ever go proudly public in Indonesia" (see also Ary 1987:17).[7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns28) The wedding of Jossie and Bonnie is also mentioned in more recent works on *lesbi* life (e.g., Herlinatiens 2003:12).

In the years immediately following this event, in at least two other instances *lesbi* couples received media attention. In the first, two young women, Suratmi and Isnaini, killed themselves in a rural area of Central Java (near Solo) by running in front of a train rather than be separated by their families. According to the news report (once again from *Liberty*), Suratmi, "Isnaini’s best friend and workmate," was asked to dress as a man and stand in for Isnaini’s new husband from Solo who had failed to return to the village for an official reception. It is unclear if the two women had been in a sexual relationship before the ceremony took place, but following the ceremony it became well known: "they went everywhere together, including the movies." This visibility "became a problem" for the villagers and the women were ordered to end their relationship, which resulted in the suicides. As in the case of Bonnie and Jossie, social opprobrium revolved around the politics of recognition, not the sexual acts of the women.

The second *lesbi* relationship to gain public attention in the wake of Jossie and Bonnie involved Aty, a twenty-one-year-old pop singer in Jakarta who was arrested for her love affair with the fifteen-year-old Nona. *Tempo* reported the incident on May 23, 1981, noting that it was "The first case of a *lesbi* woman being tried ‘for doing it with someone of the same sex."’ In this case, the two women escaped from Jakarta to Malang in East Java, where Nona sent a letter to her parents saying that she would "choose Aty as my friend" until death. Reflecting yet again an emphasis on recognition, Nona emphasized in her letter that she had made a vow on a Bible with Aty.

Articles concerning *gay* men and *lesbi* women continued to appear intermittently throughout the 1980s; determining the exact level of coverage is not yet possible because there has been no systematic attempt to catalogue this coverage. In 1984 a group of Australians translated and published (under the title *Gays in Indonesia*) a set of articles that appeared between 1981 and 1983, collected by Dédé Oetomo (Gays in Indonesia Collective 1984). Given his diligence, the total of forty articles over two years probably represents a substantial percentage of the total number of articles published in major mass media during that time, highlighting that attention to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians was ongoing but rather minimal. Topics covered in these articles include the murder of a karate teacher in Bogor by a young man whom the teacher had forced into homosexual sex; "I Didn’t Know My Husband Was a Homosexual," the story of a

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tricked wife who explained that unlike warias, *gay* men cannot be identified by a feminine appearance; and a story of homosexual behavior between men in a village Islamic school (*pesantren*), known as *mairil*. There also appeared a number of articles speculating on the causes of homosexual behavior based on Western sexology, and on notions of sin (usually drawing from Christian or Islamic sources).

It appears that throughout this period there was more media coverage of *lesbi* women than *gay* men. This is probably due to the greater policing of female sexuality in national discourse. The reports emphasized self-identified, lower-class *lesbi* women in couples as a foil to the modern middle-class woman. While *gay* and *lesbi* voices appeared in the early 1980s in Oetomo’s *Anda* article and the coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s wedding, most articles were written from an outsider’s perspective. Very little of this 1980s’ mainstream mass media coverage addressed homosexuality outside Indonesia, raising again the issue of how *gay* and *lesbi* "globalized" to Indonesia at all.

COMING TO *GAY* OR *LESBI* SUBJECTIVITY

Any model of communication is at the same time a model of trans-lation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance. No two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things, to send identical signals of valuation and inference. Neither do two human beings.

—George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*

My *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors of the 1990s and 2000s did not typically know of this history from the 1980s or the Dutch crackdown of the 1930s; they had little interest in, or knowledge of, ETPs. How did these Indonesians come to see themselves as *gay* or *lesbi*? Across what lines of similitude and difference are their selfhoods woven? How did Indonesians appropriate Western notions of homosexuality from the 1980s to the early 2000s, the period when *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities first spread across the nation?

It is late morning in the city of Makassar, and I am recording an interview with Hasan, a thirty-two-year-old *gay* man I have known for many years. We are speaking about Hasan’s youth, and he recalls his first sexual relationship as a young teenager, which took place with an older friend at school. At that point Hasan had never heard the word *gay*:

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HASAN: I didn’t yet know. I was confused. Why, why were there people like that? What I mean is why were there men who wanted to kiss men? This got me thinking when I was at home. I thought: why did my friend do that to me? What was going on? Was it just a sign, a sign of, what do you call it, just of friendship, I thought like that. I was still blind as to the existence of the *gay* world.

TB: And to learn the term *gay* or about the *gay* world, how did that happen? HASAN: I knew later, when I was watching television. I saw on the "world news," there it showed a gay demonstration. And according to the information there … the people who were demonstrating, um, wanted the government to accept the marriage of men with men. And that made me confused. Why was it like that? That’s when I was in high school [about two years after his first sexual experience with a man].

TB: And when you saw that, about that gay demonstration, what was your reaction, your feelings?

HASAN: I felt that an event like that could only happen outside; that in Indonesia there wasn’t anything like that. I thought that maybe because we had a different state [*negara*], a culture [*kebudayaan*] that wasn’t the same as their culture, so, maybe outside maybe it could be, and in Indonesia maybe it couldn’t be, but, at that time I didn’t think that there were people like that in Indonesia.

Hasan here recounts a moment of recognition, one that later leads him to look for other *gay* men and eventually call himself *gay.* Through an encounter with mass media, he comes to knowledge of what he takes to be the concept *"gay"* and retrospectively interprets his same-gender relationships before acquiring this knowledge in terms of "blindness." Readers familiar with debates in queer studies over the internationalization of gay and lesbian subjectivities (e.g., Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel 1999; Altman 2001) might seize on the fact that Hasan saw a gay demonstration as evidence of activism driving this "globalization," but, in fact, this is the most unusual aspect of Hasan’s narrative. Three other elements prove more typical: sexuality is tied to mass-mediated language; an outside way of being becomes intimate; and the border dividing *gay* culture from other cultures is national, not ethnolocal.

Throughout my fieldwork, I have taken great pains to investigate how it is that Indonesians come to *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivity. Unlike ethnicity, religion, or gender, the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are not passed down through the family. They are experienced as novel. Unlike ETPs or the waria subject position, they are not something one learns from one’s community or traditions: becoming *gay* or *lesbi* has required the reception and transformation of ideas from outside the home. This process appears,

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on first consideration, to be an ethnographic mystery. Unless they are quite upper class or have traveled to the West, most Indonesians remain surprisingly unaware of the terms *gay* and *lesbi* or think the terms (and *homo*) are English names for warias. Even *gay* men and *lesbi* women who went to elementary school in the late 1980s or early 1990s recall the use on the schoolyard of terms primarily for warias, such as *banci,* but rarely *gay* or *lesbi.* No ethnolocalized tradition (*adat*) or religion sanctions *gay* or *lesbi* or even names them systematically. How, then, do these subject positions take hold in the hearts of so many contemporary Indonesians?

Despite the testimony of my interlocutor concerning Western gay pornographic magazines imported into Indonesia in the late 1970s, during my fieldwork *gay* men and particularly *lesbi* women did not describe such pornography as having given them the idea they could be *gay* or *lesbi*; many have never seen such pornography, and it was certainly never distributed on a national scale or to most rural areas. Early in my fieldwork I learned of the small, informally published magazines or "zines" produced by some *gay* and *lesbi* groups. I initially hypothesized that such zines might play a "conduit" role, indigenizing and disseminating Western concepts of homosexual identity. I was mistaken. Zines are a form of cultural commentary highlighting many aspects of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity, including the relationship between love and the nation (see Boellstorff 2004c), but are almost always accessed after first seeing oneself as *gay* or *lesbi*. None of my interlocutors cited zines as how they came to *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivity: they do not represent a significant medium through which *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are taken up by Indonesian men and women—or were first taken up historically, since the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions existed for several years prior to the appearance of the first *gay* zine in 1982.

The majority of *gay* men and *lesbi* women first hear about the terms *gay* and *lesbi* from print media. Others hear of the terms from peers or teachers; in these cases the term is also mass mediated since those who employ it have usually encountered it directly or indirectly through mass media. One *gay* man recalled that "I first heard about *gay* from my biology teacher. She didn’t use the term *gay* or *homo*, just the concept. She said it was a genetic mutation and that such a person is a man but his face is pretty like a woman’s. Through that I knew that I was that kind of person." Another recalled that "My school friends never called me homo or banci. But I heard other people get called such names. At school some of the boys would tease one of my friends. If he grabbed another boy by the hand, another boy would call him ‘homo.’ I heard the word and thought ‘that’s me,’ I knew that what was said by that was me [*yang disebutkan itu adalah saya*]."

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Figure 3–2. Ways in which one sample of 35 gay Indonesians first learned of the term. Categories listed on the horizontal axis: (1) from Indonesian mass media [19]; (2) from imported Western gay/lesbian media [0]; (3) from the Indonesian *gay* media [0]; (4) from religious sources [0]; (5) from friends [11]; (6) by wandering into a cruising area [3]; (7) from a sexual partner [2].

A few *gay* men first knew they could be *gay* after wandering into a public area frequented by *gay* men, and a few *gay* men and *lesbi* women became aware of the subject positions after being seduced. However, these are not the dominant pathways to learning of the *gay* or *lesbi* subject positions.

Figure 3–2 summarizes the responses of one sample of thirty-five *gay* men with whom I conducted extensive interviews. It shows that the element of Hasan’s narrative with the greatest resonance is his description of a kind of ‘Aha!’ moment when, during an encounter with mainstream print or electronic mass media, they come to think of themselves as *gay.* But unlike the ‘Aha!’ moments that dominate knowledge production in the West, this is the discovery of similitude rather than difference. About 90 percent of my interlocutors encountered these terms through mainstream print media, or from schoolmates or friends who learned of the terms through mainstream print media. This is true whether the individuals in question are from Java, Bali, Sulawesi, or other islands; whether they are Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist; whether they are wealthy, middle class, or impoverished; whether they live in cities or rural areas; and whether they were born in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s. Rarely is a cultural variable distributed so widely across such a diverse population. The critical role of mainstream mass media in the lives of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians is all the more notable when comparing the life narratives of *gay* men and *lesbi* women with those of warias. I have never heard warias cite mass media as the means by which they first saw themselves

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as warias; they learn of the waria subject position from their social environs. Hasan’s narrative rehearses a common story of discovery that most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians see as pivotal in their lives, a moment they recall without hesitation, as in the case of the following Javanese Christian man in Surabaya:

In elementary school the only word was *banci* [waria]. For instance, a boy who walked or acted like a girl would get teased with the word *banci.* So I didn’t know about the word *gay* until junior high. I heard it from books, magazines, television. And I wanted to know! I looked for information; if I saw that a magazine had an article about homos I’d be sure to read it…. I learned all of that stuff from the mass media…. So having someone come and tell me "It’s like this," that never happened. I learned it all through magazines and newspapers…. And when I read those things, I knew that I was *gay.*

For this man "homo" is an impersonalized descriptive category, whereas *"gay"* is a framework for understanding the self’s past motivations, immediate desires, and visions of an unfolding future. For many men an important aspect of this moment is realizing the possibility of a nonnormative masculine sexuality other than waria. Basir, a Muslim man who grew up in a small town in Sulawesi, tells his story in the following interview excerpt:

TB: When you were in your teenage years, did you already know the term *gay*?

BASIR: In my environment at that time, most people didn’t yet know. But because I read a lot, read a lot of news, I already knew. I already knew that I was *gay.* Through reading I knew about the *gay* world….

TB: What kinds of magazines?

BASIR: Gossip magazines, you know, they always talk about such-and-such a star and the rumors that the person is *gay.* So that broadened my concepts [*wawasan*], made me realize "Oh, there are others like me."

A Balinese Hindu man in his late twenties notes that: "In my first year of high school, I started to think. I started to think very hard: why do I like men? Because my other friends liked women. So from that my questions began, but they weren’t yet answered…. I turned to the print media. So if there was news about *gay* stuff I’d be sure to read it—letters to the editor that asked ‘why am I like this?,’ reports in women’s magazines, and so on."

One afternoon I was speaking with Darta, an unmarried Ambonese man in his early thirties living with his family in Surabaya. We were alone in the living room, but family members bustled about in the back of the house. I realized that since we were speaking Indonesian, they could be listening in on the conversation, yet Darta didn’t seem bothered. Sitting

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on the cool tile floor, I looked up at him and asked, "Does your family already know about you?" Darta answered, "Yeah, they know that I’m effeminate and I have sex with men. It’s no problem. They don’t say it’s a sin or anything. After they read magazines, they knew and understood, and accepted me."

"What magazines did they read?" I asked.

"Women’s magazines, like *Kartini*. Those magazines always have gossip columns. So that’s how they knew."

"When did you hear about *gay* for the first time?"

"I also read about it from magazines. When I first heard the word *gay*, it was in fifth or sixth grade [c. 1985], on the island of Ambon where I grew up. It was there that I first heard about *lesbi*. Earlier, you know—*gay* wasn’t around yet [*gay belum ada*]. But *lesbi* was already in women’s magazines … and I read lots of those magazines because mom was a regular subscriber. Mom and I loved reading the articles on sexual deviants. I was always effeminate, and one day she even said I was *lesbi*! Because she didn’t know the term *gay*; the term wasn’t public back then. But eventually I learned the term *gay* as well [*dapat gay juga*]. That was also from a magazine. There was some story about historic English royalty … Richard someone. When I saw that, I thought ‘there’re others like me.’"

Because *gay* and *lesbi* representations mingle in these mass media, most *lesbi* women, like the following Balinese woman, also trace their subjectivities to encounters with mass media: "I didn’t use the word *lesbi* because I didn’t even know the term [when I was young]. I didn’t hear about the word *lesbi* until about 1990, when I read it in a magazine. And right away, when I read about *lesbi* and what that meant, I thought to myself, ‘That’s me!’" Sukma, a Muslim who terms herself a masculine *lesbi* woman (*hunter yang lesbi*), recalls that although she had sexual relations with other women in her early teenage years, "I didn’t know *hunter* yet, but I already knew *lesbian, lesbi,* I knew. I’d already—I’d already read it, don’t you know? In magazines, through hanging out with friends who mentioned it, through means like that." Sukma talked about short articles in newspapers that would occasionally mention how women could have sex with women, concluding, "Through that I could know that I was *lesbi*" (*lewat itu saya bisa tahu bahwa saya itu lesbi).*

For these Indonesians, the prerevelatory period of sexual subjectivity is usually experienced locally; the local is the social space of the not-yet (*belum*) *gay* or not-yet *lesbi.* What they describe when they encounter the concepts *gay* or *lesbi* through mass media is a moment of recognition that involves a shift in sexualized spatial scale; it is not only that same-gender desire can be constituted as a subjectivity, but also that its spatial scale is translocal. The deictic "*That’*s me!" places the self in a dialogic relationship

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with a *distant but familiar Other.* On one level this spatial scale is national. One reason for this is that the mass media through which Indonesians come to *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivity employ the national language, Indonesian (not ethnolocalized languages like Javanese or Buginese), and incorporate themes of national unity and patriotism. A second reason is that, unlike ETPs, the concepts *gay* and *lesbi* are seen as self-evidently incompatible with ethnolocality: no one learns what *gay* or *lesbi* means through "Makassarese culture" or "Javanese culture." *Gay* and *lesbi* persons think of themselves as *Indonesians* with regard to their sexualities. On a second level, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, unlike warias, see their subjectivities as linked to a transnational imagined community: it is as if they are one island in a global archipelago of gay and lesbian persons. How can mass media have such unexpected effects from the margins?

