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# CHAPTER FIVE

Geographies of Belonging

PLACE AND SUBJECTIVITY

Warias are usually identified as such by playmates or neighbors long before they take up waria subjectivity. There is no need for learning of the concept "waria" through mass media and little notion of a "waria world"; warias are part of the recognized social mosaic. In contrast, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians’ "desire for the same" has no place in the *normal* world. They must contend with a society that is largely unaware of their existence, living their sexual subjectivities within the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds.[1](#u20_notex-fns66) There is more to a *gay* or *lesbi* life than being *gay* or *lesbi*, but other discourses shaping their lives—the family, ethnicity, religion, nation—are sustained through institutions like bureaucracies, households, and mosques. In Southeast Asia such institutions are publicly recognized through architecture, ritual, and everyday social interaction: "it is the ubiquity of publicly displayed cultural forms that gives the region its distinctive aura" (Bowen 1995:1048). The *gay* and *lesbi* worlds lack such recognition; *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians must thus live out their sexual subjectivities on the margins of the *normal* world.

For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians there is usually a distinction between "becoming" (*menjadi*) *gay* or *lesbi*, which refers to self-awareness, and opening oneself (*membuka diri*), which refers to participating in the *gay* or *lesbi* world. To my knowledge *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians never speak of "opening oneself to oneself" in the way that Western gay men and lesbian often speak of "coming out to oneself" as the first stage in an incremental process of coming out to the world.

No census of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds exists, but for thousands (and possibly tens or hundreds of thousands) of Indonesians these worlds are spaces of sociality—camaraderie, desire, and love—a source of great pleasure and meaning. The places of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are sites of belonging and recognition, places to find people who are the "same" (*sama*) as oneself because they too "desire the same." One *gay* man who regularly went to a park at night observed that "people think that the only reason people go to this park is to find a [sex] partner. That guess is correct for those who are newcomers. But ‘old stock’ like me go to this park only for refreshing [*refreshing*]." Another came to the park to "get

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rid of feelings of boredom and frustration, so I don’t feel alone in the middle of my neighborhood."

This chapter focuses on the geography of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds—a geography of belonging—and "the role of spatialization in social reproduction" (Shields 1997:192).[2](#u20_notex-fns67) I am interested in how being *gay* and *lesbi* is shaped by spatial dimensions of domination, by the relationship between space and desire: desire operates across space, and space "unleashes desire" (Lefebvre 1991:97). The fragmented character of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds influences a sense that these subjectivities are fragmented as well: like the *gay* men in Jakarta studied by Howard, *gay* men and *lesbi* women in all of my field sites overwhelmingly saw Indonesia "as being divided into distinct social worlds, and they recognized the fact that in some sense they had to become different people in different locations in social space" (Howard 1996:263). This fragmentation shapes a powerful sense of separation from what one desires—separation from other *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, from *normal* society, from the nation itself. How is a marginalized "desire for the same" articulated through geographical imaginaries?

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE *GAY* WORLD

*Tempat Ngebers*

Across Indonesia nighttime in the city marks not the end of the day but a beginning. The sun’s searing heat is replaced by electric streetlights, whose orange glow mixes with dust and smoke to form a gentle haze pressing downward. The streets take on new life: exhausted factory workers nodding asleep on minibuses, teenagers on motorcycles en route to the cinema, husbands and wives strolling down the street. And among these varied groups of people, *gay* men meet at "hanging-out places," known in many parts of Indonesia as *tempat ngeber* (*tempat* means "place"; *ngeber* is a *gay* language term for "hang out") and sometimes by other terms like *tempat ngumpul* ("gathering place"). One tempat ngeber, Texas (in Surabaya), appeared in [chapter 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u10_ch01). The largest tempat ngeber in Bali during my fieldwork was probably *PPT*, a contraction for Puputan, the town square of Denpasar, Bali’s capital. This is a broad expanse of grass alternating with groves of trees and bushes: a statue of the warrior Udayana stands at one end of the square as the inhabitants of Denpasar cross en route to the nearby government office, hospital, or temple. On the south side of the square sits a bench, where in the late evenings one can often find five or ten *gay* men talking and laughing with each other, more on a Saturday night. The bench is on the perimeter of the park and faces the street; occasionally a man will circle once or twice on a motorcycle, then pull up to greet his friends. Many Indonesians who have moved

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to Bali from other islands prefer the tourist zones to PPT: the promise of a Westerner, cash payment, or both compares favorably to the relatively nonsexual atmosphere here. Some Balinese men do not like to come here either; they fear being seen by family or neighbors. "The Balinese here are very closed," said Bagus, a *gay* man from Bali, sitting on the curb with Nyoman, his lover, also from Bali; in the *gay* world they use the same last name as a token of their relationship. "Surabaya is more opened," Nyoman added. They live together at the house of Bagus’s parents, who think they are just friends.

The *gay* world is a constellation of conceptually linked sites ranging from bedrooms to shopping malls. It is the more public of these sites that are termed tempat ngebers, and most *gay* men see these as prototypical elements of the *gay* world. *Gay* men across Indonesia describe their city or village—and other cities or parts of Indonesia they have visited or heard about—as being relatively "opened" or "closed." This indexes not the visibility of the *gay* world but its extensiveness: a city can be seen as "opened" even though *normal* Indonesians are unaware of the *gay* geography in their midst. One thing that makes a place "opened" is the presence of tempat ngebers, and tempat ngebers are considered the most "opened" parts of the *gay* world because they occupy civic space. An "opened" city has lots of busy tempat ngebers. If you call yourself a "member of the *gay* world" (*anggota dunia gay*), you probably spend a lot of time in tempat ngebers. Even *gay* men who do not go to tempat ngebers usually know they exist and see them as important sites of the *gay* world. Along with the other elements of the *gay* world discussed below, they are places of *gay* geography forged within spaces of modern Indonesia, places to find friendship, sex, and love.[3](#u20_notex-fns68) As an ethnographer, tempat ngebers allowed me to enter the *gay* world in a new city and connect with *gay* men over months and years.

The general concept of tempat ngebers is familiar to *gay* men across Indonesia. Tempat ngebers tend to occupy civic spaces like parks, town squares, bridges, waterfronts, or bus stations. This is often the case even in towns with only a few thousand inhabitants. Late on a Thursday or Saturday night at a major tempat ngeber like PPT in Denpasar, *kampus* (campus), located at Karebosi, Makassar’s town square, or Pattaya in Surabaya, I have seen a hundred persons gathered together. More usually there are five to twenty men at a tempat ngeber at any point in time. Tempat ngebers are rarely coextensive with an entire civic space; only a portion, usually at the periphery, becomes the tempat ngeber. This permits a degree of invisibility within the most public places. Texas corresponds to no feature of everyday geography: it is one side of a street, along a river, behind the Joyoboyo bus station. Kampus is not identical to Karebosi

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(even when "Karebosi" is used as a shorthand for it); it is part of the square’s edge, as is the case for other tempat ngebers found in town squares, like PPT in Denpasar and *LA* (Los Angeles) in Yogyakarta.

The civic location of tempat ngebers can be explained in utilitarian terms. Since physical violence and police harassment against *gay* men have been rare, a central location is preferable because it is easy to invent an excuse for being seen there; this also makes them accessible to *normal* men who may be looking for sex. Such locations are also easy to access by public transport even at night, which is crucial since many *gay* men cannot afford a motorcycle. But a utilitarian characterization misses the specific conjunction of place, practice, and power at hand—what de Certeau addressed through his distinction between strategies and tactics. For de Certeau a strategy is formed through the hegemonic power to set the geographic terms of discussion; it "postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base [for managing] relations with an *exteriority*" (1984:356). Tactics lack this power and thus both institutionalization and control over place. They cannot construct "a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety" (xix). Like all nodes of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds, tempat ngebers are tactics, "situational" territories of the self (Goffman 1971:29) that insinuate themselves into civic space, national space—the "other" that will not acknowledge one’s existence.

De Certeau also emphasized that "a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.’ Whatever it wins, it does not keep" (xix). This seizing of place "on the wing" is not unlike the dynamic of dubbing. Few tempat ngebers are such twenty-four hours a day. It would make no sense to tell someone "Let’s meet at Texas at eleven in the morning"; Makassar’s kampus is nothing more than Karebosi square during the day. As one man said when we drove past Texas one afternoon, "It’s closed right now," using the same term (*tertutup*) used in reference to "closed" persons. Most tempat ngebers are associated with particular days of the week. Saturday night is generally a big evening for leisure and thus a good night for tempat ngebers. Many businesses are closed in the afternoons on Friday in observance of weekly prayers for Muslims, and as a result Thursday nights are also busy. Though some *gay* men go to tempat ngebers nearly every day of the week, many go only on these busier days. A few tempat ngebers, such as Pattaya in Surabaya, have daytime visitors, including men who have office jobs and make a brief visit on their lunch break to socialize.

Hasan spoke in [chapter 3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u12_ch03) about first seeing himself as *gay* after an encounter with mass media. Several years following this shift in subjectivity:

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I was walking by Karebosi. I thought there were only warias there and didn’t know *gay* men gathered there. And by coincidence when I walked by someone called out to me. I thought "this is a nice person" and didn’t think about it, it was just small talk, relaxed, and then one of them started speaking openly [*terbuka*] to me, admitting that he was attracted to me. And I was surprised. "How can someone be so open?" When I was a man and he was a man. And that was when I started to think that "oh, apparently in Indonesia we can already find people like this, not only outside [*di luar*]."

For Hasan it was at tempat ngebers that *gay* started to index a geography located neither "outside" nor "in Makassar" but "in Indonesia." Even though mass media are usually how *gay* subjectivity is first entered, and quite a few *gay* men have their first sex with men who do not term themselves *gay*, tempat ngebers are often the sites where they learn a *gay* world exists, as illustrated by Karim:

There was a nighttime event at Karebosi, and I was walking by and met some *gay* men [*hémong*]…. And I really didn’t know anything, even though I lived and grew up in Makassar, I only knew that it was a place for warias, only that, I didn’t know it was a *gay* place [*tempat gay*]. After I was taken into it, oh, I started to know "oh, the northern part of Karebosi, that’s the place where *gay* men gather," and I started to learn…. In the end I made a lot of friends. And someone that I met at Karebosi became my partner for a year or two.

The story leads from learning about a tempat ngeber to friendship and finally love; when speaking of what he discovered, Karim introduces a term of *gay* language (*hémong*), language that indexes the *gay* world. Tarik learned the term *gay* "from watching television, from health consultations in magazines." When he encountered the term "it was like a harpoon struck me…. I was reading the magazine, and it was like ‘this is the same [*sama*] with what I’ve experienced.’ " Only after graduating from high school did he "start to get together with *gay* men [*sémongsémong*]"; to find them he "met them on the street … from one to one information was passed." Like Karim, Tarik introduces a term of *gay* language (*sémong*) when describing the moment of meeting other *gay* men. This relationship to tempat ngebers takes roughly the same form across Indonesia. In Bali, Made was attracted to men from a young age and learned about the term *gay* from "letters to the editors of newspapers asking ‘why am I like this?,’ reports in women’s magazines, and so on." But then:

It turned out that a brother-in-law got sick, so I had to spend a lot of time at the hospital at Denpasar, helping take care of him. So I would go walking around at night. And one night just by chance I happened to walk by Puputan. That’s how I found it, just by chance! I was so surprised. I walked by there and was

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hanging around, and someone said, "So you realize this is a place for *gay* men?" I was shocked! Because Puputan, then as now, was mixed: the *gay* men just hung out on one side of the park. Once I knew, I started going there again. My questions started to get answered, and I didn’t feel lonely anymore. I knew there were other people like me, and I would go there a lot to make friends. I’d already known the term "*gay*" before then, but I’d never actually known any *gay* people other than myself.

Puputan was also important to Agus, like Made a Hindu *gay* man:

In my first year of high school I heard you could find warias at the town square at night. My classes were in the morning, so one afternoon I walked by there. But it was around five o’clock and there wasn’t anyone there of course! I thought to myself, "How strange, there’s no one here but little kids and their parents!" About two weeks later I went again around 7 in the evening, but there still weren’t many people there. After that, a week later I went for the third time, even later, around 8 P.M. And it was a Saturday night. And so I sat down there, right there at the bench where we still sit today. And a guy came up to me. It was around 9 P.M. by then. He asked me "What time is it?" but I didn’t have a watch on. After that, he started asking me where I lived, with whom I lived, where I went to school, stuff like that. He asked me what I was doing there, what I was looking for, and I said, "I’m not looking for anything; I’m just hanging around." After that, I went the following day again, around 10 P.M., and I met another guy.

Tempat ngebers are sites of belonging, not sex in isolation: *gay* men (and some *normal* men) use them to find a sex partner, but more often they are places to talk about the joys and sorrows of life, to discover romance, or simply to sit quietly in the presence of men like yourself. As a *gay* man in Makassar put it, you can "get together, joke around, things like that, get to know each other." A *gay* man in Surabaya recalled how "I met friends who … were of the same fate [*senasib*] as me. So I had a lot of friends and I wasn’t sad." *Gay* men usually go to tempat ngebers as the last event of their day before returning home, spending an hour or two beginning around 10 P.M. There is great variation—visits from five minutes to all night long; beginning as late as 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and as early as 8 P.M., though rarely before sunset. However, this variation does not correlate with cities or ethnic groups; the broad patterns of inhabiting tempat ngebers appear to be roughly consistent across the archipelago.

*Gay* men often use pseudonyms when in the *gay* world and do not reveal if they are married to a woman: two *gay* men may get to know each other quite well without knowing much about their life in the *normal* world. The topics of discussion at tempat ngebers are usually internal to the *gay* world—joking, gossip about relationships and sex, occasionally

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talk about personal problems like a lover who has ended a relationship or family pressure to marry a woman. As a *gay* man from Surabaya put it: "I only became brave enough to enter the *gay* world two years ago. And new people want to know about things, right? It makes us happy. I want to know about things, know and know and know. Want to hang out at places like *Kalifor* [a tempat ngeber located on a bridge near a major shopping mall in central Surabaya, near a river (*kali*) and named after California]. Just to talk with my friends, and then go home."

Distinctions usually develop between tempat ngebers within a city, primarily between those visible to passers-by and those more hidden. Across Indonesia, tempat ngebers in the former category are termed "opened" (*terbuka*) and in the latter "closed" (*tertutup*)—the same framework used with reference to entire cities and even nations, and also with reference to persons. Opened tempat ngebers tend to attract opened *gay* men, while closed tempat ngebers tend to attract closed *gay* men as well as men looking for sex who may not term themselves *gay*. Pattaya was created around 1997 and quickly become the most popular tempat ngeber in Surabaya because of its location: *gay* men described it as closed and quiet (*sepi*), allowing closed persons to socialize more easily than at Texas and Kalifor, which many saw as too public (*umum*). Socializing is so central to *gay* men’s use of tempat ngebers that many choose different places for sexual encounters:

I like *gay* men for friendship, but not for sex. So I go to Texas to meet friends and hang out, but I go to the Bungarasih bus terminal to find men for sex. There are lots of men from out of town who arrive on an evening bus and spend the night there sleeping on the curb. So I say "hey, I live near here and you can just spend the night with me." When we get to my room, I tell them that I want to have sex with them. Sometimes they refuse at the beginning, but I show them gay porn videos and seduce them, and so far I’ve never had a man who didn’t eventually have sex with me.

Most tempat ngebers also have an internal structure calibrated along the opened-closed continuum. While it might seem that the outer fringes of a tempat ngeber would be considered opened and the center closed, the reverse tends to be the case. For instance, the more central part of Texas, away from the *normal* world, is where opened men gather, while its ends, cloaked in shadow and closer to large streets, are frequented by closed men. The more opened men of the center may come to Texas five nights a week, while the closed men who frequent its periphery may show up only once or twice a month.

This metonymic linking of opened men to opened parts of tempat ngebers and opened cities, and closed men to closed parts of tempat ngebers and closed cities, shows how the opened-closed continuum references the

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*gay* world. You are an opened *gay* man not because your parents or coworkers know about you, nor because you go to rallies or write letters to the newspaper, but because you spend time in the *gay* world and particularly in parts of that world considered opened. Sometimes a *gay* man who comes frequently to a tempat ngeber will be regarded as a kind of leader to whom others turn for advice, the "queen of Texas" or "the person who shuts down Pattaya every night." The movements of *gay* men through different parts of tempat ngebers constitute them as more opened or closed; it is the kind of social practice by which subject positions become instantiated as subjectivities. The relationship is, in Piercian terms, indexical rather than iconic: to shift one Saturday night from one’s typical perch on a railing at the perimeter of a tempat ngeber to its center does not just mark one as opened, but is part of the process of opening oneself (see Butler 1990; Mahmood 2001).

*Malls*

Tempat ngebers have begun appearing within shopping malls, making them important elements of the *gay* world (cf. Leong 1995). Malls in Indonesia range from the basic to the truly spectacular, signifying modernity and economic transformation. The shift from open-air markets (*pasar*), with their connotations of earthy trading and the selling of foodstuffs, to enclosed malls (*mal*), where prices are fixed and the most common items are consumer goods like clothes and electronics, represents an emerging ideal of conspicuous, collective consumerism as a social activity that, separate from the items actually purchased, marks middle-class status and modernity. Surabaya’s Tunjungan Plaza, one of the largest malls in Southeast Asia, comprises four linked atria ranging from four to eight stories high, boasting hundreds of shops (including McDonald’s, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Dunkin Donuts); Tunjungan 1 features a multiplex movie theater, and for several years Tunjungan 3 featured an ice-skating rink.[4](#u20_notex-fns69) On most afternoons the mall is filled with Indonesians—the wealthy to make their purchases and others to socialize, enjoy the free air conditioning, and watch the spectacle of shopping and ice skating. Without an ice skating rink or movie theater, Tunjungan 2 is quiet. On its third floor, near the Gunung Agung bookstore, are a few wooden benches. Sitting on them or leaning over the rail in front of the store are often a few *gay* men, alone or in small groups. There is a public bathroom nearby, and men sometimes stare a little too long at the man next to them, signaling interest through eye contact. If the interest is reciprocated, the men may leave the mall together or sneak into one of the fire escape stairwells in the mall for oral sex.

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Some *gay* men go to both malls and tempat ngebers, but most go predominantly to one or the other. *Gay* men often go to malls in small groups to spend time with *gay* friends; after opening in 2000, the Ratu Indah Mall in Makassar became popular among *gay* men. Others, like Suprati, use malls primarily to find sex partners. A regular at Tunjungan Plaza, Suprati rarely goes to outdoor tempat ngebers like Texas because he is *takut dihafal* (literally, "afraid of being memorized"). For this reason his knowledge of many practices of the *gay* world is minimal; for instance, *gay* language: "I don’t know all those *gay* terms." He likes *normal* men as sexual partners; one current partner is a doctor, another in the military. He prefers such men to *gay* men because he and they "close each other" (*saling menutupi*); that is, keep their relationship hidden.

While malls have become quasi-civic spaces in contemporary Indonesia, their private ownership and orientation toward moneyed classes makes them less public than a park or town square. Malls are not open late at night, so *gay* men must visit them at the same time others do. This makes it is easier to find *normal* men for sex and to be inconspicuous, but one must be careful lest gossip make its way back to friends, family, or workplace colleagues. Effeminacy is rare in malls, as are groups of more than a handful of men. Nevertheless, provided one dresses in a manner reflecting the modernity associated with malls (e.g., not in "traditional" dress or as a waria), accessing malls is not difficult even if one’s income is low.

If looking to find a sex partner, *gay* men usually come alone and communicate through "playing eyes" (*main mata*). One *gay* man who liked to go Tunjungan Plaza said, "I would know who is *gay* there. They’d usually be hanging out around the glass walls in Tunjungan 1, just looking around. Or at Gunung Agung. And lots of people also hanging out in Tunjungan 3, looking down on the ice skating rink…. You’d see someone standing there alone, watching the ice skating for a long time. With someone like that there’d be a possibility that they were ‘sick.’" While in the West parks are stereotyped as cruising grounds saturated with sex, for *gay* men malls are often more sexualized than parks, attracting men interested solely in finding sexual partners. Seemingly so public, malls are good places to be closed.

*Discos*

*Normal* Indonesians usually walk past a group of men in a park or mall without realizing they have passed through a node of the *gay* world. One element of *gay* geography has a slightly more stable presence—discos that have a *gay* night, usually informally recognized but occasionally openly declared. *Gay* nights have taken place in discos in several Indonesian cities

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since at least the mid-1980s. In major cities like Jakarta and Surabaya, or in the Kuta tourist zone of Bali, disco patrons on some nights can be almost entirely *gay* men with a few warias and *lesbi* women. Elsewhere *gay* nights are usually mixed (*campur*), with *normal* Indonesians present. In these cases *gay* men hang out more discreetly. Because discos have owners, *gay* nights are less stable than tempat ngebers or malls; they end when the owner sells the establishment or decides the *gay* night is unprofitable. Particularly in the capital of Jakarta, *normal* Indonesians who know of the *gay* world sometimes conflate it with discos. Since 2002, several private television stations have run segments about *gay* Indonesian life; such segments almost always begin with footage from a disco "exemplifying" what *gay* life is like.

Sensation was one disco where I conducted fieldwork during the late 1990s: located on the second floor of an otherwise nondescript building in a southeastern district of Surabaya, its *gay* night was on Thursdays. One Thursday I took a minibus from Texas to Sensation with Robert, a *gay* friend. On the night in question Robert forgot to wear shoes: "they won’t let me in with these sandals," he said dejectedly. In the ground floor entryway the walls quaked from the music above as we entered (Robert made it in, self-consciously looking away from his feet). About forty feet deep with a narrow second-floor balcony on three sides, the small disco was packed with over two hundred men and about twenty warias. Underneath the balcony and behind the dance floor, sofas and chairs were lit by the intermittent constellations of innumerable cigarettes; a bar to the right of the stairs served drinks to thirsty patrons. Hip-hop music filled the room, making it difficult to converse as men filled the dance floor. Elsewhere, pairs of men sat together or even stole a kiss under the darkness of the balcony.

After half an hour the music stopped, leaving behind a sudden cacophony of conversation and laughter. Everyone backed away from the dance floor to form a tightly packed circle as the deejay’s voice filled the room: "Welcome to Sensation! It’s time for the evening’s show." Sensation’s show was a weekly event; the music was mostly Western pop, with only a few Indonesian songs thrown in. The performers were both warias and *gay* men but there was no live band; they sang what in Indonesian is termed *playback*, lip-synching to the recorded voices of others (see Boellstorff 2004b). The show began with a man playbacking a Western pop ballad, followed by a waria playbacking the theme from the movie *Titanic*. As each performed, beautifully dressed and face full of emotion, audience members walked onto the dance floor and stuffed thousand-rupiah bills (about 15 cents each) into bosoms, pants, or shorts.

The third performer was another waria, with short hair and a tight-fitting knee-length white dress. She began playbacking to an Indonesian

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pop song of love gone awry, *Aku benci* ("I hate"). Each verse of the song lists a grievance suffered by a woman from an uncaring lover, followed by the phrase *aku benci*. By the second or third repetition a few mischievous *gay* men were singing along, substituting *aku banci* ("I am a waria"). Soon the entire audience had picked up on the joke and at the end of each verse the room echoed with *aku banci*!, *gay* men pointing at themselves in mock pity or rolling on the floor in laughter. Above the fray, the waria kept her composure with a wry smile.