The role of mass media is striking because there has been little coverage of openly *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians: while coverage is increasing, what Indonesians still usually encounter through mass media is gossip about Indonesian celebrities and particularly gossip about Western celebrities. In contrast to some other postcolonial states like India, imports now represent a substantial amount of cinematic and televised fare in Indonesia, and most Indonesians, not just *gay* and *lesbi* ones, learn about the West through mass media rather than "the direct experience of living abroad" (Utomo 2002:211). Although there is a long tradition of filmmaking in Indonesia dating back to the early twentieth century and at some points garnering nationwide audiences, in the late 1990s the Indonesian film industry generally produced only fifteen to twenty films per year, mostly low-budget erotic films that went directly to second- or third-run theaters (Ryanto 1998:42).[8](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns29) Homosexuality appears so rarely that in 1997 a representative from Virgo Putra Film Corporation noted with regard to the film *Metropolitan Girl* "that film is really great, because there is a lesbian [*lesbian*] scene in it, something that has never existed in an Indonesian film up to this point."[9](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns30) Print media frequently run articles on "hetero" sex crimes, with descriptions of police breaking up "sex parties,"[10](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns31) arresting sex workers, or seizing pornography. Such musings on sexuality are sometimes linked to globalization, but homosexuality typically receives at best indirect mention, as in the following 1996 editorial:

The speed of information and the high mobility of people on the face of this earth has resulted in sociocultural interaction [*interaksi sosio budaya*]. Within this sociocultural interaction there occurs a process of influence, imitation, and identification…. [We] must guard against this sociocultural interaction…. it’s possible that we will lose our self-identity as Indonesians…. So don’t be surprised if premarital relations, sexual relations outside of marriage, sexual harassment, rape, living together without being married, sexual deviations, infidelity and similar things are already no longer considered strange.[11](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns32)

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Figure 3–3. *Gay* men portrayed as possessed by animal lust. *Bali Post*, March 1, 1998:12.

In the 1990s *lesbi* women continued to receive more attention (i.e., surveillance) than men in mass media, but the focus shifted from lower-class *lesbi* women to entertainment figures, from couples to individual women, from ceremonies to sex acts, and from self-identified *lesbi* women to speculation on concealed homosexuality. An example is *Nusa*’s 1998 interview of the actress Inneke Koesherawati.[12](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns33) The article, entitled "I Indeed Embrace Devi Frequently," revolved around accusations that Inneke was the *lesbi* lover of another actress, Devi Permatasari: "To give the public certainty … [Devi] married [the male actor] Candra Priatna. ‘Society now has proof I’m not a *lesbi* woman,’ said Devi. But what about Inneke? For her the news of Devi’s marriage is already enough to disprove the gossip. ‘What more proof do you want. What’s clear is that I’m a *normal* woman.’"

Coverage on *gay* men has tended to follow the same pattern, with a particular interest in *gay* sexuality as a vice of the *kalangan eksekutif* or "executive classes." A 1998 *Bali Post* article "*Homoseksual*" is typical.[13](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns34) Opening with an image portraying homosexual men as "after meat" or possessed by animal lust ([fig. 3–3](#u12_ch03-fig3-3)), the columnist, an "andrologist-sexologist,"

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reprints two letters. In the first, "DP" describes befriending another man who showered DP with kindnesses and invited DP to spend the night in a hotel, where he seduced DP. In the second, "WA" describes feeling aroused by seeing men in tight pants or underwear. Both ask the columnist, "Am I homoseksual?" The columnist replies "No" to both, because the first was "receiving intensive sexual stimulation" and the second because "just because he likes a handsome man does not indicate that WA is homoseksual." Emphasizing the importance of conditioning, the columnist warns DP never to repeat his experience with another man and WA to avoid seeing men in their underwear, lest either become habituated to *homosexualitas*.[14](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns35)

When Indonesians encounter Western homosexuality in the mass media, what they usually see is not a one-hour special on "Homosexuality in the West"; rarely is it even the kind of demonstration described by Hasan. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians typically speak of brief, intermittent coverage: a single fifteen-second item on Rock Hudson’s AIDS diagnosis; an editorial about Al Pacino’s role in the movie *Cruising*; reports on the 1991 death from AIDS of Freddie Mercury, lead singer of the British rock band Queen; a gossip column about Elton John or Melissa Etheridge; or gossip in the wake of the hit movie *Titanic* that Leonardo DiCaprio might be gay. The contrast to *Liberty’s* coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s marriage in 1981 is evident: the emphasis has changed from Indonesia to the outside, from couples to individuals, from the acknowledged to the imputed, and from impoverished criminality to elitism. Alongside this attention to Western entertainers has come greater coverage of homosexuality outside Indonesia.[15](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns36)

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a growing number of imported programs presented gay and lesbian characters.[16](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns37) Particularly when homosexuality is a relatively minor element of the plot—as in movies like *Cruising* or *The Wedding Banquet*, and television shows like *Melrose Place*—such programs are difficult to censor on the basis of their homosexual elements.[17](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns38) Although some *gay* men and *lesbi* women actually see such films, because the films either make it onto Indonesian screens or, increasingly, are available on video or VCD, what *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians found most significant through the 1990s and early 2000s are national print media, particularly newspapers and women’s magazines like *Kartini* and *Femina.* In most cases the references to homosexuality are negative—psychologists presenting homosexuality as a pathology, crime exposés, or disapproving gossip columns. The mystery of how Indonesians come to *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity deepens in the face of this paradox: it is mainstream mass media that play the crucial role, yet "homosexuality"—Western or Indonesian—appears quite infrequently and inconsistently in these mass media. Denunciations of sexually decadent programming from the

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West usually cite premarital sex, adultery, and unmarried cohabitation between men and women rather than homosexuality.

Beginning in the mid-1990s there has been an increasing, if still small, presence of *gay* and *lesbi* voices in general mass media, with a substantial increase after 2002. This remains a radical act because it collapses the boundaries between the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds and the *normal* world; it could thus have serious repercussions, including bringing shame upon the family or being expelled from the household or workplace. The scholar and activist Dédé Oetomo has remained the most salient *gay* or *lesbi* voice in mass media; few articles on homosexuality fail to interview him, and on several occasions he has appeared in full-color photo essays, complete with partner, house, and car—elements that mark him (and most images of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity in mass media in the 1990s) as middle class.[18](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns39) On June 9, 1997, Oetomo appeared on the talk show *Buah Bibir* (Topic of Conversation). Emceed by Debra Yatim, a woman known for her connections to women’s rights circles, the show was well known for its sensational topics such as adultery and domestic violence. The topic for discussion on June 9 was *lesbi* women, but Oetomo, willing to be publicly identified as *homoseks*, was the guest star (several *lesbi* women appeared with their faces blackened out). This marked the first time that *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivities had appeared so openly on national television. When Minister of Information Hartono criticized RCTI (the station producing *Buah Bibir*) as well as station SCTV, which produced a similar program, *Portret*, Yatim defended the show by appealing to ETPs and style: "gemblak in [the area of] Ponorogo [in East Java] have been around for a long time, in [the West Java city of] Indramayu there are *tayuban* dances in a homo style [*gaya homo*], and even at the Borobudur temple there are reliefs about homosexuality."[19](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns40) When Minister of Religion Tarmizi Taher added that the "promotion of *gay* and *lesbianisme*" must not be "provided with opportunities" in television, radio, or other public forums, the editors of *Kompas* joked, "But how is it that béncongs [warias] are in almost every telecomedy, sir?"[20](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns41)—highlighting how the waria subject position is less threatening than the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions, so clearly novel and with transnational resonances.[21](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns42)

*Lesbi* women appear much more rarely in mass media of their own accord. One Balinese *lesbi* woman appeared in the tourist magazine *Bali Eko* in the mid 1990s: "It was in English … and in the article I came out, using my real name, and talked about how hard it was being a *lesbi* here…. My parents and family were mad at first—‘how can you do this?, they said’—but I think it’s been good. It forced us to talk about things more, but they still pressure me to marry."

Since 2002 several private television stations have run segments of ten to thirty minutes on *gay* and *lesbi* life in Indonesia, including face-to-face

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interviews. *Gay* and *lesbi* topics have appeared on talk shows with greater regularity, with celebrities like Ivan Gunawan openly identifying as *gay*. The film *Arisan!* included a major plotline concerning the struggle of Sakti, a *gay* man, to accept himself and find love with another man. Though Sakti’s upper-class life bears little resemblance to the lives of most *gay* men, the film, with its two on-screen kisses between Sakti and his lover, was widely viewed in theaters or on video. Additionally, a growing number of books on *gay* life have appeared that focus on rich Jakartans, detailing an elite world of sex parties and wealth alien to the lives of most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians (e.g., Priaga 2003). This greater coverage of *gay* and *lesbi* lives in the mass media, however biased, will surely have unintended ramifications for how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians in ensuing years understand their subjectivities.

Occasionally *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesians respond to unfavorable coverage, as in an exchange of letters from the Surabaya newspaper *Surya* in 1998. On January 8 the newspaper published a letter by someone using the initials "M.Y.R." that claimed, "In this era of globalization, everything demands openness…. Up to now I have always regarded the life of *gay* people as something normal, with the note that everything has always been limited to friendship and communication. But after more than a week of research in Surabaya, I’ve become nervous. Apparently the life of *gay* people there is just a business mask, to get money easily." A week later the newspaper published the response of "A.T." After stating how he had known the *gay* world since 1984 and had even appeared on the cover of *Intisari* magazine in May 1993 for an article about *gay* issues, A.T. emphasized that "For all that time I have never known that there are *gay* men who sell themselves for money. What I know is that there are *hetero* people (there are some who already have families) who prostitute themselves for money…. Don’t just base your research on a week’s work and then draw conclusions."

Such back-talk can appear in other formats. One day in March 1998 I was hanging out in the salon of a *gay* man in southern Bali when two members of a local *gay* group suddenly entered the door. Tossing their motorcycle helmets on the sofa and pushing aside a stack of glossy fashion magazines, they sat down and started speaking animatedly: "We got invited to participate in this radio show about being *gay* three days ago, and earlier this morning we went on-air [anonymously] with a parent and a psychologist." The other man chimed in: "But that psychologist was so stupid! He didn’t know his material. He kept saying that it was a disease, that if a client got married and had kids that meant he was cured. We argued with him for the whole show."

Rarely, mainstream mass media address the organizational activities of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians. One of the most extensive examples was the

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five-part series run by the newspaper *Nusa* from November 23 to 28, 1997, covering the Third National Congress of *Gay* and *Lesbi* Indonesians in Denpasar, Bali. Most of the reportage was sensationalistic, focusing on sexual practices and the supposed shame and secrecy of the attendees. However, the final installment—entitled "The ‘Medicine’ That Makes the People Who Like the Same Kind [*Kaum Sejenis*] Happy: To Be Recognized by Society"—explored, albeit briefly, the politics of acceptance articulated by many of the conference attendees. Focusing on the fact that no *gay* or *lesbi* organization has ever been recognized by the government, in a context where many waria organizations are so recognized, the article noted that "it is difficult for [*gay* and *lesbi* organizations] to be legalized by the government for the reason that *gay* identity [*identitas gay*] does not exist in the [system of] government administration."[22](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns43) As in the case of Bonnie and Jossie’s wedding almost two decades before, the issue was not sex acts but belonging and recognition.[23](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns44)

The *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions thus lead us to a specific sociological problem. As a new, consumerist middle class emerged following the oil crisis of the 1970s, Indonesians began to learn of the possibility of thinking of oneself as *gay* or *lesbi* through the intermittent reception of messages from mass media. These messages do not intend to convey the possibility of a kind of selfhood. They are often denigrating and dismissive, but above all they are *fragmentary.* Because I have bundled together a series of examples, I may have given the false impression that such coverage is an everyday occurrence. But normally these discussions of "homosexuality" are but isolated moments in the buzz and confusion of other reportage, even in the early 2000s. It is not an incitement to discourse or a coherent "hailing." But the sum of these partial asides, sporadic humaninterest stories, and irregular interviews has been a slowly increasing hum of discourse tenuously linkable to *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities, reaching the farthest corners of Indonesia. It has implied that one could understand one’s selfhood in terms of same-gender desire, and thus that *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are somehow akin—suggesting that *gay* is conceptually closer to *lesbi* than to waria. These media disseminate the idea that *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities exist, while being vague, incomplete, and contradictory as to what they might entail in terms of everyday practice. They also imply that these subjectivities are Indonesia-wide phenomena, nonethnolocalized and bearing some kind of "family resemblance" to gay and lesbian subjectivities outside Indonesia. From their beginnings to the present, these media have "exposed" not a fully articulated discourse of homosexuality, but a series of incomplete and contradictory references, in translation, sometimes openly denigrating and hostile. It is not a transmission of self-understanding so much as a fractured set of cultural logics

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reconfigured within Indonesia. Yet from "translations" of this intermittent reportage come subjectivities by which myriad Indonesians live out their lives. In the 1980s an Indonesian might encounter such reportage a few times a year at most, if an avid reader; in the 1990s and 2000s it became more frequent but still minimal given the universe of topics appearing in the mass media. The question, then, is how modes of subjectivation become established when the social field in which they arise establishes them neither as discourses nor as reverse discourses. Indonesian mass media certainly do not intend to set forth the possibility of *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions, nor do the imported programs they frequently rebroadcast; in fact, they rarely take a negative stance on *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions. Yet it is these mass media that, in a very real sense, make *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities possible, just as the national imagined communities that are so socially efficacious worldwide could not have existed before Gutenberg struck type to page.

THE "PROBLEM" OF DUBBING

Eros and language mesh at every point. Intercourse and discourse, copula and copulation, are subclasses of the dominant fact of communication…. Sex is a profoundly semantic act … human sexuality and speech [together] generate … the process … whereby we have hammered out the notion of self and otherness.

—George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Languageand Translation*

Mass media were important in the archipelago long before *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. From the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, print media played a central role in the formation of nationalism among the diverse and far-flung peoples of the Netherlands East Indies. Print media were also important in the establishment of Indonesian (a dialect of Malay formerly used as a lingua franca of trade) as the language of this new imagined community, a language that could permit communication among a populace speaking about 550 languages, or approximately "one-tenth of all the languages in the world" (Sneddon 2003:5).[24](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns45) Electronic media have become increasingly significant: by the late 1990s each of Indonesia’s then-five private television stations was importing approximately seven thousand shows per year, many of which originated in the United States (Republika 1996), and beginning in the 1990s dubbing became an increasingly popular way of presenting these broadcasts to Indonesian audiences (Lindsay 2005).[25](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns46)

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It was in this context that, in a joint news conference on April 4, 1996, one year after one of Indonesia’s private television stations went national for the first time, Minister of Information Harmoko and Minister of Education and Culture Wardiman Djojonegoro announced that "foreign films on television should no longer be broadcast in their original language version with Indonesian summaries or subtitles but were to be dubbed into Indonesian" (Lindsay 2005). This regulation on dubbing (*dubbing, sulih suara* [to substitute sound]) was to take effect by August 16, in accordance with a soon-to-be-passed broadcasting law, which included the first set of broadcasting regulations to be issued in eighteen years.[26](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns47) This bill, which had been debated in Parliament for several months at that point, was to become one of the most contentious legal documents of the New Order’s twilight years. The requirement that all programs be dubbed into Indonesian was greeted with little fanfare: as the public relations manager of TPI noted, many of the programs imported each year by private television stations were already dubbed in response to viewer demand. Acquiescing to the state’s long-standing goal of building nationalism through language planning, the public relations manager of RCTI added that the requirement was "a good policy that will help build Indonesian skills in society" (Republika 1996).