This joking play on the *gay*/waria boundary (see [chapter 6](#u16_ch06)) was possible because of the greater degree of privacy offered by discos. While upper-class *gay* men prefer discos and rarely enter tempat ngebers, many middle- and lower-class *gay* men go to both discos and tempat ngebers; some even socialize exclusively in discos. There is always the matter of the fee (five thousand rupiah [about seventy-five cents] in 1998 at Sensation, fifteen thousand rupiah [about two dollars] in 2002 at the disco that replaced it), but *gay* men will save all month to afford the ticket. Anzar lived in Bali during my fieldwork but was from Surabaya: "When I’m in Surabaya, I don’t go to Texas much, because I’m afraid of being seen by my family. *Gay* people at that place are too overboard, they’re too open [*terlalu terbuka*], they even kiss each other out there. But at Sensation it’s no problem, because it’s enclosed; it’s not outside. And the people who go there are all like us, so it’s not possible they’d tell." In Makassar, Abdul pointed out how he felt uncomfortable (*risih*) hanging out in parks because of "people’s stares. You can’t embrace, you can’t do anything together in public." For Abdul and some other *gay* men, discos are where they first entered the *gay* world. Though married to a woman and the father of a child by the latter stages of my fieldwork, when I first knew him Abdul was a bachelor and heavily involved in the *gay* world. Attracted to men since elementary school, as a child he didn’t know the word *gay*, only banci. By his early teens he knew the term *gay* "from reading magazines all the time … women’s magazines like *Femina* and *Populer*." However, he only began socializing with other *gay* men in high school after stumbling upon a particular disco: "what I knew was that it was a crowded disco; I didn’t know that it was special for *gay* men and warias."

*Domestic Sites: Salons, Homes, and Koses*

While the home is generally a place where *gay*ness must be hidden, *gay* men forge sites of *gay* subjectivity in ostensibly domestic places, the best-known of which are salons, homes, and *koses* (rented rooms). *Gay* men can be opened in them only if the salon provides a welcoming atmosphere; usually this means the salon in question is owned and/or operated by a *gay* man or waria. Such salons can become so well known in the *gay*

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world that they are listed as tempat ngebers in *gay* zines. Salon work is a common line of employment for *gay* men and warias, and most Indonesians know that warias (and *gay* men, to the extent they distinguish the two subject positions) can be found in salons. *Gay* men drop into such salons at all hours of the day as clients or visitors, gossiping about everything from sexual escapades to romantic squabbles. Salons are an important venue by which knowledge of the *gay* world (including *gay* language) crosses, however fitfully, into Indonesian popular culture.

Since simple salons are often physically connected to homes, the dividing line between salon and home can be indistinct. Like most Indonesians, *gay* men rarely live alone. Many *gay* men spend time at the homes of *gay* friends and lovers despite the presence of parents, siblings, or a wife. For *gay* men who even fear being seen in discos, homes are the only places they can live out their sexual subjectivities. This is particularly true for upper-class men, who often look down upon the predominantly lower-class users of tempat ngebers (one upper-class *gay* man confessed that he sometimes drove by a tempat ngeber—with his car windows rolled up). Thus the widespread segregation along lines of class and status in Indonesia persists in the *gay* world (cf. Howard 1996:265). The larger homes of the wealthy make it easier to find space with some *gay* friends away from other members of the household. The difficulty is that it is educated, wealthier families who are more likely to know what *gay* means. In more lower-class households, *gay* visitors can socialize with little fear of discovery. I have seen drag show rehearsals and HIV prevention rap groups with twenty *gay* participants take place in a *gay* man’s home without the host’s parents understanding what was happening. Sometimes a *gay* couple can live together in the home of one of their families without raising suspicion, as in the case of Nyoman and Bagus above, or a married *gay* men can have a male partner live in the home without his wife understanding that he and the partner are lovers (see [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04)). One *gay* man recalled how he and his former lover shared a life: "Most of the time we were at his house, because his mother was nice and would say ‘just stay here tonight and be a friend to my son.’ So that whole time we were together we never had our own place. We had to be careful; even if we were fighting because of a broken promise or something, we had to keep our voices down so no one would hear."

If his wealth is great enough, a *gay* man can occasionally live alone in a home without family members, avoiding marriage or living separated from his wife. Such homes may become well-known sites in the *gay* world, though their use is limited by who is on friendly terms with the owner. On one occasion during my Surabaya fieldwork, over forty *gay* men crowded inside the home of a wealthy *gay* man to celebrate his birthday. In the living room we chatted and watched Western porn videos (a rare treat for

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most *gay* Indonesians) with the sound turned off while others held Muslim evening prayers in a bedroom. No one seemed to find this juxtaposition of sex and religion worthy of commentary. Sitting on the floor eating dessert in the living room, one man turned to me and said: "Let’s not bother going to Texas tonight! This is much more fun!"

The term *kos* is sometimes translated as "apartment," but this is a misnomer since most koses are single unfurnished rooms no more than ten feet on a side, with shared bathing and cooking facilities. A *rumah kos* or "kos house" can be a dormitory-like building composed of koses, or a series of koses added to a house where the landlord’s family lives. Even if there are no other known *gay* boarders, the relative lack of social ties between boarders can make a *gay* man’s kos a safe haven that other *gay* men regularly visit. Such koses are some of the most ubiquitous nodes of the *gay* world. Occasionally *gay* men live in koses located near each other, as in the case of Ridwan, who lived with his parents in a large house with eleven small koses on the second floor. Ridwan’s parents owned a second residence out of town, spending only one or two nights a week at the house. Ridwan was left to act as landlord:

This house has had lots of *gay* men and one *lesbi* woman living here for the last three months; eight out of the eleven boarders now! What happened was that the other people would move out because they married or found work elsewhere, so there were lots of empty rooms. And it spread by word of mouth, "You should board at Ridwan’s place." … I said, "Okay, we can gather here together, we can take care of each other." … If they have a problem with their boyfriends or whatever, they come to me. It’s like one of those sitcoms on television.

*Rural*/*Urban Dynamics*

A major factor in the rural *gay* world’s existence is that rural Indonesians have become avid media consumers; it is by no means unusual to find rural homes with dirt floors and no running water, but enough electricity for a handful of light bulbs and a television set. Given the key role mass media play in *gay* subjectivities, it should not be surprising that *gay* men can be found even in small villages. While many rural *gay* men move to cities, others remain in their villages of origin because they are caring for a relative, have married a woman and do not wish to be separated from their family, or do not like urban life. Others engage in cyclical migration, living in a kos in the city and returning to the village on a regular basis.

In rural areas, malls and town squares either do not exist or are too small for hanging out beyond the earshot of passersby. As a result, salons are important sites of the rural *gay* world; there exist salons run and frequented by *gay* men surrounded by nothing but rice fields. However, in

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both Java and Sulawesi (and, I suspect, elsewhere in Indonesia), certain villages have become known as places where men have sex with each other; *gay* men sometimes come from such villages and these villages are also sometimes visited by *gay* men from nearby cities. One *gay* man from outside Surabaya noted that "in my village sometimes there are men who live with each other and have sex with each other. One is a man and one is a banci; everyone knows about it and it isn’t seen as a problem or a sin. Eventually the man marries, but often the banci does not." When visiting one such village I was impressed by the way men joked openly about sexual practices with other men. However, even in such circumstances it is assumed all men will eventually marry.

*Events*

Beyond sites like tempat ngebers, malls, and salons are events (*acara*, *pertemuan*, *show*). These are time-delimited but important elements of the *gay* world. Events with up to a thousand attendees occasionally take place in large cities, and smaller events with a handful of performers and fewer than thirty *gay* men in the audience occur even in rural environments. Set apart from the rhythm of daily life and requiring a level of planning not found in the more regularized patronage of tempat ngebers and discos, events invite explicit commentary on topics like authenticity and belonging. There have been skits performed at discos in Surabaya, for instance, where the story revolves around love and separation, and the lead characters are named *gaya* (style) or *nusa* (island).

One well-known *gay* event is September Ceria (Joyous September), held near Solo; when I attended in 1997 the event had taken place every year since 1989, drawing spectators from across Java and occasionally beyond. For several weeks before September Ceria in 1997, *gay* men hanging out at Texas and elsewhere talked excitedly about the event, and as the time drew near, small groups of them made their way toward Solo on buses or trains. The event took place in a resort village outside the city, on the slopes of a volcano extending up to ten thousand feet. On the day before the event, the village was full of *gay* men strolling around between the small hotels where they were staying four or more to a room. Friends from distant cities greeted each other with hugs, and the dress all around was sharp: tight white T-shirts, jeans, smooth silk button-down shirts. But not everyone was outside, because at 4:30 P.M. local time the casket of Princess Diana began its procession toward Westminster. In every hotel room men watched the television intently, gossiping about the attractiveness of Elton John’s lover, a tantalizing glimpse of the Western gay world. By 6:45 P.M. the coverage ended and we left the hotel room in darkness, walking up to the large, high-ceilinged concrete-and-glass hall

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where September Ceria would take place. Over six hundred *gay* men together with a few *lesbi* women and warias waited outside: excitement was in the air, and it was clear that most had never been in the company of so many *gay* men at once. I purchased my ticket for 15,000 rupiah right before the doors opened at 7 P.M. The *gay* men from Solo who organized the event informed the guests that (as in years past) photography was forbidden. One attendee from Surabaya whispered under his breath: "Why are they so worried about being exposed? They are so closed."

The hall was filled with chairs, the stage at one end decorated with white steps topped with five Greek columns and bouquets of plastic flowers. Attendees took their seats as the program began with an introduction from the emcees—Ardi, a *gay* man from Surabaya, and Maria, a *gay* man from Jakarta famous for his dressing up as a woman. Maria’s glossy painted nails flashed under the lights as he exchanged mile-a-minute jokes with Ardi and then performed playback to a pop song. Afterward, Ardi stuffed money in Maria’s bosom in appreciation of his performance, joking that he had considered doing the same in "back" (slapping Maria’s rear end for emphasis) but was afraid because "who knows what’s authentic (asli) and what isn’t!"

Suddenly the sounds of Richard Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* filled the air. All eyes turned to the back of the hall as Toni, the head of the organizing committee from Solo, moved toward the stage, looking down imperiously from a golden throne resting upon the shoulders of four beefy, bare-chested men in golden loincloths. Upon reaching the stage, Toni stepped off the throne and read a short speech, expressing hope that the audience, who he referred to as *senasib* (of one fate) and *sehati* (of one heart), would enjoy the evening’s events. Following over two hours of performances by *gay* men from across Java and Bali, Ardi appeared on stage to make a few comments. Noting that both performers and attendees had come from all over Indonesia, he repeated the nationalist saying, "From Sabang to Merauke we become one."[5](#u20_notex-fns70)

*Organizations*

Events are the most common type of organizational work in which *gay* men engage: very few participate in activism as that term is usually used in the West. This near absence of political work is one reason why *gay* Indonesians remain quite invisible to Westerners and *normal* Indonesians. The organizational and activist work that does exist, however, certainly affects the *gay* world. *Gay* men have been organizing since quite soon after the *gay* subject position was probably first formed in the archipelago. Most of the largest and longest-lasting *gay* organizations are on Java, but substantial organizations have arisen in many other parts of Indonesia.

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While not representative of the lives or interests of most *gay* men, *gay* organizations have engaged in a range of activities from telephone counseling hotlines to a wide variety of HIV prevention programs; they have played a crucial role in creating entertainment events and fostering *gay* zines, volleyball clubs, and other activities that build a sense of local and national sociality.