Within a month of the announcement, however, Aisyah Aminy, a spokesperson from the House of Representatives, suggested "this problem of dubbing is going to be discussed in more depth" (Suara Pembaruan Daily 1996). Revealing dissent within the state apparatus, Aminy expressed concern that "at present, foreign films on television are not dubbed selectively and show many things that do not fit well with the culture of our people" (Suara Pembaruan Daily 1996). The influential armed forces faction also weighed in against the measure, but the House forged ahead, incorporating the dubbing requirement in its draft broadcast law of December 6, 1996.

What made the broadcasting bill such a topic of discussion was the way in which it was debated and revised, extraordinary even for the arcane machinations of the New Order bureaucracy. A first draft of the bill was completed by a legislative committee early in 1996 and sent to Parliament for approval. As usual in the New Order, the bill had been essentially crafted by the president and even bore his initials (McBeth 1997:24). In December 1996 Parliament duly rubber-stamped the bill, returning it to Soeharto for his signature. After seven months, however, on July 11, 1997, Soeharto dropped a bombshell: in an official letter he refused to sign the draft broadcast law and returned it to Parliament for revision, claiming that "several articles will be too difficult to implement from a technical standpoint" (Kompas 1997; Soeharto 1997). This unconstitutional act was the first time in national history a president refused to sign

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a draft law already passed by the House, a refusal made all the more perplexing by his approval of the original bill (Kompas 1997). House debate on the president’s proposed revisions began on September 18, 1997, and was marked by unusual (for the Soeharto era) interruptions from Parliament members and heated argument over executive–legislative relations.

In the wake of the president’s refusal, government sources gave conflicting accounts of the issues at stake. One issue, however, stood out above the others for its cultural, rather than directly economic, emphasis: the edict on dubbing. What was notable was the total reversal that occurred during parliamentary revisions: when the dust cleared in December 1997, Article 25 of the draft law, concerning dubbing, "had been completely reversed. All non-English language foreign films henceforth had to be dubbed into English, and all foreign films shown with Indonesian subtitles" (Lindsay 2005). Why this sea change? As one apologist later explained:

Dubbing can create gaps in family communication. It can ruin the self-image of family members as a result of adopting foreign values that are "Indonesianized" [*diindonesiakan*]…. This can cause feelings of becoming "another person" to arise in family members, who are in actuality not foreigners … whenever Indonesians view television, films, or other broadcasts where the original language has been changed into our national language, *those Indonesians will think that the performances in those media constitute a part of themselves. As if the culture behind those performances is also the culture of our people.* (N. Ali 1997:341–342, emphasis added)

In the end, the final version of the bill indeed forbids dubbing most foreign programs into the Indonesian language. What is of interest for our purposes here, however, is the debate itself. Why, at this prescient moment in 1997—as if foreshadowing the New Order’s collapse the following year—did translation become a focal point of political and cultural anxiety? What made the ability of Sharon Stone or Tom Cruise to "speak Indonesian" no longer a welcome opportunity to foster linguistic competency but rather a sinister force threatening the good citizen’s ability to differentiate self from Other? Why, even with widespread discontent in many parts of the archipelago, was the state’s fear suddenly recentered, not on religious, regional, or ethnic affiliation overwhelming national loyalty, but on transnational affiliation superseding nationalism and rendering it secondary? And what might be the hidden linkages between this dubbing controversy and the crucial role mass media play in *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities?

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DUBBING CULTURE

An error, a misreading initiates the modern history of our subject. Romance languages derive their terms for "translation" from *traducere* because Leonardo Bruni misinterpreted a sentence in the *Noctes* of Aulus Gellius in which the Latin actually signifies "to introduce, to lead into." The point is trivial but symbolic. Often, in the records of translation, a fortunate misreading is the source of new life.

—George Steiner, *After Babel:Aspects of Language in Translation*

We now have two problems centering on mass media. First: how do Indonesians come to see themselves as *gay* or *lesbi* through the fragmentary reception of mass mediated messages? Second: why would the question of dubbing foreign television shows into the Indonesian language provoke one of the greatest constitutional crises in Indonesia’s history? I suggest that the first problem can be addressed through the second. In effect, these two sets of social facts can be "dubbed," throwing up striking convergences and unexpected resonances. Both of these problems raise issues of translation and authenticity in an already globalized world. This conjuncture of translation and authenticity is powerfully gendered and sexualized in the Western tradition, which "suggests that in the original abides what is natural, truthful, and lawful, in the copy, what is artificial, false, and treasonous … like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful" (Chamberlain 2000:315). The "authentic" originary is masculinized, the "inauthentic" translation is feminized, and the process of translation heterosexualized. From this dominant perspective both dubbing and homosexual sex appear sterile, failed, unfaithful. The *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions demand a queer take on translation: How long before a word is no longer a "loanword"?

It was long after becoming aware of the link between mass media and *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities that I learned of the dubbing controversy. I had been struggling with the question of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities for some time without a clear conclusion, particularly concerning questions of agency. Were *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians simply mimicking the West? Were they severed from their traditions once they occupied the subject positions *gay* or *lesbi*? Alternatively, were these Indonesians queering global capitalism, subverting its heteronormativity and building a movement dedicated to human rights? Were they deploying the terms *gay* and *lesbi* tactically, as a veneer over a deeper indigenousness?

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A notion of "dubbing culture" allowed me to move beyond this impasse of "puppets of globalization" versus "veneer over tradition." Through individual encounters with mass media—like reading one’s mother’s magazines or an advice column in the local newspaper, or viewing television coverage of a gay pride march in Australia—Indonesians construct subjectivities and communities. *Construct* is the wrong word; it connotes a self who plans and consciously shapes something.[27](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns48) Better to say that these Indonesians "come to" *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity through these entanglements with mass media; their constructive agency, and the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions themselves, are constructed through the encounter. This is not a solely individual process; although the originary encounters with magazines or newspapers are typically solitary, as soon as the person begins to interact with other *gay*- or *lesbi-*identified Indonesians, he or she reworks these mass-mediated understandings of sexuality. Romance, for instance, is a crucial element of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities but rarely appears in media treatments of homosexuality.

A set of fragmented cultural elements from mass media is transformed in unexpected ways in the Indonesian context, transforming that context itself in the process. In other words, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians "dub" ostensibly Western sexual subjectivities. Like a dub, the fusion remains a juxtaposition; the seams show. "Speech" and "gesture" never perfectly match; being *gay* or *lesbi* and being Indonesian never perfectly match. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, as in dubbing culture more generally, this tension is irresolvable; there is no "real" version underneath, where everything fits. You can close your eyes and hear perfect speech or mute the sound and see perfect gesture, but no original unites the two in the dubbed production. This may not present the self with an unlivable contradiction, however, since in dubbing one is invested not in the originary, but rather in the awkward fusion. Disjuncture is at the heart of the dub; there is no prior state of pure synchrony, and no simple conversion to another way of being. Where traditional translation is haunted by its inevitable failure, dubbing rejoices in the good-enough and the forever incomplete. Dubbing is not definitive but heuristic, interpretative—like many understandings of the ethnographic project.

It is this dimension of dubbing that transcends the apparent dilemma of "puppets of globalization" versus "veneer over tradition." The idea of dubbing culture indicates that the root of the problem is the notion of authenticity itself, the colonialist paradigm that valorizes the "civilized" colonizer over the "traditional" colonized. In line with the observation that postcolonial nationalisms usually invert, rather than disavow, colonial categories of thought (inter alia, Gupta 1998:169), the Indonesian state simply flips the colonial binary, placing tradition over modernity as the ultimate justification for the nation. To the obvious problem of justifying

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a recently formed nation in terms of tradition, the Indonesian state (like all national states) has worked ever since to inculcate a sense of national culture *(kebudayaan nasional).* This is built on the pillar of the Indonesian language and propagated via mass media. Through mass media, citizens are to come to recognize themselves as authentic Indonesians, carriers of an oxymoronic "national tradition" that will guide the body politic through the travails of modernity. By speaking in one "Indonesian" voice, a hierarchy of tradition over modernity can be sustained and reconciled with statehood.

Dubbing, an inevitably and openly unfaithful translation since words and lips never match, threatens this hierarchy: it is lateral, rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The authoritative voice is at odds with the visual presentation. Dubbing culture sets two elements side by side, blurred yet distinct. It is a performative act that, in linking persons to subject positions, creates subjectivities (Butler 1990); but this dubbing link is *profoundly not one of suture,* a term originating in film studies regarding "the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers" (Silverman 1983:195). In dubbing culture, subjectivity is constituted not through suture but through collage. Yet this productively partial incorporation of the self into discourse is not a failed performance: in its iteration, its holding together of two ostensibly incompatible cultural logics without conflating them, a space for subjectivity—a subject position—appears.

I have described dubbing in terms of a disjuncture between image and voice, and many Indonesians see it that way, but another way to conceptualize dubbing is as the substitution of one voice for another, as indicated by the phrase *sulih suara*, a common term alongside dubbing. Early twentieth-century Russian linguists like Bakhtin (1981) and Vološinov (1973) became interested in "reported speech," a topic that has also gained the attention of current scholars of language and culture (e.g., Gal 1998; Rumsey 1990; Silverstein 1993). Reported speech, which in Indonesian as in English can take the form of direct or indirect discourse ("She said, ‘I’m exhausted’" versus "She said that she was exhausted"), typically operates as what Bakhtin termed authoritative discourse, which works "to determine the very bases of our ideological interactions with the world" (Bakhtin 1981:342). For Bakhtin, "authoritative discourse … remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert … it enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (343).

Dubbing destabilizes the very notion of reported speech. It is highly indirect discourse—not just paraphrasing speech but rendering it into a different language—yet it is hemmed in by a double authority: the original dialogue it reworks, and the image of moving lips with which it must

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attempt to unify. Yet the attempt is intended (not doomed) to fail; a dub rejects the binarism of "totally affirming" or "totally rejecting" the discourse it transforms, just like *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are neither imitating Western homosexualities nor utterly distinct from them. Dubbing demands a new grid of similitude and difference, one appropriate to an already globalized world.

The original television show or movie may preexist its Indonesian dub temporally, but to the interpreting audience neither voice nor image is prior. They happen together; neither dominates. Agamben, citing Benjamin’s concern with the relationship between quotation and the new "transmissibility of culture" made possible by mass media, notes that quotation "alienat[es] by force a fragment of the past … mak[ing] it lose its authentic power" (1999:104). But dubbing culture (in a literal sense as well as the metaphorical sense I develop here) is more than just quotation; it adds a step, first alienating something but then reworking it in a new context. The power of the dub comes not by erasing authenticity but by inaugurating new authenticities not dependent on tradition or translation. It is a form of reported speech that disrupts the apparent seamlessness of the predubbed original, showing that it too is a dub, that its "traditions" are the product of social contexts with their own assumptions and inequalities. Thus it is not the case that *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities in Indonesia are disjunctive and heuristic while Western sexual subjectivities (queer or otherwise) are seamless. What we can learn from the Indonesian case is that the apparent coherence of all subjectivities is a cultural effect, and the inevitable "failure" of coherence does not mean that subjectivity is flawed or inauthentic.

The Indonesian authorities were keenly aware of these disruptive implications during the dubbing controversy. For decades, Indonesian had been the vehicle allowing Indonesians to speak with one voice. But now the possibility that Sharon Stone could "speak Indonesian" meant that this vehicle was spinning beyond state control—into the control of globalizing forces, but also into an interzone between languages and cultures, a zone with no controlling authority: "the Indonesian dubbing was so successful in making the language familiar that viewers lost any idea that it was strange for foreigners to speak Indonesian…. The language was too familiar, too much like real speech, too colloquial, and therefore the speech was too dangerous" (Lindsay 2005:11).

The sudden shift during the dubbing controversy—from an insistence that *all* foreign television programs be dubbed into the Indonesian language to an insistence that *none* of them could be so dubbed—reveals a tectonic shift in the position of mass media in Indonesian society. For the first time, fear of this juxtaposition, of Westerners "speaking" the national tongue, tipped the scales against a historically privileged concern

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with propagating Indonesian as national unifier. Now the ability of dubbing (and the Indonesian language itself) to explode the national imagined community—to show that one can be Indonesian *and* translate ideas from outside—presented a danger greater than the potential benefit of drawing more sharply the nation’s archipelagic edges.

Dubbing itself is clearly not how Indonesians come to *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivity; I have never heard them specifically mention dubbing, and dubbing did not become ubiquitous until the 1990s. This is why the dubbing controversy took place in 1997, not 1981, 1961, or 1861. However, the controversy was about more than the technique of dubbing or even mass media generally: it concretized a sense that the relationship among scale, selfhood, and belonging had been cast into what for some was a disturbing state of flux. The trajectory of this process stretches back over one hundred years, for "the path by which recognition became centered in the Indonesian nation … is indissociable from the history of ‘communication’ … the history of the nation is made not from autochthonous sources and not from foreign borrowings but from the effects of these connections." Not similitude, nor difference, but the dubbing of these two, so that the originary moment of Indonesian national culture lies in "the history of hearing and overhearing that went on between groups of the Indies and between the Indies and the world" (Siegel 1997:7, 6).

What does it mean when what you overhear is a dub?

Dubbing culture is about a new kind of cultural formation in an already globalized world, one for which the idiom of translation is no longer sufficient. It questions *the relationship between translation and belonging,* asserting that the binarisms of import–export and authentic–inauthentic are insufficient to explain how globalizing mass media play a role in *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions but do not determine them outright. For queer studies, one lesson is that binarisms of rupture versus indigenity do not capture the possibility of subject positions with more nuanced and conjunctural relationships to the West, ones that may stand outside usual definitions of identity politics. In a metaphorical sense, one could say that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians dub Western sexual subject positions: they overwrite the deterministic "voice of the West," yet they cannot compose any script they please; their bricolage remains shaped by a discourse originating in the West and filtered through a nationalistic lens. This process of dubbing allows *gay* and *lesbi* individuals to see themselves as part of a global community, but also as authentically Indonesian. Unlike warias, they never ask, "Are there people like me outside Indonesia?" because it is already obvious—"built into" the dubbed subjectivities—that there are such people. These Indonesians imagine themselves as one national element in a global patchwork of gay and lesbian national subjectivities, not as "traditional," because *gay* and *lesbi* have a national spatial scale.

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More broadly, dubbing culture as a metaphor speaks to the nonteleological, transformative dimensions of globalizing processes. It is useful for questioning the ability of globalizing mass media to project uniform ideologies. Contemporary mass media have enormous power, but this power is not absolute; it can lead to unexpected results—like *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions themselves. The metaphorical use of dubbing culture fleshes out theories linking ideological apparatuses with Althusser’s thesis that "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects" (1971:160–162). By this, Althusser meant that ideology forms the subject positions by which individuals come to represent their conditions of existence to themselves and to others. Althusser terms this function of ideology interpellation or hailing and illustrates it in terms of a person on the street responding to the hail, "Hey, you there!" When the person turns around to respond to the hail, "he becomes a *subject.* Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him" (Althusser 1971:163). Many social theorists, particularly those interested in mass media, have found this a useful analytical starting point. The question most commonly posed to this framework by these theorists concerns the issue of structure versus agency: "How and why does the subject turn? … What kind of relation already binds these two such that the subject knows to turn, knows that something is to be gained from such a turn" (Butler 1997:107)?

Part and parcel of this dilemma of agency is the question: how to explain the circumstance when people "recognize" something an ideology does not intend? Indonesian mass media never meant to create the conditions of possibility for national *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions. One way to address this problem might be through the dubbing culture concept, where what is recognized in the hail is itself a product of transformation. This does not entail compliance with state ideology. Yet neither does it imply a freewheeling, presocial, self-assembling of an identity from elements presented by mass media, independent of social context.