The first *gay* organization to publicly proclaim itself was Lambda Indonesia, which in 1982 began publishing a zine and holding events in Surabaya, and which quickly gained members from other areas (Ary 1987:52). The successor organization to Lambda Indonesia, GAYa Nusantara, remains the best-known *gay* organization and plays an important role in articulating a sense of national belonging for organizations across the archipelago. The phrase *GAYa Nusantara* indexes (1) an organization based in Surabaya, (2) a nationally distributed zine produced by (1), and (3) a national network for which (1) is the clearinghouse. Each term in the phrase *GAYa Nusantara* has two meanings. *Gaya* is Indonesian for "style," but the unusual capitalization highlights its similarity to "*gay*." *Nusantara* means both "archipelago" and is an everyday term for "Indonesia." The phrase can thus be parsed in four ways (since in Indonesian adjectives follow nouns, while in English they precede them): "archipelago style," "archipelago *gay*," "Indonesia style," and "Indonesia *gay*."

This multilevel aspect of the term is illustrated in [figure 5-1](#u15_ch05-fig5-1), the August 1994 cover of the magazine *GAYa Nusantara*. The image shows two *gay* men wearing Muslim *topi* hats. The man on the left carries the Indonesian flag (red on top, white on the bottom) while the man on the right carries the rainbow flag that has become an international symbol for gay men and lesbians (which has two small vertical red and white strips at its base, recalling the Indonesian flag). While the term *GAYa Nusantara* is by no means used or even known to all Indonesians who identify as *gay*, it manifests a common conception of *gay* subjectivity as national in scope. Many *gay* groups name themselves "*GAYa X*": GAYa Semarang in the city of Semarang in Java, GAYa Betawi in Jakarta (Betawi is an old name for Jakarta and its ethnolocalized inhabitants), GAYa PRIAngan in Bandung (*Priangan* is a local term; the first four letters are capitalized to evoke *pria*, Indonesian for "male"), GAYa Celebes in Makassar (Celebes is the French term for the island of Sulawesi), the former GAYa Intim in Ambon, GAYa Siak in the city of Pekanbaru in Sumatra (the Siak is a major river in the province), GAYa Dewata in Bali (*dewata* is Indonesian for "gods," and in contemporary Indonesia Bali is termed the "island of the gods" or Pulau Dewata), GAYa Khatulistiwa in the city of Pontianak, near the equator in Kalimantan (Khatulistiwa is Indonesian for "equator"), GAYa Tepian Samarinda in the city of Samarinda in Kalimantan, and others. A *gay* group on the island of Batam near Singapore, Bagasy, changed its name to GAYa Batam in the late 1990s, marking more clearly its place in the national *gay* archipelago. Several *lesbi* organizations have also used *GAYa* or other terms to link themselves to this network. Since adjectives follow nouns in Indonesian, this pattern ontologizes the national; the "local" term appears as modifier of *GAYa*, incorporating the state’s "attempt to construct local identity in such a way that it can be encompassed by national culture" (Keane 1997:38).

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Figure 5–1. Sexuality and nation intersecting. *GAYa Nusantara* 32 (August 1994), cover illustration.

The activities of *gay* organizations differ in several respects from dominant Western models. *Gay* organizations rarely engage in work whose goal is social rights or visibility; most focus on entertainment and social activities. *Gay* men who participate in organizations rarely see their goal as changing social norms or find the notion of visibility compelling. Many members of *gay* organizations, even their leaders, are married to women or plan to get married in the future. *Gay* men who contribute time and

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energy to *gay* organizations (they are rarely paid) sometimes say they are *aktif* or refer to themselves as an *aktivis* but more commonly identify as a member (*anggota*) or participant (*peserta*) in an organization. Organizations tend to be small, with three to eight core members, and many cease to exist after a few years. Those that are able to survive for longer periods have usually obtained international funding, generally linked to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. *Gay* organizations engage in such work out of a real concern about HIV/AIDS and a sense that doing good deeds proves that they are worthy of inclusion in national society. While linkages to transnational HIV/AIDS discourse undoubtedly shape *gay* subjectivity (for instance, the rise in the early 2000s of the concept *lelaki suka lelaki* or LSL, based upon "men who have sex with men" or MSM), such discourse is not how *gay* men come to *gay* subjectivity and does not play a major role in shaping the *gay* world. Among other things, this reflects the reality that funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in Indonesia remains relatively minor and the profile of HIV/AIDS organizations quite low.

The struggles *gay* organizations face reflect the "tactical" geography of the *gay* world; except for a handful of organizations with HIV/AIDS-related funding who can rent an office, meetings typically must take place in homes or koses, and problems arise if no such places are available or if conflicts develop between the lucky person with a place to meet and others. It testifies to the crucial role of place in *gay* subjectivity that organizations often arise from tempat ngebers rather than the other way around. In 1993 an organization came into being in one of my field sites when a group of men who knew each other from a tempat ngeber began meeting in my rented room. In a different city an organization began with a group of *gay* men who rented koses in the boarding house described earlier: "We had a group of people at this place, so we thought ‘why not become an organization?’" Some organizations even incorporate tempat ngebers into their names.

*The Working World*

Warias hold a limited range of occupations (salon work, bridal makeup, sex work), and at work they remain visibly waria. In contrast, the working world is almost never part of a *gay* man’s *gay* world unless he works in a salon. When in the *gay* world, *gay* men often avoid speaking about how they earn a living, since they wish to keep the *normal* and *gay* worlds distinct. *Gay* men who have high-paying jobs in corporate management exist, and mass media usually conflate *gay* men with the *kalangan ekseutif* or "executive classes." However, because they come to their sexual subjectivities through mass media rather than travel to the West or reading English-language

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magazines, *gay* men can be from any class and most are rather poor even in Indonesian terms. Although detailed survey work on the class backgrounds of *gay* men has not yet been conducted, about 90 percent of *gay* men I interviewed during one fieldwork period (1997–1998) made under 500,000 rupiah a month (about 100 dollars at the time), many much less. Very few *gay* men I encountered during my fieldwork owned a car, and most did not even own a motorcycle. If living separate from their families, most *gay* men live in koses; few own their own homes. The jobs of *gay* men have the same range as other Indonesian men, from street sweeper to elementary school teacher, pharmacist, salesman in a motorcycle dealership, hotel worker, and store cashier. As is the case for other Indonesians, there is a fair amount of unemployment and underemployment among *gay* men.

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE *LESBI* WORLD

As noted earlier, the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions took form around the same time, as gendered analogues of a "desire for the same." However, while both *gay* men and *lesbi* women sometimes speak of a single "*gay* and *lesbi* world" and cogendered sociality certainly exists (see below), the *lesbi* world is generally distinct from the *gay* world. This reflects the widespread gender segregation in Indonesia: socialization between men and women connotes sexual impropriety unless carefully managed.

A theme in *lesbi* narratives is the difficulty they face in meeting others "like themselves." *Gay* men also speak of isolation and invisibility, but not so consistently and emphatically. The most fundamental issue is that *lesbi* women have difficulty accessing public or civic space, even in the "tactical" way that *gay* men do, because generally they cannot leave the home (particularly at night) unless in the company of a male guardian. This is not an absolute prohibition. Women in much of Southeast Asia have historically had significant freedom of movement, often due to market activities or agricultural work (Reid 1988). While the aristocratic nationalist figure Kartini complained of confinement during the late colonial era, nonelite women have often been expected to move about outside their homes. However, this is extended primarily to married and older women, and nowhere in Indonesia is it considered acceptable for an unaccompanied woman to spend a couple hours at night hanging out in a park. Were a woman to do so, she would risk bringing shame to her family by being seen as a prostitute or *perek* (an abbreviation for *perempuan eksperimen* or "experimenting woman").

Across Indonesia, tombois have somewhat more freedom of movement than ceweks: "[tombois] go out alone, especially at night, which is men’s

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prerogative" (Blackwood 1999:188). This is particularly the case if their appearance is so masculine that they are mistaken for men on the street. Even so, parents or husbands may limit their time away from home. Tombois speak of rivalries over their cewek partners as a major barrier to sociality between tombois. There are few social activities to bring tombois together along the lines of the shows and contests of waria and *gay* life. Ceweks find it easier to move about in the company of a tomboi; in *Menguak Duniaku*, the tomboi Hen talks about how he can move about with a cewek after dark because people "see how my presentation reflects the character and attitude [*sifat dan sikap*] of a man" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:280). While a few upper-class tombois own cars, most tombois drive motorcycles or take public transport.

Given the restrictions on women’s movement in civic space, it is not surprising that tempat ngebers, such important sites of *gay* subjectivity, do not exist for *lesbi* women. The primary sites of *lesbi* subjectivity are homes or semiprivate civic spaces like shopping malls, cinemas, coffee shops, salons, or restaurants, as in the story from northern Bali in [chapter 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u10_ch01). *Menguak Duniaku* shows the *lesbi* world in the western Javanese city of Bandung to be composed primarily of semiprivate civic spaces, a pattern similar to *lesbi* geographies elsewhere: "A few months ago I was always spending my Saturday nights with Dewi. Whether it was going to the movies, sitting together in a restaurant, or going to a friend’s party" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:239). On another occasion the tomboi protagonist reminisces about places he would go with a former lover: "We’d go study [at each others’ homes], go to the bookstore looking for schoolbooks, to the mosque every Friday morning, to movies, to friend’s parties" (1988:66). The upper-class characters in more recent *lesbi* fiction move in similar spaces (Herlinatiens 2003; Kartini 2003; Ratri 2000). Since the early 1990s the relatively enclosed, private spaces of discos have become sites of *lesbi* subjectivity in some Indonesian cities.

Like the *gay* world, the *lesbi* world is constructed by forging rooms of one’s own in the space of another. Indeed, the *lesbi* world is more tactical than the *gay* world; its sites are less distinguished from those of the *normal* world. Keeping the *lesbi* world safely separated from the *normal* world presents challenges. *Lesbi* women are aided by patterns of gender segregation in Indonesia: men tend to socialize with men and women with women. This does not solve the problem of prying female family members, and at home men are often present as well. For instance, Tina and Tri were a *lesbi* couple who lived together in Tina’s house, tucked down a side alley on the outskirts of Denpasar where houses become interspersed with rice fields. They had to be on guard since Tina’s brother lived in the house but was unaware that his sister and Tri were *lesbi*, much less

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that they were lovers; *gay* and *lesbi* friends were led to a back room out of earshot.

While *gay* men or warias may encounter violence, it plays a special role in the *lesbi* world. Many *lesbi* women have direct or indirect experience of violence at the hands of fathers, husbands, brothers, or other male family members. That the *lesbi* world is comparatively oriented around the home makes this threat of violence difficult to escape. One of my upper-class *lesbi* interlocutors was hit in the jaw by her older brother so strongly that she had to be hospitalized; the family also tried to have her committed to a psychiatric hospital. The tomboi protagonist of *Menguak Duniaku* is locked up for several months in such a hospital.

While images of "criminal" lower-class *lesbi* women were quite common in popular Indonesian mass media during the 1980s, by the 1990s the dominant stereotype among both Indonesians and Westerners was that *lesbi* women were upper class. The image is that of the career woman or entertainment figure, living in Jakarta, for whom sex with women is another sign of foreign contamination and excessive modernity. While rich *lesbi* women certainly exist, they seem to represent the segment of *lesbi* women most visible to outsiders rather than a numerically or discursively dominant group. As is the case for *gay* men, *lesbi* geographies are class specific, and the worlds of poor *lesbi* women and wealthy *lesbi* women have little in common (A. Murray 1999).

State discourse presents Indonesia as neither becoming a nation of millionaires nor forever mired in poverty, but a nation of "prosperous" middle-class households centered on the heterosexual conjugal pair. The new middle class is highly gendered: "gender relations are central to the making of middle classes and modernity in [Southeast Asia]…. in particular, the development of elaborate new femininities based on the consumer/wife/mother and the consumer/beautiful young woman in the region can be seen as central to the very development of these burgeoning economies" (Stivens 1998:1, 5). As for *gay* men, *lesbi* middle-class subjectivity must be understood in terms of "mode of consumption": "the economic forces which have produced the new ‘middle classes’ of affluent Asia have had transformative effects for people not directly benefiting from being members of an urban rich or self-consciously modern stratum…. One does not have to have a high disposable income to desire consumption of new commodities, or to aspire to associated lifestyles" (Robinson 1998:63).

Since most Indonesians cannot distinguish *lesbi* women from *normal* women, they work anywhere other women do, from club deejay to restaurant waitress to office manager. There are feminine *lesbi* women who engage in sex work (with male clients). Survival in the working world usually means not telling anyone one is *lesbi*. This is also true for *lesbi* women

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who are married to men and work as housewives; these probably form the largest category of *lesbi* labor. Due to their visibly nonnormative gender practices, tombois face a more limited range of career options than ceweks and sometimes work in traditionally male domains like driving a taxi. Many tombois are unemployed, but even poor tombois do not usually engage in sex work, since they do not fit dominant conceptions of female beauty. Like warias, however, some tombois work in salons, even though they do not wear makeup or have feminine hairstyles. Tombois say they obtain salon work because salons have a reputation for employing persons who do not conform to gender norms, and also because it permits interacting with women clients with whom they can potentially have sexual relationships.

A handful of *lesbi* organizations have existed, based mostly in Jakarta (with one predominantly lower-class *lesbi* HIV/AIDS organization in Makassar), but their activities have been limited due to their relative exclusion from HIV/AIDS-related funding and difficulties in finding a place to meet. Whereas some *gay* men are able to access transnational gay networks through HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs, *lesbi* women’s linkages to the transnational (beyond mass media) are largely limited to women’s rights networks; in some cases such women first enter these networks while in college abroad rather than in Indonesia itself.

INTERSECTIONS OF THE *GAY* AND *LESBI* WORLDS

Across Indonesia, men and women tend to socialize in single-gender groups and remain segregated in daily life. It is relatively rare (but becoming more common) for men and women not related through kinship or marriage to spend time with each other outside carefully delimited contexts of school or work. In such environments it is to be expected that *lesbi* women spend time mostly with other *lesbi* women, and *gay* men with other *gay* men.

However, instances of cogendered sociality across Indonesia beg explanation. A *gay* man who owns a salon in Bandung rents out a front room to a *lesbi* couple, which they use as a photography studio. In Surabaya, Rita, a tomboi, emphasizes that *gay* language is "for our group alone, so we can talk without other people understanding." One night Rita and I were in a taxi en route to the Sensation disco with Rano, a *gay* man. They fell to talking and Rano said: "I feel so sorry for *lesbi* women. We have to pity them, because they’re so closed." Rita nodded her assent. I added, "Yeah, it’s so hard for *lesbi* women to meet," and Rita replied, "Yes, we meet mostly at each other’s homes." I mentioned that at the home of a certain waria "It’s nice that *gay* men, *lesbi* women, and warias are to gether.

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Why doesn’t that happen everywhere?" Rita answered "It used to be like that: *lesbi* women and *gay* men were together." Rano added: "Around 1990 it ended, because some authentic men [*laki-laki asli*] pretended to be *gay*. They used it as a ruse to get at the *lesbi* women. So we became separated." I asked, "Was this just in Surabaya?" and Rita replied, "I think it happened all over East Java." Just as memories of "traditional" Java were constructed through the encounter with colonial modernity (Pemberton 1994), this example shows how *gay* men and *lesbi* women can imagine a past in which they were a single community, rather than seeing *gay* and *lesbi* as having distinct ontologies.

In Surabaya and Makassar, *gay* zines have published *lesbi* zines as inserts, allowing them to benefit from the *gay* zine’s larger distribution network. In Makassar, a *gay* organization grew to include not only warias but *lesbi* women as staff and clients. In northern Bali, Ita’s family’s restaurant was a gathering place not only for *lesbi* women but for *gay* men and warias, and *lesbi* women would visit *gay* men and warias at their own homes and salons. One afternoon Tuti invited a respected *gay* man and several warias to a meeting in her family’s souvenir shop. Everyone moved racks of batik clothing and carved wooden fruit to the sides of the shop, clearing a space in the middle to sit. Tuti began by thanking everyone for attending, saying, "It’s good that we’re all meeting here together, *lesbi* women, *gay* men, and warias, because we’re all of the same fate [*senasib*], of the same soul [*sejiwa*]." It was decided that a new organization would be created for northern Bali that would network with *gay* men and *lesbi* women in southern Bali, and that the organization would have three chairs—one *lesbi* woman, one *gay* man, and one waria.

Without multiplying examples further, it is clear that the geographies of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds can intersect. This is not a function of wealth or urbanity; there appears to be more cogendered sociality in rural areas, where networks are smaller and thus less likely to become distinct. When *gay* men and *lesbi* women do socialize it is on the more restricted terms of the *lesbi* world: not in parks at night but in salons (where *gay* men and *lesbi* women often work together) or at homes. *Lesbi* women have been involved with male-dominated *gay* groups in many different contexts. This was first documented in the article "Welcome Sisters!" by Dédé Oetomo, which appeared in *Gaya Hidup Ceria* in July 1983. The article recounts that the organization Lambda Indonesia was founded by Oetomo and five other men on March 1, 1981, and that in May of that year the women’s magazine *Sarinah* interviewed the group. Lambda Indonesia received a large number of letters from women, including *lesbi*-identified women, in the wake of the *Sarinah* reportage.[6](#u20_notex-fns71) In *lesbi* zines *lesbi* women can speak of a "*gay* and *lesbi* movement" (e.g., *MitraS,* Nov. 1997:8) or judge *lesbi* women to be politically infantile compared to "our *gay* male

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compatriots, our older siblings" (*Gaya LEStari* 3:9; in *GAYa Nusantara*, July 1994).

To my knowledge no *lesbi* women are unaware of the existence of *gay* men, or vice versa. Mass media as well as *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians themselves speak frequently of *homoseks* and *homosexualitas* in terms that unite *gay* men and *lesbi* women. In southern Bali, Kari once explained that "*lesbi* means the same as *gay*, it’s only the type [*jenis*] that differs." In a meeting between *gay* men and *lesbi* women in Makassar, Karim spoke of *gay* men and *lesbi* women as of "the same fate"—the same term, *senasib*, used by the *lesbi* woman Tuti in Bali and the *gay* man Ardi at September Ceria—and also as having a single emotional state (*seperasaan*) and vision (*kesamaan visi*).

The language of unity that permeates these understandings of cogendered sociality recalls nationalist tropes of unity across difference, as canonized in the nationalist Youth Pledge of 1928: one nation, one people, one language. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, sociality across a gendered divide can be sustained in terms of a shared "desire for the same." The resonances between a sense of cogendered sociality and national discourse indicate that this assumption of sharedness is not simply due to notions of gender complementarity that can be found in many "traditional" cultures of the archipelago. It also has to do with the dubbing culture by which the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions took form, and the continuing importance of mass media in *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. Concepts of gayness and lesbianness have for the most part translocated to Indonesia together: the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions originated around the same time through the same process. In Indonesia, homosexuality has implied heterosociality.

*GAY* AND *LESBI* ARCHIPELAGOES

The dominant belief in contemporary Indonesia is that sexual and gendered subjectivities are to be clearly embodied. *Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities, however, pivot around a homosexual desire that is not immediately visible. They do not just have different geographies from *normal* and waria Indonesians; their geographies have different meanings. On many occasions in all my field sites, a *gay* man would invite me and some *gay* friends to his family’s home but warn us not to be effeminate because his mother, wife, brother, or neighbors did not know he was *gay*. Warias do not request such discretion because others typically know they are waria. Yet it is possible for twenty *gay* men to gather in the living room of a *gay* friend who lives with his parents and siblings and discuss how difficult it

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is to tell one’s parents one is *gay* while the mother and sisters offer drinks to the guests. "They just think we are all friends," one guest said.

For no *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesian is the *gay* or *lesbi* world their whole world. Despite the many years that homosexuality has appeared in Indonesian mass media, most Indonesians do not have a clear understanding of male or female "desire for the same"; they know primarily of warias. These worlds are not the spatially and culturally contiguous units that constitute the settings for traditional ethnographic work, nor the transnational circuits assumed to constitute "globalization." The notion of a gay or lesbian "community," which suffers from definitional confusion in the West, makes even less sense in Indonesia. There is no Indonesian term for "community"; the closest glosses are probably *masyarakat* (society), *himpunan* (association, as in a "community of scholars"), *kampung* ("village" or "quarter"), and the as-yet rarely used loanword *komunitas*. *Gay* men never use himpunan or kampung to refer to themselves, and they consistently use masyarakat to refer to society in general, as in the phrase "we are not yet accepted by society" (*kita belum diterima oleh masyarakat*). When referring to themselves collectively, *gay* men are most likely to speak of a *gay* "people" using the terms *kaum* or *bangsa*, which usually refer to dispersed social groups like Muslims (*kaum Muslim*) or nationals (*bangsa Indonesia*).

The splintered and marginalized worlds of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians do not correspond to "community" in Redfield’s (1995) classic sense of the term as a localized, distinctive, homogeneous group, or as used in Western gender and sexuality studies, where it refers to interpersonal relationships, shared values, commercial venues like bookstores and bars, and social service or activist organizations. This lack of institutional support or social recognition means that the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are seen as incomplete and on some level incapable of sustaining a full life. This is why Howard’s *gay* interlocutors in Jakarta could describe the *gay* world as fulfilling but also "a dangerous and disorderly place, where those who stayed too long could be destroyed emotionally, financially, and sometimes spiritually" (1996:178).

Through their everyday interactions, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians create the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds over and over again at the center of the *normal* world, not its periphery—in centers of consumer life like malls, centers of domestic life like homes, and, for *gay* men, centers of civic life like parks. When *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians hang out in a corner of a park or a friend’s home, a piece of the globe becomes part of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds. Subjectivity shapes place. And place shapes subjectivity, as exemplified in how *gay* men (and *lesbi* women) often employ deictics, referring to themselves as "people like this" (*orang begini*), "members of here" (*anggota di sini*), "people like that" (*orang begitu*), or "people like here"

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(*orang kayak sini*). These are exophoric categorizations; unlike anaphoric pronouns whose reference is to an item in the linguistic chain (as in "Sally gave Joe a shirt. *He* liked *it*"), for these terms the reference point is outside language (as in "*That* table is blue"). Some *gay* men feel they become *gay* only in certain places: when I asked one frequent visitor to Texas, "Would you call yourself *gay* or *homo*?" he answered, "Yeah, words like that are used here often, but in other places [*tempat lain*] it’s different."

Such geographical transformations make it possible for a *gay* man in Bali to say that "[*gay* men] might become friends in particular places [*tempat tertentu*] like the tempat ngeber at the town square, but then if we meet in a public place [*tempat umum*] like a movie theater or a supermarket, we pretend like we don’t know each other." A town square—usually a prime example of a public place—is here reframed as part of the *gay* world: through the agency of *gay* men, a "tempat umum" becomes a "tempat tertentu."