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians often playfully employ the notion of authenticity (*asli*)—I have often heard gay men describe themselves as *asli gay.* In doing so, they implicitly challenge the state’s monopoly on designating what will count as tradition in Indonesia. Authenticity is crucial for mass media studies as well. For Benjamin, the very concept of authenticity is put under erasure by mass media. Because mass media depend on mechanical reproduction (no mass media circulate as a series of handcrafted originals), and for Benjamin "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity," it follows that "the whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical … reproducibility." Benjamin sees the most significant aspect of this reproducibility to be that of movement: "above all, [technical reproduction] enables the original to meet the beholder halfway….

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[The] cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room" (1955:220–221).

*Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are not moved from one place to another, as Benjamin saw mechanical reproduction, but are the dubbing of cultural logics in new ways. Dubbing culture is thus articulation in both senses of the term, an interaction of elements that remain distinct—like the image of speech and the dubbed voice—and also the "speaking" of a (dubbed) subjectivity.[28](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns49) This lets us "queery" globalization without posing either an oppositionally authentic "native" or globalization as simple movement.

Dubbing culture also speaks to conceptions of translation in the age of mechanical production. As Benjamin notes with reference to magazines, "For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting" (1955:226). This is because captions are a guide to interpretation, juxtaposed to the work of art yet at a slight remove. They serve as "signposts" that "demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them" (Benjamin 1955:226). They are a mediation internal to mass media, a translation within.

Dubbing, far more than a subtitle, is a caption fused to the thing being described. It comes from the mouth of imagic characters yet is never quite in synch. The moving lips never match the speech; the moment of fusion is always deferred, as dubbed voice, translation-never-quite-complete, bridges two sets of representations.[29](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns50) *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians dub culture as they live a subjectivity linked to people and places far away. They are completely Indonesian, but to be "completely Indonesian" requires thinking of one’s position in a transnational world. In speaking of translation, Benjamin wrote that "unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (1955:76). *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians have made of that echo subject positions that bespeak subjectivity and community even under conditions of oppression. They live in the echo, in the mass-mediated margin of incomplete translation, and find there authenticity, meaning, sex, friendship, and love.

The concept of dubbing culture has a reflexive dimension for ethnography in an already globalized world. To the extent that translation is a structuralist enterprise framing movement between languages and cultures in terms of grammar and meaning, many contemporary ethnographers engage in dubbing culture when they employ poststructuralist frameworks that question received understandings of the relationship among signifiers, and between signifiers and signifieds. One reason dubbing

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culture profoundly challenges established frameworks for anthropological analysis is that in it the act of interpretation precedes the anthropological encounter, so the analytical moment is not external to the ethnographic moment.

Contemporary ethnography, then, can be said to be engaging in dubbing culture when it brings together parts and wholes, data and theory. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians engage in dubbing culture as they come to sexual subjectivity; they show not that "authentic Indonesian tradition" is a lie but that this authenticity is processual, constructed through active engagement with an unequal world. And if tradition and belonging are not given but constructed, they can be contested and transformed. The playing field is certainly not even—*gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are not about to become fully accepted members of Indonesian society—but it is a playing field nonetheless, and there is space for change. Similarly, even in an already globalized world, non-Western cultures are not doomed to the status of reruns, even when confronted by Western hegemony.

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# PART TWO

Opening to *Gay* and *Lesbi* Worlds

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# CHAPTER FOUR

Islands of Desire

TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF SIMILITUDE

We do not know whether two things are to be regarded as the same or not unless we are told the context in which the question arises. However much we may be tempted to think otherwise, there is no absolute unchanging sense to the words "the same."

—Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*

If becoming *gay* or *lesbi* typically begins with mass media, how is a whole *gay* or *lesbi* life forged from this first moment of dubbing culture?

Many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians express the idea of a *gay* or *lesbi* life by speaking of a *gay* world and *lesbi* world (*dunia gay*, *dunia lesbi*), partially overlapping worlds they distinguish from the *normal* world (*dunia normal*). As Howard notes in his study of *gay* men in Jakarta, "the use of the term ‘normal’ is telling, as normal life (*kehidupan normal*) is also recognized in national political rhetoric as a recognition of social stability and order" (1996:177). *Gay* and *lesbi* sexuality have no place in the *normal* world, and during the time of my fieldwork *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians overwhelmingly had no interest in a Western-style politics seeking a place in that world. Less contiguous spaces than distributed archipelagos, the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds were the primary "sites" of my fieldwork. [Part 2](#u13_pt02) of this book delves into these worlds to gain a better understanding of how *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are lived. This chapter explores sex, desire, love, and relationships, including "heterosexual" marriage. It may seem strange to discuss "heterosexual" marriage in a chapter on homosexual erotics, but the importance of marriage to *gay* men and *lesbi* women offers important clues about the relationship between sexuality and nation for all those living in the postcolonial nation-state of Indonesia.

Most "homosexualities" in Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia share with dominant Western "homosexualities" an assumption that sexuality and gender overlap. While "race" is sexualized in the United States, I do not know of any case where, for instance, sex between one African American and another, regardless of their gender, is labeled "homosexual"

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while sex between an African American and an Asian American, regardless of their gender, is labeled "heterosexual." Nor do I know of a case where an older person having sex with a younger person is seen as "heterosexual" while sex between two younger people or two older people (regardless of the genders involved) is seen as "homosexual." "Homo" and "hetero," as terms of sexuality, are assumed to index gender; thus, what is referred to as gender is more accurately glossed "heteronormative gender." The partial fusion of sexuality and gender appears universal, an apparent similitude that invites biologizing or the search for counterexamples. Another possibility is to reconceptualize the grid of similitude and difference itself, asking how conceptions of gender and sexuality are forged and sustained in specific contexts.

*Gay* and *lesbi* desires are unique in Indonesia in that they are erotics within, not between, sexual subject positions. Both *gay* men and *lesbi* women speak of their sexualities as a "desire for the same." This contrasts with the desire for difference characterizing the desire of *normal* women for *normal* men, *normal* men for *normal* women, warias for *normal* men, and *normal* men for warias. Even when *gay* or *lesbi* erotics are articulated across a heterogendered divide—between effeminate and masculine *gay* men, or between tombois and ceweks—this is seen to take place within a field of homosexual desire.

Similitude is the style (*gaya*, *cara*) of *gay* and *lesbi* desire, revealed in phrases like *sama jenis* (same type) or *sejenis* (one type) in distinction to *normal* desire, which is for *lain jenis* (different type). *Sama* is a common word for "same"; in *gay* language it can be transformed into *sémong* "*gay* man." *Sama* can also mean "together, with." *Suka* means "joy, pleasure, desire," and the phrase *suka sama suka*, roughly "desire with desire," is a colloquialism meaning "by mutual agreement, especially with regard to sex and marriage" (Echols and Shadily 1997:530).[1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns51) *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians often use *suka sama suka* to describe their desires. Their *gay* or *lesbi* sexual relationships are never arranged by their families; they are always chosen, like the "love marriages" that have become the ideal in contemporary Indonesia. Later I discuss how marriage based on love and choice has long been linked to modernity and national belonging, and how this rhetoric of similitude intersects with *gay* and *lesbi* views of having a difference or deviance (*kelainan*, from the root word *lain*, "other") in regard to Indonesian society. Here I wish to linger over *gay* and *lesbi* desire—a desire for the same (*suka sama*) realized through choice (*suka sama suka*)—and the complexities hinted at in *sama*’s polysemy.

This polysemy recalls how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians often say they are the "same" across Indonesia. It also recalls the common view that they are the "same" as gay and lesbian Westerners, as indexed by the terms *gay* and *lesbi* themselves, even if their understanding of these Westerners’

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lives is unclear. The *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions confront us with questions of similitude in reference to both scale and desire.

Westerners have advanced theoretical tools—feminist, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist—for analyzing difference, but only a handful of clichés for theorizing similitude. The focus on difference is not misguided or unproductive; it is incomplete without an equally thoroughgoing theorization of the similitude it implicitly evokes. In anthropology, difference is seen to be our contribution to social theory. It is expected: unproblematic, obvious, and authentic. It asks nothing more than to be recorded, typologized, interpreted, and rhetorically deployed. Similitude, however, awakens disturbing contradictions. On the one hand, similitude is uninteresting: if you study the Other and they are the same, what is there to say? Are they a proper Other at all? At the same time, there is discomfort: similitude cries out for explanation and modeling. It must have a reason: is it diffusion or convergent evolution? There is a sense that contamination has occurred and authenticity compromised. The tendency for ethnographic work to structure itself around difference renders *gay*, *lesbi*, and other nonethnolocalized aspects of Indonesian culture invisible to Western observers.

The lifeworlds of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians demand an anthropology of similitude—of the sama. Not only do they employ a problematic of similitude in understanding their desires, but much of their daily lives seems familiar. *Gay* men hang out in parks and shopping malls, perform in drag shows at discos, and engage in sexual practices that recall those of many gay Westerners. *Lesbi* women meet in each other’s homes, listen to American lesbian folksingers, and appear to identify in terms recalling "butch" and "femme." Difference has often stood as the default paradigm for understanding sexuality, gender, and globalization. A "homo" approach may prove productive: "Can similarities encode difference, and differences similarities?" (Weston 1995:92). In an already globalized world, an anthropology of similitude can illuminate how what appear to be Western ways of being are transformed through dubbing culture.

DESIRE

How do *gay* men conceptualize their desire for men? One clue is offered by the term *orang sakit* (sick person), which can be used with reference to any man who desires men. There is certainly an element of self-hate in the phrase "sick person," and some politically minded *gay* men have called for its abolition. But when I have heard *gay* men use the phrase, the connotation has been more specific and neutral: *gay*ness is like a chronic illness, something for which accommodations must be made on

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an ongoing basis. It is something important but not necessarily central to one’s sense of self, and it can be "transmitted to susceptible individuals" (Howard 1996:8).

From the evidence of my interlocutors, other researchers, and narratives published in zines and mass media, it appears most *gay* men start thinking of themselves as *gay* in their late teens to early twenties. Some *gay* men recall feeling same-gender attractions while boys—toward another young boy or an adult man in the neighborhood, or toward someone on television (Indonesian or not; one *gay* men was attracted to the actor Lee Majors on the 1970s’ show *The Six Million Dollar Man*). However, a frequent pattern is for *gay* men to emphasize the agency of others. A common view is that to be *gay* is willed by God. Same-gender desire may be viewed as innate, "carried from birth"; as one man put it, "my instinct calls me to men, not women." This can also take the form of a belief one is biologically *gay*, a notion reinforced by reportage some *gay* men have encountered concerning "gay gene" research in the West. These are all essentialist understandings of becoming *gay*, recalling the penchant of Westerners for understanding sexuality in terms of immutability (Halley 1994).

However, environmental, constructionist explanations are the most popular etiology for *gay* subjectivity, phrased in terms of addiction (*ketagihan*) or habit (*kebiasaan*), recalling Sucipto’s 1920s claim that "life is following habits."[2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns52) Such an addition can permanently alter the self as surely as one cannot forget one’s mother-tongue. Sammy, a man from Sumatra, mused on how his life could have been different: "I think that if I’d never left my village, it’s possible that I wouldn’t have become *gay*. Because every time I go back to the village, my feelings are different than my feelings here: I can have feelings for women. I hang out with my father and brothers, I talk about girl problems and stuff like that. And it’s *normal* life, it’s no problem! So from that I think there’s a big possibility that if I’d never left my village, I’d have a house by now, children, a family. Maybe I’d just have a little bit of feelings for men."

Environmental explanations rarely cite effeminacy: few *gay* men crossdressed regularly as children or thought they might be warias. When I asked one Balinese man if he ever thought he might be waria, he said that "No, I didn’t think of myself as waria. I just knew that if I looked at a man I wanted [*suka*] him." Another kind of environmental explanation is the claim that someone became *gay* because his heart was broken by a woman. Above all the language of addiction and habit usually refers to being seduced by another male while a child or adolescent.[3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns53) Often the seducer does not see himself as *gay*, indeed does not know of the term, so it is more accurate to say such seduction makes *gay* subjectivity more possible. The seducer is often an older male neighbor, uncle, or cousin, but seduction can also take place away from home:

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I used to live in the pesantren, from the last year of junior high school until the end of high school. About four years … it was at that time that I started to understand same-gender relations [*hubungan sejenis*] because I was seduced by my Koranic recitation teacher…. I was 18 or 19 years old at the time and he was 25 years old. The first time we were together I didn’t have any emotions [*belum rasa*]…. When we were sleeping together he liked to hold me and he’d ejaculate…. [At] the beginning I felt very uncomfortable. I didn’t like feeling the sperm in his *sarung* … but he started asking me to hold his penis … eventually I started to like it…. He had his own room, so we could do it easily. He was always very helpful to me in my studies; perhaps at the beginning he was only sympathetic and eventually there arose desire [*suka*]. I don’t know about him for sure, but there arose love in me for him as well. Eventually his own studies at the pesantren were finished and so he had to return to his home province. And I was sad half to death, because he got married at that point; he was pushed to get married by his parents. I was so sad that I fled here to the city.

This environmental understanding of same-gender desire can be a source of confusion because many *gay* men prefer sex and even romantic relationships with *normal* men. *Gay* men often call such persons authentic (*asli*, *tulen*) men: on one occasion a *gay* man asked me, "Have you ever had sex with a *normal* man, with an asli *normal* man [*lelaki normal asli*]?" *Normal* men are desired for a variety of reasons: they are (it is assumed) never effeminate, and they are also better at keeping relationships secret because they do not like to hang out and gossip like *gay* men do. Most *gay* men believe that all men are capable of same-gender arousal and love given the opportunity, but they insist that these *normal* men could not become *gay* themselves: as one *gay* man put it, "That’s not possible. If a *hetero* becomes *gay* temporarily [*jadi gay sementara*], he’ll go back to being *hetero*." Another *gay* man described how *gay* men seduced *normal* men by saying "we insert our selves [*pribadi*] into the other person." In this view a *normal* man can be seduced into desiring a *gay* man, but these temporarily acquired desires do not persist: one persona is "inserted" into another. Relationships with *normal* men can make the distinguishing character of being *gay* unclear:

We can’t be hypocrites: if a man likes a man that means he’s *gay*, right? That’s the opinion of all people, right? But in my own view, what I’ve experienced, it’s not always that way—there are certain men who like *gay* men from a certain structure, a certain form. He wants to be with me, but it’s not for certain that he wants to be with another *gay* person…. But what’s strange is that there’s a feeling of jealousy and anger on his part if I’m with someone else. Now, from that we can know from a psychological perspective he’s already started to enter, to feel the *gay* life [*merasakan kehidupan gay*].

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Figure 4–1. The fatherly modern male. Office of State Minister for Population (1999):25.

Most *gay* men prefer men who are masculine—using terms like *macho*, *maskulin*, and, most frequently, "fatherly" (*kebapakan*). Effeminate *gay* men attracted to masculine men thus have somewhat heterogendered desires. Desirable masculine men (*normal* or *gay*) ideally have an absence of effeminacy and a quiet, assertive demeanor; height and a mustache are pluses, as is employment as a policeman or military man. This is a narrow notion of acceptable masculinity. Historians and anthropologists have noted how across the archipelago the range of masculinities has been much broader; for instance, "‘Pure’ Javanese tradition … regards a very wide range of behavior, from he-man to rather … ‘effeminate,’ as properly masculine" (Peacock 1968:204). The more restricted conception of masculinity prevalent in contemporary Indonesia, the conception *gay* men draw upon in their views of the ideal lover, is linked to idealized images of the modern middle-class male ([fig. 4–1](#u14_ch04-fig4-1)). This notion of the fatherly modern male took form during Soeharto’s New Order and was promulgated by state discourse, particularly the state’s powerful family planning program. Soeharto, after all, called himself "father" (*Bapak Soeharto*) in opposition to his predecessor’s moniker "brother" (*Bung Karno*). *Gay* desire is colored by national discourse.