The relationship between *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians and place recalls not only how historically "privacy could only be had in public" for gay men in New York (Chauncey 1994), but the more general Western dynamic by which "*public* vs. *private* does not refer to properties inherent in any locale, so much as it specifies two different interpretations … of the visibility or accessibility of a particular locale" (Leap 1999:9). The places of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are literal "subject positions" shaping the selfhoods of those inhabiting them. In the West the phrase "the gay world" has existed historically and at present, but there is no evidence that this translocated to Indonesia. The mass mediated messages have been too fragmentary; after all, *dunia* is an Arabic "loanword" that in standard Indonesian refers to nonlocalized social phenomena: the world of Islam, the world of fashion. The channels of globalization once again turn out to be dubbed, linked to popular culture and national discourse rather than international gay and lesbian human rights activism or gay and lesbian tourism.

The *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are not ethnolocalized: they seem to be conceptualized as localities connected in a national network that is in turn part of a global network. This queerscape or homoscape (Ingram 1997; Parker 1999) is a complex grid of similitude and difference that references not "tradition" but the nation: while *gay* and *lesbi* persons identify in ethnic terms in many respects, with reference to their *gay*ness or *lesbi*ness they are *Indonesians*. In addition, the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds invoke the transnational despite the near absence of Westerners in them. Such indirect and fragmented linkages to globality recall nothing so much as the dubbing culture relationship between mass media and *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. This can be seen in the terms "*gay*" and "*lesbi*" themselves, and in tempat ngeber names like Texas, *Kalifor*, *Paris*, *Brasil*, and Pattaya

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in Surabaya, *Manhattan* in Solo, LA and *Paris* in Yogyakarta, or Texas in Mataram on the island of Lombok (which probably indexes both the West’s and Surabaya’s Texas). Global imaginings are not unique to tempat ngebers named after non-Indonesian sites, but they provide clear examples of them. When *gay* men in Texas speak of being a "person of here" or "from Texas" (*dari* Texas), they reference a "here" that is simultaneously a "there," a "here" caught up in imagined communities both national and global. A commonality between *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians is that in general, what fascination the gay and lesbian West holds for them stems from a perception that it is *familiar*, not exotic. Feminist geographers have long noted a widespread "association between the feminine and the local" (Massey 1994:9); inhabitants of the *lesbi* world challenge this association as they think of themselves in national and transnational terms. *Gay* men may imagine that the Texas in the United States is more opened than Texas in Surabaya, or *lesbi* women may imagine that discos with lesbian patrons are ubiquitous in Europe, but these are seen as distinctions of degree, not kind.

There is a very specific grid of similitude and difference at work: it is as if the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are islands in a national *gay* and *lesbi* archipelago, and on another level that archipelago is one island in a global archipelago of homosexuality. This archipelago metaphor does not originate in "tradition": as discussed in [chapter 7](#u18_ch07), since 1957 state ideology has explicitly proclaimed Indonesia a nation organized by the archipelago concept (*wawasan nusantara*). *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians dub the archipelago concept in conceptualizing their worlds as isolated places linked into constellations or networks of affiliation. This is an implicit blurring of domains: I have never heard a *gay* man or *lesbi* woman refer to a tempat ngeber or café as an island, yet it appears that the various elements of their *gay* worlds are construed implicitly as islands in a *gay* and *lesbi* archipelago.

How can such a largely unspoken leakage from one cultural domain (nation) to another (sexuality) take place in Indonesia, the "East Indies"? To answer this question it is productive to turn to work on the "West Indies," the Caribbean, where the concept of cultural transformation is a familiar theme. Mintz and Price’s (1976) classic study of African American culture responds to an intellectual milieu in which two unsatisfactory interpretations of African American culture predominated: (1) due to the tremendous dislocations and oppressions of the slave trade, African American culture had originated solely in the New World and there was nothing particularly "African" about it, and (2) scholarship could uncover "retentions and survivals" from Africa, which made African American culture "African." These two interpretations participate in the same Western conceptualization of similitude and difference that, as noted in

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[chapter 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u10_ch01), inform the reductionisms of "Gay Planet" versus "McGay." Mintz and Price, drawing from Herskovits, developed the idea of a "cultural grammar" that could be shared even if surface manifestations differed, just as related but mutually unintelligible languages can share grammatical features: "though ‘witchcraft’ may figure importantly in the social life of one group and be absent from that of its neighbor, both peoples may still subscribe to the widely held African principle that social conflict can produce illness or misfortune" (10).

The influence of the archipelago concept on the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds is mostly covert. These worlds are not "mapped" as archipelagoes because the idea of culture as cognitive map is an artifact of the researcher’s position as outsider: "it is the analogy which occurs to an outsider who has to find his way around in a foreign landscape and who compensates for his lack of practical mastery … by the use of a model of all possible routes" (Bourdieu 1977:2). The tactical way in which the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are built up through practice—innumerable daily acts of hanging out, visiting a salon, going to a disco, watching television at a friend’s kos—means they are experienced processually. The impact of the state’s archipelago concept can be seen in the conceptualization of the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds as distributed networks of places: homes, shopping malls, salons, and tempat ngebers like Texas or Kalifor ([fig. 5-2](#u15_ch05-fig5-2)) are like islands in an archipelago.

The state’s archipelago concept has as its central goal the creation of unity from ethnolocalized diversity. State rhetoric often lexicalizes this ideal through terms based on "one" (*satu*), as in the phrase "unity and integrity" (*persatuan dan kesatuan*) or the verbal form *(me)nyatu* (unify). This shapes how the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds have *never* to date been ethnolocalized—there has never been a specifically Javanese or Sundanese or Makassarese tempat ngeber or salon (or slang or zine). There is no evidence for the idea that, say, two tempat ngebers in Surabaya—Texas and Kalifor—might be for Javanese and Balinese persons, respectively. One finds instead commentary like that of the *gay* man from Surabaya who explained his love of tempat ngebers as follows: "It’s always a sense of being close, caring, it’s like that, because although there are some different characteristics … personal matters, we’ll meet in a town square and feel ‘oh, we’re already close.’ So we quickly unify [*menyatu*]—although we’re Bugis, we’re Javanese, still we quickly unify." *Lesbi* women articulate subjectivities that presume being tomboi or cewek is to participate in a network of affiliation that is not ethnolocalized but both national and transnational. Indeed, given that terms like "tomboy" are used worldwide while *waria* is understood as a specifically Indonesian concept, *lesbi* women may be *more* imbricated with global discourses of gender and sexuality than *gay* men.

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Figure 5–2. "Kalifornia," a bridge in downtown Surabaya. *GAYa Nusantara* 29 (May 1994:28).

My hypothesis is that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians draw cultural logics from both the archipelagic spatial metaphor of the state and its "family principle." This conjunction of nation and sexuality shapes the desire to marry "heterosexually," the sense that *gay* and *lesbi* are nationwide subjectivities (that is, found throughout the archipelago, though not necessarily everywhere in the archipelago), and the sense that these subjectivities nonetheless do not really belong. The archipelago concept represents a powerfully institutionalized, nonethnolocalized rubric for conceptualizing "desire for the same" in terms of unity.

The *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are isomorphic with Indonesia. They stretch "from Sabang to Merauke," as Ardi put it during September Ceria—though they do not cover every point in between, as a continental rather than archipelago imaginary would imply. One *gay* man in Makassar tried to describe what being "opened" meant by saying "openness is between our groups" (*keterbukaan di antara kalangan kita*). In speaking of openness as between (*di antara*) rather than within (*di dalam*) "our groups," he evoked a geography in which the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds exist as a distributed network of realms; that is, as an archipelago.

The *gay* and *lesbi* worlds cannot be explained as products of a top-down globalization where a "Gay International" imposes homosexual identities on the non-Western Other. They are linked but distinct geographies of "desire for the same." State hegemony shapes *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities, yet *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians rework that hegemony in unexpected ways. This is simultaneously a local archipelago of tactically created places in which *gay* men and *lesbi* women live their sexual subjectivities, a national archipelago of cities and rural sites where the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are known to exist, and a global archipelago where *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesia is like an island alongside Holland, Australia, Thailand, and the United States. To be *"gay*" in *"*Texas*"* is not just local.

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Figure 5–3. Intersecting global, national, and local discourses; the *GAYa Dewata* symbol (original in red).

Just like a person fluent in English may be unable to explain the English grammar they use every time they speak, persons cannot always comment directly on the assumptions that shape their consciousness and social relations. Yet sometimes the influence of national discourse is explicit, as in the "*gay* identity card" story from [chapter 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u10_ch01), or in statements like "When I was still with my former lover I never went to Texas or any other places…. It was only afterward that I entered the ‘Republic’ [*Republik*]." An explicit linkage also appears in the name GAYa Nusantara, which means both "archipelago style" and "*gay* archipelago," and the fact that groups of *gay* men and *lesbi* women across the archipelago name their groups with terms incorporating *GAYa*. The symbol for the group GAYa Dewata in Bali, which engages in some HIV prevention work ([fig. 5-3](#u15_ch05-fig5-3)), is an AIDS ribbon inverted and turned around so that it looks like a ceremonial Balinese male headdress. This image intertwines discourses of local, national, and international provenance with AIDS discourse and the archipelago concept’s requirement that every ethnolocalized region have a distinct character.

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To analyze how state discourse shapes something as ostensibly intimate as sexuality, it is necessary to read between the lines of participant observation and divine cultural logics that may not be on the lips of one’s interlocutors. Yet situations arise in which these logics—the idea of the *gay* world, for instance—shine forth, if only in an offhand remark that otherwise passes unnoticed. Doel, a *gay* man from Surabaya, had flown to Makassar in July 2002 to meet with a *gay* organization. One afternoon we accompanied a group of about thirty *gay* men to volleyball practice in a big field near the Azhar mosque. Ten yards away another group of men were playing volleyball. Doel was sitting next to me watching our *gay* friends play when he suddenly sat up and exclaimed: "Those guys over there are speaking Javanese!" Karim, sitting nearby, said, "Yes, they’re Javanese men who work in the market." Then he added jokingly, "Doel, you should go hang out with them. You’re Javanese, after all!"

I think most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would understand why Doel just turned to us and smiled: "Here is my world [*di sini dunia saya*]."

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# CHAPTER SIX

Practices of Self, Tests of Faith

NATIONAL STYLE

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

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

*Gaya* and its near-synonym *cara* have been popular terms in the archipelago more broadly. A concern with style was central to how Indies "natives" construed themselves as distinct from Dutch colonists (Pemberton 1994:23, 65–66). The idea that style can distinguish self from Other persists in the postcolonial concept of national style, which in distinction to ethnolocalized "tradition" is modern, animated by consumerism, and oriented around the figure of the middle-class family. The concept of style has long worked to establish social boundaries: it is a performative rather than status-based logic of belonging.[1](#u20_notex-fns72)

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

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

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

THE PERFORMED *LESBI* SELF

*The Cewek/Tomboi Boundary*

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

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

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for most *lesbi* women the *lesbi* subject position cannot be occupied in the abstract. A sharp division between feminine and masculine structures selfhood, sexual relationships, and sociality: the norm is that sexual relationships take place between masculine and feminine *lesbi* women, not between two masculine or two feminine *lesbi* women.[2](#u20_notex-fns73) Some *lesbi* women (primarily but not solely upper class) do not structure their desires around this gendered divide, but it is predominant. This heterogenderal (Faderman 1992) character of *lesbi* subjectivity and desire might seem to be imported, since butch-femme distinctions often play an important role in lesbian communities in the West and elsewhere (Halberstam 1998; Kennedy and Davis 1993; S. Wieringa 1999a), without a clear parallel in gay men’s sexual norms. However, when *gay* took form in (not "globalized to") Indonesia, it did so in the context of the well-known waria subject position. The *gay* subject position thus came to structure "desire for the same" within the category of masculinity. *Gay* men and warias are often friends, but it is considered highly abnormal for them to have sex with each other. Crucially, however, no female analogue to waria existed at the time that *lesbi* took shape in Indonesia: masculine women and female-to-male transgenders certainly existed but were not publicly known as a category of person, as warias were. As a result, the *lesbi* subject position includes not only women attracted to women (of masculine or feminine gendering) but also tombois, persons born with women’s bodies who feel themselves to have the soul of a man and strive to be considered social men.

The consequences of this are manifold. The sense that tomboi and *lesbi* might be separate subject positions is complicated by the fact that whereas *gay* men and warias rarely have sexual relationships, tombois and ceweks are ideal sexual partners. Additionally, like *gay* and *lesbi* (but unlike *waria*), tomboi is understood to be a "foreign" concept that has been Indonesianized. Tomboi does not appear in a 1976 Indonesian dictionary (*lesbian* does, but *gay* is absent [Poerwadarminta 1976:592]); by 1991, however, it appears with the definition "an active girl, full of adventuring like a boy." That tomboi was Indonesianized by this point is indicated by the fact that the term could already occur with the circumfix *ke-an* to form the abstract noun *ketomboian,* "tomboi matters" (Salim and Salim 1991:1630). These common Indonesian uses of *tomboi,* however, do not mark a minoritized sexual subject position but indicate what is understood to be a temporary and benign characteristic of young girls.[3](#u20_notex-fns74) The use of the term *tomboi* to label an adult sexual subject position builds from this understanding in a manner that has no parallel for the terms *waria, gay*, or *lesbi.* Tomboi subjectivity thus appears to be dubbed with relation both to the West and to Indonesian popular culture.

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The most important consequence of this dual dubbing is that there is active debate among tombois as to whether they are a subcategory of *lesbi* or a separate transgendered subject position analogous to waria. As a Balinese *lesbi* woman phrased it: "not all tombois are *lesbi,* and not all *lesbi* women are tomboi." In [chapter 5](#u15_ch05) I described the formation of an organization in northern Bali with three leaders—one *lesbi*, one *gay*, and one waria. The idea of a fourth, tomboi leader seems not to have occurred, reflecting how tombois are seen as a kind of *lesbi* woman whereas waria is a distinct subject position. While warias would never list themselves in the personals section of a *gay* zine, tombois have listed themselves in *lesbi* zines. For instance, in the April 1998 issue of *MitraS*, "Ray," twenty years old, listed herself as "L" (*lesbi*) but then said "I’m a tomboy, with fair skin and medium build." In the February 1998 issue, "Wiewid Thomboy," twenty-five years old, entered a personal ad looking for a woman who "is intimate and warm." In the first of a series of pivotal encounters with mass media in *Menguak Duniaku*, the tomboi protagonist Hen reads about the first waria sex change operation (performed on a waria named Vivian): "in the silence of the night, I prayed to God that he would give the reverse [*sebaliknya*] of what he gave Vivian to me…. I wanted to tell my mother, my father, that I was the same as Vivian" (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:51).

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

Thus, while being tomboi can be framed as a form of female masculinity (as when a tomboi states, "Well, I wouldn’t want to be a man. Not that I could with this body" [Graham 2001:1]), it is often linked to transgenderism. This is certainly Hen’s understanding in *Menguak Duniaku*; when reading about the 1981 "wedding" of Jossie and Bonnie (see [chapter 2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u11_ch02)), Hen is surprised that Bonnie, a cewek who "was beforehand called *normal* and always paired up with a boy," did not want Jossie, a tomboi who had been called "banci" as a child, to have a sex change operation (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:306). Later he tells a cewek lover: "I’m not a lesbian [*lesbian*] because I play the part of a man [*berperan*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Being Cewek, Being Tomboi*

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

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

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

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

The performativity of tomboi subjectivity typically begins in childhood and focuses on boyish clothing, haircuts, and play activities (tombois frequently emphasize how they never liked dolls). In these respects, the trajectory of tomboi subjectivity appears the inverse of waria subjectivity, but with the crucial difference that the tomboi subject position is virtually unknown. While gender-nonconforming men can be quickly slotted into the category *waria*, gender-nonconforming women can play off the ambiguity between the standard Indonesian term *tomboi* and the less-known transgendered meaning of *tomboi*.[4](#u20_notex-fns75) This is why Sukma was rarely bothered on the streets of Makassar, even at night: "They might think I’m a tomboi woman, but they don’t know I’m a hunter."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE PERFORMED *GAY* SELF

*Ngondhek*

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

Some *gay* men see themselves as consistently feminine or consistently masculine and may prefer sexual relationships with a man who has the opposite gendering, but it is not considered abnormal for two feminine or two masculine *gay* men to have sex with each other.[5](#u20_notex-fns76) Becoming *gay* thus does not involve the all-important decision between masculine or feminine that characterizes the life courses of most *lesbi* women. However, to "open oneself" (*membuka diri*) to the *gay* world usually means not only socializing in certain places but also effeminacy, known in Surabaya and some other parts of *gay* Indonesia as *ngondhek*.[6](#u20_notex-fns77) Opposed to masculinity (*macho*, *maskulin, kebapakan* [derived from *bapak*, "father"], or *laki-laki asli* [authentic man]), ngondhek is a male body’s performing of feminine gender at a slight remove. It is the normative but not essential "style" of *gay* subjectivity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Gay* men draw a distinction between being an authentic man (*laki-laki asli*) and an authentic *gay* man (*gay asli*): *gay* men can become authentic men in the *normal* world through marriage (see [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04); Howard 1996) yet perform their *gay*ness in the *gay* world through ngondhek. There is a pleasure in this expression of the *gay* self through effeminacy; it is an enjoyable practice often conceptualized in terms of performance. There is also danger in ngondhek: it becomes a habit and thus ever in danger of surfacing inappropriately outside the *gay* world. As I once heard a group of *gay* men in Makassar put it, there is a need to "look at the situation" (*lihat situasi*) when acting ngondhek. Ngondhek is a style: of speaking, of hanging out (*gaya kumpul*), of acting in the world that surfs the border between visible and invisible, authentic and inauthentic, local and global, masculine and feminine. It dubs culture in the sense that it holds feminine practice and male embodiment together over time without conflating them (like dubbed language and filmed mouths that do not match up), unlike the practices of waria subjectivity, which fuse—symbolically and literally—femininity and male bodies.

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

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

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

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

*Opening and Closing*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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an incitement to discourse that contributed to the "reverse discourse" of the gay and lesbian rights movement.[7](#u20_notex-fns78)

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

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

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

*The* Gay*/Waria Boundary*

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

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

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

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Tensions over the *gay/*waria boundary can be seen in excerpts from letters written to the *gay* zine *GAYa Nusantara* in response to the question: Is it proper that *gay* men make themselves up (déndong)?[8](#u20_notex-fns79)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Gay Language and the National Voice*

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

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

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

The significance of bahasa *gay*’s founding in Indonesian is a consequence of the unusual position of Indonesian in the nation-building project. Language played a vital role in the state’s enormous effort to build a sense of nationalism among the denizens of the Dutch East Indies. At the time of independence in the late 1940s, many of these groups shared little more than the Dutch colonial encounter, which itself exhibited great regional variation in length and intensity. One core element of most nationalisms is the belief that to be modern and authentic, nations need national vernaculars (Anderson 1983). What would become Indonesia’s mother tongue? Dutch clearly would not have sufficed, not only because of its association with the colonizing power but also because of Holland’s antipathy toward having its subjects speak the colonial language. As noted in [chapter 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u10_ch01), at the time of independence, after 350 years of Netherlands rule, less than 2 percent of Indonesians spoke Dutch. Javanese, spoken by almost 40 percent of "natives," seemed a logical choice, but selecting any ethnolocalized language had the disadvantage of privileging one group.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Standard Indonesian: | *Saya sudah lapar dua jam*I already hungry two hours |
| Bahasa *gay*: | *Saya sudah lapangan dua jam*I already open field two hours |

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TESTS OF FAITH

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

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

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

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

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# PART THREE

Sexuality and Nation

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# CHAPTER SEVEN

The Postcolonial State and *Gay* and *Lesbi* Subjectivities

HEGEMONY AND SUBJECTIVITY

Ruling or dominant conceptions of the world [may] not directly prescribe the mental content of … the heads of the dominated classes. But the circle of dominant ideas does accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others; its classifications do acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought but also the inertial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken for granted: what the world is and how it works, for all practical purposes.

—Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden"

[Part 2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u13_pt02) of this book explored what it means to be *gay* or *lesbi* in daily life. Building upon these materials and also the discussions of history, mass media, and globalization in [part 1](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u09_pt01), this chapter further theorizes the relationship between sexuality and nation. In the postcolonial Indonesia of the 1970s through the 1990s, when the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions first took form, the authoritarian New Order (*Orde Baru*) regime of Soeharto had the resources to impose its agenda to a greater degree than the Old Order regime of Sukarno (1945–1969) it replaced, or the colonial regimes of Japan and Holland. Indonesians did—and continue to—resist this state power. What is of interest is that such resistance often takes the form of transformation rather than rejection. The very terms "*gay*" and "*lesbi*" might be taken to indicate that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians identify with a global gay and lesbian movement and thus stand outside national discourse. However, it seems quite clear that they lie deeply within that discourse. They also imagine global linkages despite the fact that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians rarely travel outside Indonesia or encounter gay or lesbian Westerners.

Stuart Hall notes that "ruling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world."[1](#u20_notex-fns80) Theories of ideology tend to view this influence in binary terms: one either believes the ideology and suffers from false consciousness or sees the ideology as such and rejects it. One is hailed, or one turns away (Althusser 1971). Theories of hegemony, which typically

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trace their origin to the work of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), offer a more nuanced framework for analyzing "stories that find sustenance in pervasive commonsensical, almost unconscious, dominant ways of understanding, experiencing, and acting in the world" (Helmreich 1998:12). In developing his theory of hegemony in the 1930s, Gramsci was concerned with orthodox Marxism’s inability to explain the failure of the peoples of Western Europe to revolt against their states in the manner of the Russian Revolution twenty years earlier. Gramsci located this theoretical failure in an orthodox Marxist "economism" that "asks the question: ‘who profits directly from the initiative under consideration,’ and replies with a line of reasoning which is as simplistic as is it fallacious: the ones who profit directly are a certain fraction of the ruling class" (1971:166).

In response Gramsci refined the notion of hegemony, a term already in use in Marxist analysis at the time. Gramsci did not see most societies as controlled solely through physical coercion; while it could certainly exist (as Gramsci’s imprisonment must have made clear to him), Gramsci saw it as a means of last resort. He believed that most contemporary societies were controlled by a hegemony functioning first and foremost through "leadership"—the winning of consent through cultural means. Such consent is not reducible to false consciousness because it requires real concessions; it is partial and historically unstable, vulnerable to transformation particularly when such transformation does not directly threaten the hegemony itself. For Gramsci, "hegemony was, in effect, the basis for the reformulation of the doctrine of historical materialism to allow room for the influence of ideas and the powerful effect of human will" (Kurtz 1996:108; see also Crehan 2002:104). One way in which hegemonies differ from ideologies is that the former tend to be taken for granted (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:25). Such naturalization is possible because, in contrast to the specific content of ideologies (Althusser 1971:162), hegemonies "hail" persons to a range of debate. This nonspecificity gives hegemonies their flexibility and dynamism—you can argue as a Republican or Democrat over a variety of issues, but more important is the range of debate such "extremes" define. Hegemony permits, even requires, diversity. If ideology clothes the self from a specific wardrobe, then hegemony is a style—a loose imperative that permits variation within a "horizon of the taken for granted."[2](#u20_notex-fns81)

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians have received little academic attention not only because they do not fit within an ethnolocalized spatial scale, but because no discourse appears to correlate with their existence. My analysis departs from most of the literature on sexuality and nationalism in that I ask how the state can shape sexual subject positions that it neither incites as normative nor calls into being through oppression, what Foucault termed a reverse discourse (Foucault 1978). In the case of *gay* and

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*lesbi* Indonesians, sexuality—what might appear to be the most intimate, personal, prepublic domain of life—is configured through state discourse, but not in an intentional manner or as a form of oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 1991). In Indonesia "the state’s powers are manifest less through coercive force or economic interventions than in a quieter percolation through schools, village meeting halls, minor bureaucratic offices, churches, and the like" (Keane 1997:39). It is these indirect "percolations" of national discourse that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians transform through their sexual subjectivities.