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For *lesbi* desire a heterogendered form predominates: it is considered unusual for a tomboi to desire another tomboi, or for a cewek to desire another cewek. *Lesbi* women who do not experience their desires through a heterogendered lens tend to reject the tomboi/cewek binarism altogether. While this could be seen as evidence of influence from Western notions of butch and femme, it seems to originate in the fact that no female-to-male analogue to the waria subject position existed as "gay" and "lesbian" translocated to Indonesia, so that both female homosexuality and female-to-male transgenderism have been taken up within the scope of *lesbi*. Waria preexisted *gay*, but they now form a binarism making thinkable a noneffeminate male homosexuality (cf. Jackson 1999a). The tomboi subject position, however, appears not to have had a separate existence before the *lesbi* subject position; it tends to form a subtype within *lesbi*, troubling the distinction between homosexuality and transgenderism under the sign of "female."

Many tombois speak of themselves as the pursuer of women—as indicated by the term *hunter*, used by tombois in southern Sulawesi and supposedly in parts of Java as well. To be a hunter is to hunt women, be they cewek or *normal*. Hen, the protagonist of the tomboi autobiography *Menguak Duniaku*, explains how he seduces women in terms tombois across Indonesia would find familiar (cf. Blackwood 1999; Graham 2001):

I begin by trying to fathom her feelings. I treat her like a beloved by protecting and helping her, taking her wherever she wants to go without being asked to do so. I go to her house every few days. If in the end she can sense that my attitude towards her is more than that of a friend, slowly I’ll tell her who I really am. And if she can accept [*menerima*] my love, I’ll give her all I own and I’ll do anything for her happiness … just like how any *normal* man would act towards their beloved. (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:206)

Clearly Hen assumes his beloved cannot be another tomboi. This understanding of *lesbi* desire occasionally crosses over into popular culture, as in [figure 4–2](#u14_ch04-fig4-2), from a 1996 article entitled "Lesbians and Lifestyle." This cartoon from the newspaper *Kompas* depicts a tomboi and cewek couple, figures dimly familiar to the Indonesian public since the wedding of Jossie and Bonnie. A tomboi fails to connect with a man (possibly because he is effeminate); Cupid’s arrow strikes the tomboi instead and the tomboi’s desire is misdirected toward a woman, who does not reciprocate that desire but is only a object to be pursued. It is not clear from the image whether the pursued woman is supposed to be a *normal* woman or a cewek: the distinction is irrelevant from the cartoon’s perspective, which assumes desire is always of masculine for feminine.

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Figure 4–2. Image accompanying article on "Lesbians and Lifestyle." *Kompas*, January 13, 1996.

This understanding of *lesbi* desire as one of masculinity for femininity fits the widespread pattern of devaluing women’s sexuality (Blackwood and Wieringa 1999:55). But it does not tell the whole story, for ceweks do sometimes "hunt" tombois: in the words of one tomboi, ceweks are "far the most aggressive partners, they are always the first to ask for sex" (Graham 2001:fn9).[4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns54) Some tombois even say they became tomboi because a cewek seduced them (Graham 2001:21). While some lovers of tombois do identify as *normal*, others see themselves as a kind of *lesbi* woman.[5](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns55)

In *Menguak Duniaku*, Hen views desire between a tomboi and cewek as a kind of homosexuality: "I’m not *normal* because I love someone of the same kind as me [*sejenisku*]"; later he adds, "I have the soul of a man not because of my strength, bravery, or firmness, but because the objects of my love are women" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:12, 280). Many tombois would agree with Hen that what they see as homosexual desire is more foundational than their masculine gendering: the tombois "wanted to love women, and they had noticed that persons with male bodies had much less trouble in finding women partners than they had" (S. Wieringa 1999a:218). In other cases it appears that a desire for women

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follows from a prior sense of being masculine and having a man’s soul that begins in childhood (Blackwood 1999). Two dominant viewpoints concerning etiology exist among warias: someone is waria because they (1) have a woman’s soul or (2) dress like women. It appears that having a man’s soul or dressing like a man can make one tomboi, but so can sexual desire for women—a multiplicity of possible understandings of "desire for the same" reflecting the *lesbi* subject position’s complexity.

For both *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, another common element of their sexual subjectivities is a lack of desire for difference. Many *gay* men talk about not feeling a desire for women—and *lesbi* women of not feeling a desire for men—as important to their sense of self. In the West as well, a lack of desire often plays a central role in gay and lesbian subjectivities, distinguishing them from bisexual subjectivities. While most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians marry "heterosexually," they tend not to see themselves as bisexual, not only because *biseks* is still a rather academic term in Indonesian but because they see marriage as, so to speak, another island of desire.

SEX, IDENTITY, AND BEHAVIOR

I did not conduct a survey of sexual practices during my research, since subject positions are my primary interest. Sexual practices are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for *gay* subjectivity; there are both *gay* virgins and men sexually active with other men who do not think of themselves as *gay*. However, through my ethnographic and HIV prevention work I gained familiarity with the range of sexual practices in which *gay* men engage. As a male researcher it was more difficult to talk with *lesbi* women about sex practices, but particularly through HIV prevention work I was able to broach this topic.

The greatest difficulty in discussing the place of sex in *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities is not a lack of data but the identity-behavior binarism that still dominates discussions of sexuality. This binarism is of limited value because it entails a behaviorist approach that assumes behavior precedes and determines identity (and often valorizes a vague notion of "fluidity"). The concept of "men who have sex with men" or MSM illustrates this process. This term (which by the early 2000s had been dubbed in Indonesia as LSL (*lelaki suka lelaki*)) was invented in HIV prevention circles to refer to men who had sex with other men but did not identify as gay (as the saying goes, it’s not who you are, it’s what you do). "MSM" is to "gay man" as "behavior" is to "identity." This assumption that one could label behavior without identity failed to take into account how what we do (our "behaviors") always shapes how we think about ourselves (our "identities"). Through many channels, including the program planning

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requirements of organizations that fund HIV prevention and treatment, the distinction between "identity" and "behavior" that the MSM category was to stabilize has broken down. Despite the fact that HIV prevention discourse intended "MSM" to label behavior without identity, there soon emerged talk of the "MSM community," "self-identified MSM," and "MSM peers." The most remarkable term in this regard—one I have heard used in international HIV/AIDS conferences—must be "male partners of MSM." A moment’s reflection should convince that, by definition, the male partner of an MSM is himself an MSM. Yet this term exists and can make sense because "identity" versus "behavior" is a false dichotomy (Elliston 1995): "identity" is not simply a cognitive map but also a set of embodied practices, and "behavior" is always culturally mediated through self-narrative.[6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns56)

While many cultures of the Indonesian archipelago have had well-developed erotic vocabularies, in contemporary Indonesia sex is also shaped by the "family principle." The common word for "sex," *seks*, is itself a loanword, and a widespread circumlocution is *hubungan suami-istri* or "husband-wife relations." One result of this is that many *gay* men gloss the practices they engage in with other men as *main-main* (playing around) rather than "sex," which is often understood to be something that occurs between men and women, involving penile-vaginal penetration and the possibility of pregnancy. This is reinforced by religious norms that define sex in terms of adultery or premarital relations between women and men. For some *gay* men, one thing that distinguishes them from *normal* men is that they recognize what they do with other men as "sex" at all. This is often linked to the complaint that *normal* men are passive (*pasif*); they just want to ejaculate and "lie there" as the *gay* man fellates them or sits on their penis, while a *gay* lover will engage in kissing and foreplay. One *gay* man asserted that "It’s much nicer having sex with a *gay* man. There’s more give and take. With a regular man it’s just an act of devotion. I’m active, he’s just quiet. After he ejaculates he doesn’t pay attention to me!" *Gay* men often claim that Western men are more romantic and active than *normal* or *gay* Indonesian men, based on mass media images, Western gay pornography they have seen, or a sexual experience they or a friend has had with a Westerner. With the rise of video technology and growing Internet access, Western gay pornography has become more common, though still somewhat difficult to obtain and even more difficult to find a place to watch it without the knowledge of family members.

Since most *gay* men come to *gay* subjectivity via mass media, sex with other *gay* men usually begins in the late teens or early twenties. *Gay* men who have had sex with men earlier in life usually see those experiences as distinct. They fall into two main categories: sex with childhood peers and

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sex with older men. *Gay* men sometimes talk of the latter in terms of their being a victim (*korban*) and see it as sexual abuse. For example, "It was first by my uncle, when I was in the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school. He put his penis between my thighs. I rejected being anally penetrated, but my uncle wanted to try it. It was very painful and was a kind of trauma that made me not want to be given it like that."

Adult *gay* men engage in a range of sexual practices roughly familiar to most gay Westerners. Kissing and hugging are considered erotic and things *normal* men are less likely to agree to do. Oral sex is very common and there are many slang terms for it: *karaoke, oral, ngésong*, even *gaya 69* "69 style" for mutual oral sex (the symbolism of "69" for this practice is suggested by the way the digits 6 and 9 wrap around each other). All of these terms can take active or passive grammatical forms in Indonesian (for instance, *(me)ngesong* or *diesong*); for oral sex the active form always refers to the man using his mouth. Some *gay* men enjoy swallowing semen when they have oral sex. Rimming (oral-anal contact) is probably less common but by no means unknown; a widespread *gay* term for it is "cleaning the toilet" (*cuci WC*). Interfemoral sex (placing one man’s penis between the thighs of another) is a much more familiar sexual practice than in the West and is known in *gay* language as *jépong* from *jepit* (pinching, in this case pinching the thighs together). Mutual masturbation is also widely practiced; anal penetration with fingers is well known, with dildos less so. Anal sex itself, while perhaps not having the symbolic centrality it often possesses in the West for understandings of male homosexuality, is significant for many *gay* men. *Gay* men who penetrate (and *normal* men who go to male, female, or waria sex workers) often say that they prefer anal sex over vaginal sex because the anus is drier and thus "tighter." This reflects a preference for "dry sex" in much of Indonesia; women, for instance, sometimes take traditional medicines (*jamu*) or insert alum wands into their vaginas to dry them out. Terms for anal sex can also have passive or active grammatical markers. For instance, one of the most widespread *gay* language terms for anal sex, *tempong*, can be rendered *(me)nempong* (to penetrate another man anally with one’s penis) or *ditempong* (to be penetrated anally by other man’s penis). This division is so clear that the prefixes can be used in isolation; *gay* men sometimes ask if a person prefers "*me-*" or "*di-*" or can say they don’t like anal sex "*baik diatau me-*" ("whether penetrated or penetrator").

Beyond kissing and hugging, the most popular sexual practices in which *lesbi* women engage, in order, appear to be oral-vaginal contact, rubbing vaginas together (referred to in Makassar as *pompa kosong* or "empty [gas] pump"), vaginal penetration with fingers, and more rarely, vaginal penetration with dildos. I have not heard of oral-anal contact or anal penetration as recognized forms of *lesbi* sexuality but assume they take

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place. In *Menguak Duniaku*, one of Hen’s lovers loses her virginity to Hen’s finger and they find blood on the sheets afterwards; when the lover asks how Hen learned to be so good in bed, Hen replies that she learned from books about sex between men and women (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:489). Across Indonesia there seems to be an understanding that when desire is structured across a tomboi/cewek divide, it is the tomboi who penetrates the cewek, not the other way around.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE: CHOOSING TO BELONG

To the extent *normal* Indonesians know of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, they assume them to be interested only in sex. But while sex is certainly important to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, they consistently valorize same-gender love as more consequential; through it, sex gains meaning and social significance. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians across the archipelago emphasize that they fall in love with persons of the same gender: nowhere in Indonesia is there a predominant belief that *gay* and *lesbi* desire is limited to sex alone. Love (*cinta*, less often *kasih sayang* or *kasih*) is extremely important to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, and it is a key way in which their sexualities are linked to national discourse. What is distinctive about being *gay* or *lesbi* is not same-gender sex (it is usually taken for granted that both men and women will engage in it, given the chance) but love. Like most tombois, Sukma insisted that "sex has to be based on love. I must date a woman first and start to care about her and love her before I want to have sex with her." Love is the epitome of being *gay* or *lesbi*. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians even speak of their love as greater than the love between *normal* men and women. The distinction between authentic (*asli*) and inauthentic or false (*palsu*) is crucial: *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians speak of love as asli or caution against palsu love.

There are no models for *gay* and *lesbi* love; like all aspects of *gay* and *lesbi* life, one cannot learn about this from family, tradition, religion, or state. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians instead dub dominant heterosexual models of love that in the contemporary period are shaped by the state’s family principle. The meanings of *gay* and *lesbi* love track assumptions about marriage in the *normal* world; this is one reason why most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians marry "heterosexually." The resonances between same-gender love and "heterosexual" marriage in *gay* and *lesbi* life speak to how these subject positions are formed at the conjuncture of globalization and postcoloniality.

The expectation in Indonesia that adults will marry (barring some special circumstance, like being a Catholic priest or waria) is well documented (G. Jones 1994:61); across Indonesia, "individuals, whether male

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or female, are not considered adult until they have married heterosexually" (Blackwood 1999:191) and "notions of celibacy or single life styles are virtually unknown" (Hoskins 1998:17).[7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns57) But if sexual desire is (arguably) a human universal, there is nothing natural about why it should take particular forms of marriage. The apparent universality of the marriage imperative compels a critical response that appreciates the varied meanings "marriage" takes in different historical and cultural contexts, particularly how marriage has come to link coupledom, national belonging, and the consumerist self of capitalism (Abelove 1992; Collier 1988; Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako 1997; Engels 1972; Freeman 2002; Rubin 1975; Zaretsky 1976).

As is the case elsewhere, marriage in Indonesia is in the midst of enormous change (Ahearn 2001; Castells 1997:221–235). In comments regarding Spain that are appropriate for Indonesia as well, Jane Collier notes a shift in the latter part of the twentieth century toward a notion of marriage based on love, a shift often understood as being from "following social conventions" to "thinking for oneself," but in fact shaped by larger cultural forces including the rise of wage labor (so that the inheritance of property from one’s parents was no longer central to one’s class status) (1997:45 and passim). Collier concludes that "television and opportunities for urban employment did not simply offer villagers exposure to different ways of behaving…. people taking advantage of new opportunities changed the wider socioeconomic context for everyone, transforming the consequences of individual action" (47). In Indonesia as well, social transformations have led to new dubbed understandings of marriage, desire, and selfhood that are not simply the direct product of globalization.

With a growing degree of socialization between the sexes (even among adolescents) has come a steady increase in the age of marriage in Indonesia. Between 1971 and 1990, overall age at marriage rose from 19.3 to 21.6 years for women; between 1970 and 1990 it rose from 23.8 to 25.4 years for men (G. Jones 1994:80, 104). During the social upheavals of the late colonial period, World War II, and the independence struggle, there were no detectable changes in age of marriage in Indonesia (G. Jones 1994:68–69); these marriage trends are associated with persons born since the early 1960s, just like *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. One apparent constant is that "the proxy data (percentage of women single at ages 45–49) … give no evidence that [not marrying] is becoming any more than an aberration in a resolutely family-centered Malay world" (G. Jones 1994:63). A triply compulsory heterosexuality makes marriage in contemporary Indonesia appear as the overdetermined imperative of tradition, religion, and nation. Mainline doctrines in Islam, Christianity, and Balinese Hinduism view marriage as essential. The great ethnolocalized variation in adat or "local tradition" across Indonesia seems to evaporate

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in the face of marriage. The postcolonial state takes great interest in redeploying such "tradition." Historically marriage has been a key institution shaping statecraft within the archipelago (Pemberton 1994:71, 142, 215) and elsewhere, but attention to marriage was largely limited to royal circles and the ritual event of the wedding itself, with little provision for officialized marriage among commoners. With the rise of modern forms of governmentality that view societies in terms of national "populations" (Foucault 1991), interest has shifted to the proper and successful marriage of each citizen: "no modern nation-state can ignore marriage forms, because of their direct impact on reproducing and composing the population" (Cott 2000:5).

This national vision of marriage is shaped by and promulgated through family planning discourse (Dwyer 2000; Robinson 1989; Warren 1993) and based upon the state’s family principle, which stipulates that the nation is made up not of citizens but of families. The marriage envisioned by the state involves a single husband and wife where the husband is head of household, but increasingly the wife is to have a career in addition to her domestic duties. It assumes a middle-class conception of the self organized around responsibility, consumerism, and career, even if one is not middle class oneself. For instance, when one *gay* man said that "in Indonesia if you’re not married you’re not seen as mature in your thinking. Because you don’t shoulder any responsibility … you can just go wherever you want," it is this national rhetoric of marriage "in Indonesia" that he referenced.

One day in Makassar when I was discussing marriage with Umar and Hasan, *gay* men who had been friends for years, Umar tried to sum up what he saw as the prevailing attitude by saying, "Here in Indonesia you have to marry to prove you can make a small, harmonious family." Almost every term in Umar’s statement—"Indonesia" (rather than "Makassar" or "among the Bugis"), "small, harmonious family"—comes from the state’s family principle. I then asked: Why is it that I’ve never seen a case anywhere in Indonesia of a *gay* man and *lesbi* woman marrying each other? Wouldn’t that solve all the problems? Hasan eyed me resignedly and shook his head: clearly I didn’t understand. "The most important reason why that doesn’t happen is that it wouldn’t be a real marriage. Marriage isn’t just for show, it isn’t to hide who we are. It’s something that you must take seriously." The model of love *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians internalize from childhood pivots around this ideal of *authentic* heterosexual marriage actualized through love and choice.

The meanings of marriage that circulate in Indonesian popular culture are strongly shaped by the state and mass media. Many scholars have commented on the decline of arranged marriages in Indonesia.[8](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns58) While a

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range of marriage practices still exists, and there are claims that polygamy is on the rise due to Islamic revivalism, the dominant model of marriage is based on monogamous love and choice. The importance of this to *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities cannot be overstated. In Indonesian and many ethnolocalized languages, the verb "to marry" can take active or passive forms: one can "be married off" or "marry someone." For decades the latter has been eclipsing the former, a process linked to conceptions of nationalism and modernity that also draws from Western models of romantic love transmitted through mass media (Robinson 1989). It strongly emphasizes notions of authenticity and choice; love should be true and freely chosen by individuals, not families (E. Wieringa 2003).

Late colonial literature brought together nation, people, and language through the power of love, particularly around the conflict over "arranged" marriages, associated with tradition, versus "love" marriages, associated with modernity and nationalism. Such conflicts figure centrally in nationalist literature, condensing debates over tradition, modernity, and collective identity.[9](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns59) Love and choice imply democracy, equality, and a horizon beyond the family and locality. This literature frames love as selfless when directed toward either the nation or the hoped-for spouse: "nationalism and love are linked because through it, peoples are mixed and a new authority is created" (Siegel 1998:16). This is a love that "demands recognition" and is "inseparable from the struggle for progress" (Siegel 1997:140); by definition it breaks from ethnolocalized custom (adat). Properly chosen love makes you a proper citizen. It is for this reason that the failure of national-love is not barrenness, but sickness (*sakit*), an unnational love that can kill:

What would the cure for love sickness be if not proper recognition, that is, recognizing cinta [love] for what it is: *the power to compel recognition*. More precisely, it is the power to compel recognition of desire transformed into idealism. That idealism is directed towards the advancement of the Indonesian people. At that time [in the 1920s and 1930s], this meant not independence and not equality. It meant rather *the possibility of having a certain identity*. One which marked one as progressive. A progressive person was in touch with the modern world outside the Indies. (Siegel 1997:146, emphasis mine)

Thanks to a love performed through choice rather than arrangement, Indonesian national literature enacts a "twin approach to constructing a modern self and imagining a modern society," whereby "in gaining a modern self, [Indonesians] gain a modern vision of the world, and vice versa. Selfhood becomes permeated with political meaning" (Rodgers 1995:44).[10](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns60) Thus, in the decades before independence, love, choice, modernity, and national belonging became interlinked. While there are still arranged marriages, and many that fall between arrangement and choice, the ideal of chosen marriage now dominates images of the proper Indonesian citizen; purely arranged marriages are viewed as unsophisticated, and women and men are increasingly assumed to play an active role in choosing their future spouses (Hatley 1997; Hull 2002). This is a love that does not just happen to you through arrangement but is performed through choice. (One possible reason for the popularity of the film *Titanic* in Indonesia was its dramatization of a triumph, beyond the grave, of choice over arrangement.) It is based on a paradox of modernity that crops up in contexts beyond Indonesia: love enables choice but is not chosen. Thus, one cannot choose not to choose love. As Ahearn notes in the case of Nepal, "while love empowers lovers in non-romantic realms, people do not have any control over love itself" (2001:150); and as Collier notes in the case of Spain, "‘modern’ courtship customs were as culturally constructed, and socially enforced, as ‘traditional’ ones" (1997:101). Another paradox is that love overcomes difference and creates sameness—as the editors of the zine *GAYa Nusantara* once wrote, "with love we can learn to overcome differences between all people." [11](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns61) Ideally, *gay* and *lesbi* love should make *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians equal to *normal* ones ([fig. 4–3](#u14_ch04-fig4-3)), but their "desire for the same" is not recognized as having this ability to overcome difference.

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Figure 4–3. Love should make *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians equal to normal ones. *GAYa Nusantara* 59 (February 1999):36.

Performatives depend on cultural context: only an umpire can declare "strike!" and only a judge or jury can pronounce someone "innocent" in a court of law. The ability of love to compel national recognition depends on a modern conception of heterosexual desire (termed, after all, with transformed English terms [*normal* or *hetero*] just like *gay* and *lesbi*). *Gay*

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or *lesbi* love does not get you national belonging: heteronormativity lies at the heart of national love.[12](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns62) Indonesians who term themselves *gay* or *lesbi* mark themselves as in touch with the modern world outside the archipelago, but in terms of a love that receives no recognition. It does not belong.

The pivotal cultural logic is that when marriage is arranged, sexual orientation is secondary, but sexual orientation comes to the foreground—to some extent, comes into being—through a language of choice. The failure to "be married off" is a failure of the family to see one of their members properly married. However, when marriage hinges on choice—on a relational, choosing self animated by love—that self and that love fail if not heterosexual. It is a failure of the self and a failure of citizenship. As one married *gay* man put it when advising unmarried *gay* men, "marriage is up to us." The shift from arranged to chosen has not implied a parallel shift from public to private; this "choice" remains a highly public act. To be national and modern, this choice must be heterosexual choice. It is through heterosexuality that self and nation articulate.

A heteronormative worldview can dismiss same-gender sex as devoid of deeper implication, but same-gender love leans dangerously close to kinship. Since many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians see their capacity for loving people of the same gender as their distinguishing characteristic, more than same-gender attraction (which is seen as ubiquitous), this hegemony can bring incredible pain and desperation. Many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians love their partners passionately: wed them in unrecognized ceremonies in the dead of night at the homes of sympathetic preachers, sleep cuddled in their arms, trade rings, go to the photographer’s shop for portraits that are carried in wallets until faded and scarred by creases. It is this love, far more than the actual sexual acts themselves, which is prohibited by dominant discourses of national belonging.

*GAY* AND *LESBI* RELATIONSHIPS

Within the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds, love thus ideally leads to an ongoing same-gender relationship. The common Indonesian term for a boyfriend or girlfriend is *pacar* and the relationship *pacaran*, and these terms are sometimes used by *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians to refer to their same-gender relationships. Other terms used are *jodoh*—"marriage partner, future spouse" (Idrus 2003)—and even husband (*suami*) or wife (*isteri*). However, many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians avoid using these terms in the *gay* or *lesbi* world; as a *gay* man from Central Java put it, "if we say ‘suami’ or ‘isteri’ it means marriage." Most *gay* men have girlfriends in addition

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to any love relationships in the *gay* world, and the question "Do you have a pacar?" is typically interpreted to mean "Do you have a girlfriend?" One term less linked to the *normal* world is *join*: "Do you have a join?"

Regardless of the term used, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians see themselves as "joined" to their lovers within the *gay* or *lesbi* world. These relationships can persist for decades and involve great fidelity, devotion, and passion. Most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians see no benefit in having their same-gender relationships known to the *normal* world. When I once told one *gay* man that some gay Westerners adopted children, he replied that the idea horrified him because if with two men "people can assume they’re just friends," but a child would make the relationship visible to the *normal* world. The "marriage" of Jossie and Bonnie in 1981 was influential because it was atypical (see [chapter 3](#u12_ch03)).

Most sexual relationships in the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are with other Indonesians, not Westerners, since there are relatively few Westerners in Indonesia and they travel mostly in expatriate circles. However, in all three of my major field sites I met *gay* men in relationships with Western men. Early in my fieldwork I hypothesized that these relationships might represent a significant modality by which Western conceptions of homosexuality translocate to Indonesia. This now appears unlikely. Such relationships are fairly rare, and language barriers often impede communication. Additionally, since a Western lover offers prestige, money, and sometimes travel to the West, *gay* men who find a Western lover often try to keep that Westerner from meeting other *gay* men, curtailing the couple’s involvement in the *gay* world. As a result, gay or lesbian Westerners with Indonesian partners do not affect the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds as often as might be expected. I have knowledge of only a handful of *lesbi* relationships with Western women; two reasons for this beyond my own status as a man are the smaller number of Western women expatriates and the greater difficulty *lesbi* women face in meeting Westerners, given restrictions on women’s movement.

A constant threat to *gay* relationships is for one member to have sex outside the relationship, a practice most often termed *selingkuh*, which normally means "dishonest, corrupt" (Echols and Shadily 1989:494). Selingkuh refers to sexual dalliances within the *gay* world; many *gay* men have girlfriends or wives, but I have never heard them term sex with women selingkuh. Selingkuh is a concern in the *lesbi* world as well; many tombois say one reason they do not spend more time socializing with each other is the fear that another tomboi will "hunt" their own girlfriend. While *lesbi* sexuality has a strong erotic component that should not be underestimated, *lesbi* women, like *gay* men, consistently rank romance and the goal of a long-term relationship as important priorities.

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MARRIAGE AND SELFHOOD

*The Mystery of Marriage*

One night in a park I met Andy and four of his friends. Andy identified as *gay,* explaining that his boyfriend of ten years was married with two children. When I asked if the boyfriend should get divorced he stared in shock: "Of course not. He needs descendants and a wife. I want to get married in five years—I already have a girlfriend. You mean you won’t marry as long as you live?" When I nodded, the other men confronted me in astonishment: "How could you not want to get married? You’ll be lonely when you get old! Everyone must have descendants. According to Islam, if you don’t yet have children, you haven’t yet entered the society of the Prophet Muhammad."

In this story *gay* men implicate me in their world while discussing marriage in terms of the triple compulsion of religion, tradition, and nation. The story is from Surabaya and involves primarily Muslim men, but Hindu and Christian men speak in similar terms. When I told a Hindu *gay* man in Bali that *gay* men in Surabaya tended to speak of marriage as their number-one problem, he replied, "Here it’s the same. Most of my friends who are the same age as me, around thirty, have already started to think: am I going to get married or not?" In Makassar, Michael talked about how his lover Arief already had a fiancée and would probably marry next year; Arief’s younger sibling had married, increasing the pressure on Arief. Michael also expected to marry someday, in response to his own desires and pressure from his aunt and grandmother, yet he hoped to sustain his relationship with Arief. A Bugis Muslim from Makassar, who unlike most *gay* men had told his family he was *gay* and moved away from the parental home, nevertheless said that "I’m one hundred percent sure I’m going to get married. I’m sure that my family will demand it…. The problem is, in Indonesia—maybe outside it’s different—everyone has to get married. Lots of *gay* people get married. Even if [your family] knows that you’re *gay* they want you to marry." In Howard’s study of *gay* men in Jakarta, marriage was viewed as "an essential step in becoming a whole person" regardless of religion, ethnicity, or class (1996:246).

While the stereotypical response of Western parents to a son’s coming out is "I’ll never have grandchildren," Indonesian parents who learn a son is *gay* sometimes say they can accept this so long as he marries a woman. This parental sentiment may sound contradictory to Western ears, but it reflects a cultural logic shared with most *gay* men and most *lesbi* women, as revealed in their "heterosexual" marriages and their assumption that that gay and lesbian Westerners marry "heterosexually." During my 1997–1998 fieldwork I always placed on my desk a picture of

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my partner that shows him standing with a female colleague. *Gay* men and *lesbi* women who saw this picture would invariably point it out and say, "Your partner is already married," or "His wife is taller than he is!" My explanation that she was a friend and that neither my partner nor I wanted to marry a woman was be met with disbelief and pity. In their eyes we were deviants, transgressing what they understood *gay* subjectivity to entail.

During my Surabaya fieldwork I conducted three focus groups bringing together approximately ten *gay* men for an evening in a neutral environment. Toward the end of one focus group a debate broke out between the members of the group and Faisal, a *gay* man who assisted me in moderating the groups. We were discussing marriage when the focus group members asked if Faisal or I would ever marry. My negative reply brought surprised looks, but it was Faisal’s firm contention that *he* would never marry ("because I am *gay* after all") that brought an air of distress to the room. No one was more upset than Ikbal, a friend of Andy who was married to a woman. "Maybe you are more modern and liberal, Faisal. I am absolutely in disagreement and unhappy with your decision. I’m sure you could do it with a woman if you tried."

"Ikbal, I think you are *biseks*," Faisal said, using a term unfamiliar to most *gay* men that reflected his work in HIV prevention.

"But I only became able to have sex with a woman after I got married. You’ve already condemned yourself to be *gay*," Ikbal replied.

Murmurs broke out around the room. One person said, "I think that Faisal is really waria, not *gay*, because he never plans to marry."

Ikbal leapt on the statement: "Faisal, the problem with you is that you don’t want to take any steps toward being *normal*. You’re being shallow." Then, in exasperation, Ikbal turned to me: "I just can’t imagine you not getting married, Tom. I’m trying to understand it, but my mind just can’t believe it. I’ve always assumed that all men get married, even warias, even *gay* men."

For the Western observer, the starkest difference between *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians and gay and lesbian Westerners is probably that the former usually *choose* to marry "heterosexually," have children, and see this as part of a complete *gay* or *lesbi* life (Boellstorff 1999).[13](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns63) Across the archipelago unmarried *gay* men and *lesbi* women cite marriage as the most important issue in their lives. Most *gay* men past their early thirties have married, and most *lesbi* women, particularly ceweks, marry before turning thirty. Cases of *gay* men or *lesbi* women forced into marriage certainly exist. For some, marriage is a traumatic event: people have committed suicide rather than be compelled to marry, or at the news that their longterm lover has decided to marry. However, such cases are easy to explain in terms of oppression.

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What poses the greater theoretical challenge is that unmarried *gay* men and *lesbi* women can look forward to their wedding day with all the anticipation of any *normal* Indonesian. This is a compromise between homosexual desire and social norms concerning marriage, but it is not just an external imposition: for many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, it is a source of meaning and pleasure allowing them to enjoy homosexual relationships while pleasing their parents, carrying on the family name, minimizing sin, raising dearly loved children who can care for them in old age, and becoming full members of national society. For both *gay* men and *lesbi* women, the causality of marriage is complex, and my analysis is predicated on taking seriously the meaningfulness of their marriages. Because marriage brings together in such stark relief sexuality and belonging, it is crucial to how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians see their place in national culture.

*The Marriage Imperative*

During the time period of my fieldwork (1992–2004) it was considered acceptable for a man to stay unmarried until about twenty-five or so. But while Western models of homosexual identity presume that the pivotal emotional crisis takes place during adolescence (see [chapter 7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u18_ch07) and Howard 1996:125), for *gay* men the key predicament typically takes place in one’s twenties as the pressure for marriage increases. To not marry by thirty represents a crisis, requiring excuses of not having a good enough job to support a new household or not having found the right woman, and age thirty-five is what one interlocutor called the "peak" (*puncak*) where the pressure to marry is nearly overwhelming. While age of marriage for women is rising, it has been difficult for a young woman to remain single past twenty-five, even when engaging in forms of white-collar work identified as a "career." For *gay* men and *lesbi* women, the marriage of a younger sibling frequently increases the pressure to wed; across Indonesia there is often an assumption that members of a sibling set should marry in order. These dynamics were remarkably uniform across all of my field sites (as well as in Howard’s study of *gay* men in Jakarta) and did not appear to vary systematically by ethnicity or religion. Like *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians’ relationship to mass media and other aspects of their worlds, what begs explanation is not ethnolocalized difference but national similarity.

Across Indonesia *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians identify marriage as something of a mystery. For instance, married *gay* men sometimes talk about marriage to a woman as one of the greatest joys of life, something they could not imagine living without. They almost always want their lovers to marry women as well, because the lover will be happy and successful

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and also less likely to have sex with other men. Yet they also complain about the strictures marriage brings. If a husband finds it difficult to go out at night once married, it can drastically curtail involvement in the *gay* world:

We were lovers for seventeen years, until 1996 when he married, and now I am so sad. I cry every night. He lives with his wife now. Sometimes at night I go walking past his house and see him and his wife inside. I don’t even say hello; I just look on him from afar. It just causes me too much stress to go in…. Even his parents knew about us. They didn’t have any problem with it; they thought of me as one of their own children…. Then one day his parents came to me: "Our child wants to marry. And we beg permission of you, please let him marry." Oh, it was so hard! I didn’t want that at all. I said, "Go right ahead," but I felt as if I’d died. He was pushed into marriage by his parents. So I just told him, "From now on, just think of me as a father to you." Even his new wife calls me "father." She doesn’t know a thing!

Some *gay* men complain about the difficulties of the marital bedroom: one *gay* man advised that those who couldn’t get an erection with their wife should note how their penis had spontaneous erections several times during the day and that they should call their wives and have sex with them right away. Others insist they enjoy sex with their wives because they find them attractive or that the sex demonstrates their love and care for their wife. Unmarried *gay* men sometimes say they wish they did not have to marry, or they plot how to delay it (a common phrase is they will marry "in five years"). *Lesbi* women speak of marriage as a necessity for full social womanhood yet fear the male domination and severe limits on participation in the *lesbi* world that almost always follow marriage. The role of social pressure channeled through family dictate is crucial for both *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians: parents, siblings, even cousins hound them about their single status as they age. Such pressure is strongest for ceweks and *gay* men (as opposed to tombois and warias) because their same-gender desire is not unambiguously embodied; they appear *normal*. Nira, a Javanese cewek, said, "I will probably get married, but I’ll keep having my relationship with Ati and it will be the most important thing to me. My parents will push me to marry because I’m the oldest child." Ati added, "Ceweks always get married." When I asked Karim what led him to decide he should marry, he employed reported speech in his reply, citing the authoritative voice of social expectation: "I couldn’t stand all that pressure, especially the pressure from home, from my mother. I worried she would start saying that if I didn’t get married people would say, quote, ‘maybe you’re impotent’ or ‘maybe you’re a béncong’ [waria]." For Karim "the outside pressure [*tekanan luar*] became an inside pressure [*tekanan batin*]," but many married *gay* men state emphatically that they

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were *not* pressured into marrying by family, religious leaders, traditional authorities, or anyone other than themselves. *Gay* men across Indonesia appear not to "recognize a distinction between being a man and being a husband, for they believe that the only way to become recognized adult members of society is by getting married and eventually having children" (Howard 1996:156).

*Lesbi Women and Marriage*

Across Indonesia there are no socially sanctioned life narratives for Indonesian women that do not result in marriage (Blackwood 1999). As for men, this is shaped by the triple compulsion of religion, ethnolocalized tradition, and state discourse. State ideologies of womanhood, which under Soeharto took the form of a "State Ibuism" (State Momism), "define women as appendages and companions to their husbands, as procreators of the nation, as mothers and educators of children, as housekeepers, and as members of Indonesian society—in that order" (Suryakusuma 1996:101). As in many postcolonial nations, women’s sexuality becomes the site of "tradition" and authenticity, and controlling women’s sexuality the symbolic equivalent of resisting colonial oppression (Chatterjee 1993). This offers little conceptual space for the "career woman," even as women are increasingly exhorted to work outside the home in addition to their domestic duties (Anderson 1996). While the notion of the affluent career woman has become a favored image of Indonesian femininity (Sen 1998), she is still presumed to marry a man and bear children. This new woman has a dual role (*peran ganda*)—career and parent; the career is additive rather than supplanting. The choices *lesbi* women make to marry or delay marrying, to divorce or to stick with a husband, take place within the horizon of these discourses of femininity and belonging. Many *lesbi* women thus struggle with the limits imposed by conceptions of normative heterosexuality: as repeated obsessively by Paria, the *lesbi* protagonist of *Garis Tepi Seorang Lesbian*, "I am a normal woman who can do what’s normal" (*aku perempuan biasa yang terbiasa bisa*) (Herlinatiens 2003).

Marriage to a man does not necessarily end same-gender relations or *lesbi* subjectivity (A. Murray 1999:141). However, while marriage does not usually place insurmountable barriers to a man’s involvement in the *gay* world, it makes it much harder for *lesbi* women to participate in the *lesbi* world. Marriage presents Indonesian women with a set of time-consuming activities that make privacy nearly impossible: not only caring for the husband and any children, but also economic responsibility for maintaining the household. Nonetheless, many married *lesbi* women find a way to participate in the *lesbi* world in some fashion.

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One way in which some tombois say they are like warias is that they do not wish to marry. Unlike warias, however, tombois are not typically released from the marriage imperative, even if their appearance is highly masculine, because tomboi subjectivity is so poorly recognized. As a result it appears that many tombois marry, divorce, and do not remarry. The divorce can take place within weeks of the wedding or even sooner, as in the case of one tomboi in Makassar who was married for a single day.[14](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns64) In another case from Makassar, a tomboi reportedly married a man, but the tomboi’s cewek girlfriend slept between the bride and groom on their wedding night, and the two women ran away the following day. Another common pattern is for tombois to marry (and often bear children) but then separate from their husbands, remaining formally married but independent in daily life, with their children under the care of other family members. Because tombois are typically visible as gender nonconforming, they, like warias, say that the idea of living in two worlds (as most *gay* men and feminine *lesbi* women do) is impossible and undesirable.

It appears that the husbands of *lesbi* women rarely know of their wives’ former (and ongoing) sexual relationships with women. Before moving to Surabaya, Rita, a tomboi, was involved for five years with Anti, a woman in her early forties who was married with three children. Rita was known by Anti’s family as Anti’s "close friend" and was on good terms with Anti’s husband and three children, who Rita claims never knew of the sexual relationship he shared with Anti. Interlocutors with married *lesbi* friends often said that since married *lesbi* women find it difficult to leave the home unaccompanied, especially if they have children, these *lesbi* women often have their partners come to their home while the husband is away, either in the evening or especially during the day while he is at work. Even if other family members are around, the women can often steal a few moments together. The ability for *lesbi* women to continue same-gender relations after marriage is aided by a variety of factors, including that female-female sex is even more unfamiliar to Indonesian public culture than male-male sex, the greater emphasis on male homosexuality in Islam and Christianity, and the lack of a well-known female analogue to warias.

*The Wives of Gay Men*

For a woman to marry a *gay* man, knowingly or not, presents issues not completely foreign to those faced by other Indonesian women in their marriages. Many wives know of their husband’s *gay* subjectivity to some extent and sometimes even befriend their husband’s male lover. In one of my field sites a *gay* man lived with his wife and three children in a two-story house that also contained his salon. The man’s wife lived on the top

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floor with a male lover, while the husband lived on the bottom floor with his male lover, and a peaceable arrangement was reached. In another of many examples, one young *gay* man’s wife invited his male lover to live at home with them, preferring this arrangement to having her husband absent on evenings and weekends. While I find the gender politics of this disturbing, it is important to recognize the situated rationality at play in the production of these new inequalities, and why it is the case that although some wives divorce *gay* husbands, many "choose" to remain married even if they know their husband pursues sexual relationships with other men.

Across Indonesia a double standard of masculinity is common. On one hand, men are seen as possessing more rationality (*akal*) than women, who are driven by desire (*nafsu*) (Siegel 1969). At the same time, women are seen as more rational than men, particularly in matters of household finances, while men are naughty and mischievous like children, apt to be carried away by sexual desire, which is tricky to control (cf. Peletz 1996). As a result of this second view, "many women tolerate, and even expect, a certain amount of sexual infidelity from their husbands, although they certainly do not encourage it" (Brenner 1998:151).[15](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u20_notex-fns65) As Brenner notes, the crucial issue is not the existence of such affairs, but the potential for such affairs to (1) siphon financial resources away from the home in the forms of gifts or cash support to the illicit partner; (2) lead to a pregnancy out of wedlock, which would entail financial drain and social shame; (3) lead to a second wife being taken by the husband (if he is Muslim), which many Indonesians find improper and which could affect inheritance and property rights; and (4) bring shame to the family through public knowledge of the affair. The acceptance of many Indonesian women for the same-gender affairs of their husbands must be placed in this context: (1) a male lover is more likely to have his own income, (2) pregnancy is impossible, (3) a male lover cannot become a second wife, and (4) it is far easier to hide a sexual relationship between two men than between a man and a woman. Male friends routinely move about alone at night, sleep over in each other’s houses—even bathe together—without arousing suspicion, since it is unclear to many Indonesians if activities between men (and even more, between two women) count as sex or are just "playing around." One married *gay* man summed up this state of affairs, animating the voices of wives through reported speech:

Because I provide for the family, because I strive to become, what’s the word for it, the head of the family, then as I see it how could [my wife] know I was *gay*? Even if she knew, I’m sure she’d just say "Oh, that’s probably just seeking variety." It’s like the waria Cindy’s boyfriend. He has a wife and the wife knows her husband is Cindy’s partner. The wife says "it’s no big deal if it’s a waria,

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it’s not competition. Cindy won’t become a second wife, right? There won’t be polygamy." And the wife sees lots of benefits. Because the husband gets money from Cindy. It’s always like that, right? So rather than have him having sex with women, spending lots of money, whatever, it’s better this way. He can get sexual satisfaction and money.

*Marriage and Hegemony*

I examine the overall linkages between the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions and national discourse in [chapter 7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u18_ch07); at this point I wish to explore how these linkages shape the archipelago-wide pattern of "heterosexual" marriage. In particular, I am interested in how this discourse shapes not a single stance on marriage, but a complex and contradictory range of desires—a desire to marry and a desire not to marry, an understanding of selfhood as unitary and an understanding of selfhood as multiple. The great power of hegemonies lies in this ability to define a "horizon of the taken for granted" (Hall 1988a:44) that informs a spectrum of viewpoints, desires, and practices. The mystery of "heterosexual" marriage speaks to the existence of oppressive heterosexist norms, but it also indicates how ostensibly Western sexual subject positions have been dubbed: this "homosexual" self can desire marriage. *Gay* and *lesbi* persons are self-reflexive but not self-congruent. Amin, a Muslim *gay* man from Surabaya, expressed this when he noted that "one of the benefits of being *gay* is that you can enjoy two worlds." The benefit lies not in an integrated self, out of its closet and always the same, but in the ability to maintain distinct worlds keyed to distinct subjectivities. Could *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians become poster children for the ultimate postmodern subject? The mystery is more complex.

Ikbal was a friend of Andy, who earlier reacted in shock when I told him I did not plan on marrying a woman. Like Andy’s boyfriend, Ikbal was already married; his wife lived in a nearby village with their child while he cohabited in Surabaya with Dodi, his male lover for over ten years. Hand in hand with Dodi at the parks almost every night, Ikbal frequently lectured other *gay* men on the obligation to marry and the joys it brought. It was a point of pride that his wife and parents "knew about him" and that he and Dodi had married cousins so they would never be separated. One day Ikbal insisted that I come to the village to meet his wife. Once there, however, we would stay in a nearby town with his parents until Sunday; he would end up spending only two hours with his wife before we had to return to Surabaya. En route to the meeting, Ikbal told me about the months of sexual frustration he and his wife had experienced: they had been able to consummate their marriage only by admitting Dodi to their bed, where he lay alongside Ikbal and, as Ikbal’s wife

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sobbed, stimulated him so that penetration could take place. On this Sunday, when he could delay his visit with his wife no longer, Ikbal warned me to be extra macho: "Now is the time to begin ‘playacting.’" Apparently his family’s knowledge of him was more fractured than I had suspected. Later that day he would comment, "This life is theater." As our little minibus, adrift in a green flowing sea of rice paddies, approached the village and a tense afternoon of silent squabbles and awkward smiles, Ikbal looked out the dusty window and almost whispered: "These parts of my life cannot be unified."

Theoretical physicists may believe in God’s creation; social constructionists may believe that they were born gay or lesbian. The mystery of "heterosexual" marriage is that most *gay* men and *lesbi* women evince—simultaneously, within a single subjectivity—a multiple self for which marriage is not only compatible but pleasurable *and* a self for which it stymies a desire to "unify" one’s spheres of life into a single narrative trajectory. This is a mystery not only to the "external," non-Indonesian observer, but also to the *gay* men themselves; many of them, like Ikbal, experience it as a contradiction. Ceweks also appear to experience this contradiction, as do those tombois who wish to marry. The source of this mystery lies in the origins of the imperative to marry itself. While marriage is a powerful norm throughout Indonesia, the particular form of this imperative certainly does not stem from a primordial localism: it is an imperative to *choose* marriage that is deeply bound up with nationalist conceptions of marriage as symbol and exemplar of proper citizenship.

In modern societies, forms of kinship and forms of governmentality shape each other. A key element of Indonesian state ideology is the "family principle," which holds that the family is the fundamental unit of the nation. Crucially, this is not the extended family but the nuclear family, whose ubiquitous smiles illuminate television ads and government posters: husband, wife, and two children, with a car, a home with smooth white tile floors, a television set, and other paraphernalia of the new middle class. It is this "public domesticity" that the state equates with citizen subjectivity and summons into being through a range of development practices (cf. Morris 1997). For the most part the influence of nationalist rhetoric is implicit: when *gay* men and *lesbi* women speak about the imperative to marry, they emphasize parental pressure. Parents’ hopes that their children marry reflect not just nationalist discourse but ethnolocalized beliefs about kinship. My interlocutors were mostly twenty to thirty years old, and their parents are thus of the generation born around the time of independence. Their expectations about marriage incorporate understandings of marriage as social duty; visions of the romantic couple tended to play a subordinate role. In this regard there is a generational divide in beliefs about marriage. Yet it is crucial not to portray the imperative

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to marry as more traditional than *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. Both *gay* men and *lesbi* women can have their marriages "arranged" to some degree by their families, but the norm for them, as for most contemporary Indonesians, is a marriage actualized through choice and love. However, their love, sick in its desire for the same, forever estranges them from truly choosing marriage and thus disqualifies them from truly belonging as proper citizens of the postcolonial nation-state.

Since both postcolonial thought and capitalism orient themselves toward modernity, it is understandable that rhetorics of economic globalization converge with ideals of the modern Indonesian (Weber 1994). While a considerable body of work has pointed out the gender inequalities of the new international division of labor, less attention has been paid to its foundation in the naturalization of the couple formed though heterosexual love and choice as the basic unit of the postcolonial nation. More effectively than Henry Ford’s fabled management of his workers’ lives ever could, the heterosexualization of the labor force constitutes the domains of public and private, locates the family as the unit of consumption, and naturalizes gender inequalities. Heterosexuality made real through love and choice (associated with independence, democracy, and modernity), not arrangement (associated with dependency, colonialism, and tradition), provides a critical bridge between capitalist ideologies of production and nationalist ideologies of reproduction. Voting and marriage: proper choice is to underlie both sex and citizenship, and the nuclear, middle-class family is to stand as metonym for the nation. As constituted by this moral economy, the unmarried self is an incomplete economic and national subject. It has not "chosen" to marry; its love is inauthentic, a miscast vote for national belonging. It is this context, not ethnolocalized tradition, that explains most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians’ assumption not just that they will "marry," but that *they will choose marriage through heterosexual love and form a nuclear family*.

State rhetoric claims that the prosperous family produced by chosen heterosexual marriage will be middle class. This notion of the family is strongly influenced by shifting economic rationalities. In 1982, following the oil boom, Soeharto’s technocratic ministers gained ground and enacted economic and fiscal reforms that resulted in massive inflows of capital, which accelerated a shift away from agriculture and toward the service and industrial sectors (Hill 1996; Winters 1996). This shift led to the rise of a substantial middle class for the first time in Indonesian history (Robison 1996:79). Daniel Lev dates its consumerist and self-reflexive consciousness to a special edition of the magazine *Prisma* on the "new middle class" in 1984, during the same period in which *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities first became national phenomena (1990:26).

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These economic changes did not affect *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities in a determinist manner; *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians were not suddenly wealthy, able to travel to the West, or obtain Western gay and lesbian publications. Like other Indonesians, many of them are members of the "populist lower middle classes," "a much-neglected and underresearched category of the middle class [in Indonesia]" (Robison 1996:88). Anthropological studies of new middle classes, however, have emphasized how "the middle class’s position is determined less directly by its relations to the ‘means of production’ … than by its relations to the market, that is, by its ability to consume" (Liechty 2003:16; see also Pinches 1999:8). In Indonesia as well, it has long been realized that middle-class consciousness thus cannot be "read off" raw income (H. Geertz 1963:37). Many observers identify the Indonesian middle class in terms of aspiration and "mode of consumption": "among the *rakyat* [lower classes], consumer durables are shared: it is anti-social to restrict the access of one’s neighbors. Middle class households, by contrast, confine the enjoyment of such goods to members of the household…. In other words, there is ‘privatization of the means of consumption’" (Dick 1990:64). Another important theme of the Indonesian middle class is equality (Dick 1985, 1990:66)—a kind of desire for the same, but one that unlike homosexuality engenders national belonging through "assumptions of kinship in the place of the assumptions of difference … giving [the middle class] the recognition that they too [are] part of the Indonesian family no matter what their regional origins" (Siegel 2002:209).

Like middle-class subjectivities, *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are not passed down through "tradition." With this consumerist ethic comes a modernist, narrative self defined in terms of autobiography. While far from universal, the notion of the self as something constructed is hardly new. What is at issue in the Indonesian context is the conjunction of a fashioned self with middle-class consumerism. It is not a fantasy of the sultan or the super-rich cosmopolitan who selects at will from the world’s bounty. It is a circumscribed personhood-as-career in which, given limited resources, one budgets one’s life trajectory within a marketplace logic that guides the crafting of choices. The self becomes the self’s profession: this middle-class subjectivity is a story that the self tells to itself about itself, rather than a story passed down primarily through religious or ethnolocalized background, as the stories of lower and upper classes historically were in Indonesia and elsewhere (Appadurai 1996:53). Like middle-class subjectivities, *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are not passed down through "tradition"; they become their own stories, and the telling of those stories becomes a problem. A palette of possible lives spreads out before the subject, whose only prohibition is not to choose heterosexual love. One self-consumes, struggling to forge one’s self-story. Like M. C. Escher’s image of two disembodied hands gripping pens, conjuring each other into existence on a drawing pad, the self and the self’s story form a loop of personhood. As Escher’s loop breaks down without the pens with which to draw, so heterosexual love and the commodity represent the conduits by which the middle-class self writes its story. In this sense, the *gay* person is self-contingent. Is this the same old liberal, bourgeois subject that has received such scholarly attention (Collier, Maurer, and Suárez-Navaz 1995; Macpherson 1962)? The mystery is more complex.

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Figure 4–4. "A poor *hetero* family that does not follow Family Planning. In the end they create not heaven but a ‘hell’ on earth. How far can this husband and wife guarantee that their children will become successful children later on?" Maengkom (1997:44).

*The Desire Not to Marry*

Given the overdetermined character of the marriage imperative, it is remarkable that any *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesian would ever reject marriage. Yet such Indonesians exist (including about 10 percent of my interlocutors). In "choosing" not to marry, however, these Indonesians have not stepped outside Indonesian culture into a realm of purely globalized homosexuality.

On rare occasions *gay* men critique the conjunction of class, nation, and the imperative to marry, as the following examples from a manifesto published in Jakarta in 1997 show. [Figure 4–4](#u14_ch04-fig4-4) shows "a poor *hetero* family that does not follow Family Planning." Utensils and toys are strewn about a dirt floor; a mother, weighed down by an infant, screams over a gas stove, while the father is incapacitated in bed by the fighting of the other four children. One child is urinating on the floor; curtains hang precariously from unhinged shutters. The line-drawing format of the picture recalls those that have appeared in Family Planning brochures since the 1970s.

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Figure 4–5. "A *lesbi* couple who are professionals. They can live together comfortably, with greater plenty, greater prosperity, and … fewer problems on average than *hetero* families." Maengkom (1997:45a).

By contrast, [figures 4–5](#u14_ch04-fig4-5) and [4–6](#u14_ch04-fig4-6) show "a *lesbi* couple who are professionals" and "can live together comfortably" and "a young *gay* couple who, besides being happy, also can enjoy life optimally": the author notes that the *lesbi* couple can live "with … fewer problems on average than *hetero* families" and asks, if the *gay* couple "were each married in the *hetero* manner, could it be guaranteed that they would live as comfortably as shown above? Only if they were descended from wealth."

What is shown in [figures 4–5](#u14_ch04-fig4-5) and [4–6](#u14_ch04-fig4-6) are beautifully coiffed hair, upholstered furniture, clean clothes, smooth white tile floors, television sets, automobiles, two servants (men for the *gay* couple, women for the *lesbi* couple), gardens being watered, and the calm aura of leisure. The message is clear: *gay* and *lesbi* couples can "outfamily" the family. But what constitutes the ideal family is not challenged: it remains the modern middle-class, professional household. When the author compares marriage unfavorably with *gay* and *lesbi* couples, it is a particular vision of marriage and heterosexuality in mind, one oriented around the nuclear family made modern through family planning, consumer goods, a notion of the home as private leisure space, and ethnolocality confined to the television set. The author argues that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians achieve this national ideal better than *hetero* couples can, but without questioning the vision of national couplehood: their actions "bring benefit to others, without regard to race, religion, line of work, education, or status" (Maengkom 1997:9).

While direct denunciations of marriage like these cartoons are uncommon, traces of their sentiment emerge in the words of other *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians who reject marriage. Some *gay* men base a desire not to marry on a sense that *gay* men marry to "hide who they are," solely due to social pressure, and also that marriage is unjust: "In Indonesia many men hide themselves by having a girlfriend. I think they’re hypocrites! They don’t want to accept themselves as *gay*. I feel sorry for the woman. She gets toyed with. I have a friend who has a girlfriend. He’s an authentic gay [*gay asli*]. Eventually they got married. But they were married only for one week and then they got divorced because he couldn’t have sex with her. He was only looking for status by marrying."

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Figure 4–6. "A young *gay* couple who, besides being happy, also can enjoy life optimally. If they each married in the *hetero* manner, could it be guaranteed that they would live as comfortably as shown above? Only if they descended from wealth." Maengkom (1997:45b).

Another *gay* man said, "I’m afraid that I’d break the heart of the woman…. All the women that I’ve ever been with want me to stop being *gay*, and I don’t think I could do that." A third said, "So many gay men do that; they just marry a woman to close themselves [*menutupi diri sendiri*], and then as soon as they’re married they run off and have sex with men…. It’s unfair to the woman." Sometimes an unmarried relative provides a precedent. Michael, a *gay* man in Makassar, had an older uncle who never married; the uncle knew about Michael, but since he and his uncle were the same (*sama*) they could "close each other" (*saling menutupi*).

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In north Bali, the *lesbi* woman Ita noted that "Another reason my parents accept me is because I have an aunt in the village who never married and has always lived by herself. So I can point to her and say ‘I’m like that,’ even though that aunt doesn’t have sex with women. There are actually a couple other women in my family who didn’t marry. But there’s no one like that in Tuti’s family, and that makes things harder for her."

Choosing not to marry usually has enormous social and economic repercussions, even in urban areas; like other Indonesians, *gay* men and *lesbi* women usually say they have "not yet" married (*belum nikah*) rather than say they are not married at all (*tidak nikah*), regardless of age. While a few of my older *gay* interlocutors in their forties and fifties had never married, most of my interlocutors were in their twenties and thirties; absent a future longitudinal study, it is not possible to predict how many of them will "choose" marriage as they age. Despite the pressures to marry, those who say they will not marry can find cultural rationales for coping with this choice. To not marry for life certainly presents challenges, but some *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians find ways to live with them, particularly if they are upper class (cf. Howard 1996:247). In response to the need for children, *gay* men and *lesbi* women say that they will adopt the children of siblings, cousins, or other relatives (or have already done so), or will pay for their schooling to build bonds of reciprocity. Most reconcile their religious beliefs with not marrying (see [chapter 6](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u16_ch06)).

Paradoxically, another way to avoid marriage is to marry and divorce, a solution that seems to be especially popular amongst tombois. Across Indonesia seeing one’s child married is often seen as the ultimate duty of parenthood. The transition from arranged to chosen marriage has not obviated this; parents should ensure that their children "choose" marriage, and the parents should provide a wedding appropriate to the family’s status. However, whether or not a divorcee remarries tends to be seen as a more individual decision.

The question is why so few *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians "choose" not to marry and why this "choice" does not appear to be gaining popularity. That Islam or tradition demands marriage does not explain the particular form the marriage imperative takes, or its similitude across religion and ethnolocalized difference. The answer seems to lie in intersections between the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions and national discourse. My goal is not to adjudicate between apparently contradictory notions of personhood, the multiple (where "heterosexual" marriage is not problematic) or the congruent (where "heterosexual" marriage is problematic). I wish to hold them in tension, as a mystery I attempt to solve in [chapter 7](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00002.docx#u18_ch07), because it is precisely in such a multiply mediated contact zone that *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities exist.

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*Marriage, Similitude, and the Nation*

Some coverage of Jossie and Bonnie’s 1981 wedding mentioned Western homosexual rights legislation, and since the mid-1990s rumors of gay and lesbian marriage in the West have fascinated *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians. The topic is interesting because *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians usually assume that gay and lesbian Westerners marry "heterosexually" as they do and are confused as to whether such same-sex marriages are acknowledged in the *normal* world or are limited to the *gay* world. One tomboi concluded after speaking with me about the West that he was more like Western gay men than Indonesian *gay* men because he did not plan on marrying. In a few cases *gay* men told me that were *gay* marriage legal in Indonesia, they would not marry women, but most find this inconceivable and imagine an ideal life in which there would be a *normal* marriage for the *normal* world and a formalized *gay* relationship for the *gay* world. Marriage links *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities to the *normal* world; *gay* men, for instance, often believe that through marriage they can become "real men" (*laki-laki asli*; cf. Howard 1996).

The following episode from *The Perfect Path* (introduced in [chapter 2](#u11_ch02)) suggests how these spatial scales of homosexual desire in Indonesia are not the direct product of globalization. The year is 1926, and Sucipto, young and homeless in Surabaya, has been walking along the river at night. He pauses to rest on a bridge near the Gubeng train station, near one site where *gay* men hang out in the contemporary period. Lost in thought, he hears a voice call out to him. It is a Dutchman, who invites Sucipto to his house and pays Sucipto to have sex with him. After leaving the house, Sucipto returns to the bridge, "thinking about what had just happened…. It was completely impossible that a Dutch person could desire things like that…. He was of a different race than myself. Apparently my assumptions had been turned upside down…. How did he know that I like this kind of thing? This was what astonished me" (Budiman 1992:111–114).

The Westerner of Sucipto’s imagination did not have same-gender desires prior to this encounter. Even after learning that a colonial Westerner could have these desires, Sucipto does not identify with him; he sees the Westerner as interested only in commodified sex, incapable of the love that Sucipto shares with other Javanese men. Sucipto sees his homosexuality in the 1920s as a local, Javanese phenomenon; he also sees it as incompatible with marriage and discourages his Javanese friends from marrying. Living at the high point of Dutch colonialism, he does not imagine himself as part of a national or transnational community, but in some ways his subjectivity is closer to Western gay subjectivity than to contemporary Indonesian *gay* subjectivity, since normative *gay* Indonesians marry and normative

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gay Westerners do not. Clearly, a theory of globalization that holds that things become more similar as time marches on is insufficient. Contemporary *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are not just the evolutionary end points of Sucipto’s subjectivity. They represent a dubbing culture, a reterritorialization of Western discourses of homosexuality.

While *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians’ homosexual "desire for the same" and their desire to marry "heterosexually" may seem worlds apart—one the core of identity and the other imposed by society—these desires are part of *gay, lesbi*, and *normal* worlds all shaped by Indonesian national culture. Sexual desire is the source of great pleasure and meaning for most *gay* Indonesians (even if sometimes lived only in fantasy and also the source of sorrow and heartbreak), but it is not always central to selfhood. In Western thought sexuality has become seen as a psychic Prime Mover that radiates outward into every aspect of one’s life. Foucault (1978) identified this as the rise of "confessional" discourse and noted that modern gay and lesbian sexualities retain this view of sexuality, as revealed in the concept of "coming out."

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians have dubbed national discourse with concepts of homosexuality originating outside Indonesia. This is why the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are not ethnolocalized, why belonging to society is so important, and why issues of love and marriage take the particular forms they do. *Gay* and *lesbi* desire typically appears as an island of desire among others, keyed to a *gay* or *lesbi* world rather than seeking to "come out" to the whole world. Recalling again the polysemy of *sama*, *gay* and *lesbi* love is a "desire for the same" and a desire to be "together with" others in the *gay* or *lesbi* world. In marrying heterosexually, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians desire to be the "same" as *normal* Indonesians, "together with" them in the national culture they epitomize.