To further illuminate how sexuality and nation intersect in *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities, it is necessary to specify the most relevant elements of national discourse. Though the Pancasila or Five Principles of the state, first set out during Sukarno’s rule, have been central (Morfit 1981; Ramage 1995), these principles are relatively abstract. For the New Order state (and the regimes following it), two of the most significant elements of national discourse that concretize Pancasila’s principles of unity, morality, and justice have been the archipelago concept (*wawasan nusantara*) and the family principle (*azas kekeluargaan*).

In previous chapters I foreshadowed the influence of these elements of national discourse—from the notion of "archipelago style" to the dynamics of *gay* and *lesbi* "heterosexual" marriages. One could conduct a thought experiment in which the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions had formed under a different set of circumstances. What would these subject positions have looked like had they developed under Sukarno’s Old Order government, which was in power from independence in 1945 until the mid-1960s? During this period Sukarno attempted to build nationalism through a much more antagonistic relationship to the world outside Indonesia. National belonging was articulated not so much in terms of paternalist development but as an oppositional national identity. In such a context Indonesians might have even produced ethnolocalized homosexualities. Yet this did not happen: the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions came into being under the New Order’s hegemony. How has this contingent conjunction shaped what it means to be *gay* or *lesbi*?

THE ARCHIPELAGO CONCEPT

I used [the term "archipelago"] only once, and that was to designate, via the title of Solzhenitsyn’s work, the carceral archipelago: the way in which a form of punitive system is physically dispersed yet at the same time covers the entirety of a society.

—Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography"

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Throughout the period of anticolonial nationalism, intellectuals and political leaders struggled to define a social and political entity that would challenge Dutch rule. It was a breathtakingly new idea: "Indonesian nationalism, the European-derived idea that the diverse indigenous people of the territory then called Netherlands India constituted a single nation and had a right to independence and a state of their own, dates as a political movement only from the first or second decade of the twentieth century" (Liddle 1988:4). It was far from certain that the colonial entity the "Dutch East Indies" would be succeeded by an entity with identical boundaries, rather than a number of smaller states. It was a question of similitude and difference: what did the members of this far-flung archipelago share to counterbalance differences in ethnicity, language, religion, wealth, colonial experience, and culture? How was the new nation to integrate an imagined community of "broad, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983), given the regional history of "deploying spatially defined imagery for the legitimacy of systems of political and spiritual authority" (Kuipers 1998:8–9)?[3](#u20_notex-fns82) It is in this sense that the notion of "Indonesia" has been the greatest legacy of the colonial encounter, as territorial boundaries have been to many postcolonial nation-states. By converting the colonial concept of the "East Indies" into something authentic, the state reinterprets denizens of what was known as the "Malay Archipelago" (Wallace 1962) as citizens of an Indonesian archipelago. This is a question of recognition, but whereas national recognition in liberal multicultural democracies is usually assumed to be the recognition of difference (Povinelli 2002:17), from the beginning Indonesian national discourse also framed recognition in terms of similitude. During the final decades of colonial rule, the vision of a nation where difference would be the precondition for similitude—like islands are necessary for an archipelago—became increasingly codified. One important moment was the Kongres Pemuda or "Youth Meeting" of 1928. At this meeting, "an ethnically diverse, Dutch-educated native intelligentsia … renamed Malay (*bahasa Melayu*) as Indonesian (*bahasa Indonesia*), language of their nation-tobe. Their famous ‘Oath of the Youth,’ still repeated on its anniversary every year across the country, conferred public, formal recognition on the project of a unified people (*satu bangsa*), speaking one language (*satu bahasa*), in a single homeland (*satu nusa*)" (J. Errington 1998:52).

The use of *nusa* (island) for the unitary nation demonstrates the recursivity of what would become the archipelago concept: islands make up a national archipelago, but on a metalevel the nation is a single island in a global archipelago of nation-states. The term *nusantara* (archipelago) (which can be used as a colloquial term for Indonesia itself) combines *nusa* with *antara*, which means "between" in Indonesian but in the original Sanskrit means "other" (R. Jones 1973:93). It has been dated to copper

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inscriptions from 1305 (Avé 1989:230) but was not central to the anticolonial movement. The term *nusantara* appears to have been first used in its modern sense in the 1920s by several Dutch figures, including Brandes and E. F. Douwes Dekker (R. Jones 1973:94). It was then taken up by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, an important nationalist figure and founder of the Taman Siswa schools (Avé 1989:231), but appears nowhere in the 1945 constitution.[4](#u20_notex-fns83) The archipelago concept become elaborated and implemented as a central element of state discourse only during the postcolonial era, in the context of an international dispute over maritime boundaries. At the First International Conference of the Law of the Sea, held in Geneva in December 1957, the Indonesian state argued that its borders were not limited to a certain distance from the coast of each island, as was the international norm (and as Indonesia had inherited from the colonial state), but should include all of the waters "within" the archipelago (see [figs. 7–1](#u18_ch07-fig7-1) and [7–2](#u18_ch07-fig7-2)).[5](#u20_notex-fns84) Indonesia’s request was granted, and the Second International Conference in 1960 recognized the notion of an "archipelagic state" and with it the archipelago concept. The archipelago concept took its final form only in March 1973,[6](#u20_notex-fns85) and the map of the nation showing the archipelago concept was formally introduced on May 2, 1984, at the height of the New Order.[7](#u20_notex-fns86)

Since the 1970s the archipelago concept has been promulgated by the state—particularly the military—as a *cultural* concept wherein similitude encompasses difference. It is a way to think of oneself in simultaneously ethnolocalized and national terms—for instance, as both Makassarese and Indonesian, or both Sundanese and Indonesian. A core element of this project has been to extend the archipelago concept backward in time and claim it as "indigenous." In so doing, this discourse attempts to forge a citizen-subject whose selfhood is keyed to *national* culture as much as ethnolocalized culture. Thus Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, foreign affairs minister from 1978 to 1988, claimed "it would not be exaggerating to say that it is [through the archipelago concept] … that the effort or the journey of the Indonesian nation towards *rediscovering* its own subjectivity has been carried out" (1982:25, emphasis added). General Benny Moerdani, one of the most powerful figures of the New Order, claimed that the archipelago concept could be found not only in the 686 oath of King Syailendra of the Sumatra-based Sriwiyayan empire, but in the fifteenth-century "palapa oath" of Gajah Mada, a renowned chief minister of the Java-based Majapahit empire (Moerdani 1986:35–36). It is unclear to which islands Gajah Mada referred. The relevant line of this oath is as follows (in Javanese): *Lamun huwus kalah Nusantara/Insun amukti palapa, lamun kalah* (Once I have subdued the Nusantara, only then will I rest) (Sudibyo 1991; see also Avé 1989:230; R. Jones 1973:93–94).

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Figure 7–1. Indonesia’s borders before the invention of the archipelago concept, as inherited from a 1939 colonial law. From Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional (1995:16).



Figure 7–2. Indonesia’s borders after the invention of the archipelago concept in December 1957. Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional (1995:17).

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Through the efforts of state bureaucracies and officials, including not only Kusumaatmadja and Moerdani but Lieutenant General Ali Moertopo, one of the most powerful figures of the New Order, "the notion of archipelagic culture (*kebudayaan nusantara*) has served as a central attribute of the unified nation, as one of the pivotal notions that has enabled the positing of the national subject’s continuity across History" (Acciaioli 2001:12). In this understanding, *negara* (state) and *nusantara* (archipelago) come together to define Indonesian uniqueness—what Sukarno had in 1959 already identified as the "national personality" (*kepribadian bangsa*; Bourchier 1997:157). Within what the national anthem terms "our lands and waters" (*tanah air kita*), Indonesians supposedly inherit a "single vision" (*pandangan satu*) from their ancestors (Moerdani 1986:36); Indonesia is understood to be a single culture in which similitude trumps difference, a unified culture that will allow Indonesians to selectively accept or reject global influences. Thus Indonesia’s postcolonial future, where the archipelago concept will be the "bridge" incorporating the global within the national, can be described as the *zaman nusantara* (archipelagic era) (Rustam 1986:78). Frequently, official writings on the archipelago concept conclude it is a *cara pandang bangsa Indonesia*; literally, a national style of seeing (Sudibyo 1991:2).

Foucault (1978) identified the concept of an archipelago in repressive terms. Yet his understanding of power as productive and "capillary"—distributed in mundane practices as much as official ideologies—suggests that the notion of archipelagic culture can be vulnerable to transformation. Troubling notions of similitude and difference, the archipelago concept can also be used to problematize received understandings of exterior and interior. State ideology is never without its contradictions. The archipelago concept implies that all regions have equal status, but the obvious political and economic superiority of Java (indeed, of Jakarta, the capital) recalls colonial and precolonial modes of sovereignty, when the ruler’s palace was the "axis of the world" (Anderson 1990:41). However, one of the best-known models for sovereignty and national belonging in postcolonial Indonesia does not invoke a core and periphery. It is *Taman Mini*, the "Beautiful Indonesian Park in Miniature," brainchild of Soeharto’s wife following a visit to Disneyland, with its cultural pavilions for each province, surrounding a central lake with tiny islands mapping the archipelago. This park has attracted attention (e.g., Pemberton 1994) because it demonstrates how the state deploys difference. The archipelago concept not only tolerates but demands difference as the raw material the nation incorporates into "unity." By ethnolocalizing this difference, the state claims it as authentic, asli, prior to the colonial encounter and the postcolonial state.

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Figure 7–3. The nation subsumes the ethnolocal. Abas (1987:149).

The archipelago concept is easily visualized as a conceptual line drawn around Indonesia’s islands. It also appears in schematic representations such as the "identity diagram," which appears in a work on language policy with the explanation that "The rectangle ABCD encloses all features that comprise national as well as ethnic identities and identifies them as a socio-cultural and political unity" (Abas 1987:149; [fig. 7–3](#u18_ch07-fig7-3)). By refracting difference through the archipelago concept, the state acquires legitimacy. The state can be taken to represent the similitude that difference needs to be legible as such: the "*wawasan nusantara* envisages, in both abstract and material form, the unification of the archipelagic nation-state as a total organism … stressing unity above decentralization" (van Langenberg 1990:124; see also Fletcher 1994). As the national motto states, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, unity *in* diversity, one *over* many. Similitude has been the modality of the postcolonial state’s authoritarianism, but also of a distinct and, for many Indonesians, deeply felt sense of nationalism. While Indonesians are no more likely to accept uncritically the archipelago concept than all U.S. citizens accept the idea of the melting pot, the archipelago concept is hegemonic: backed by state power, it dominates "common sense" and helps define the bounds of acceptable discussion. For instance, it shapes notions of "tradition" and "local autonomy" characterizing contemporary politics of indigenous rights in Indonesia, with their focus on recognition (Li 2003). That the Indonesian state’s hegemony

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is never stable or complete does not nullify its power: it creates space for improvisation and transformation—for dubbing—of which the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are signal examples.

THE FAMILY PRINCIPLE

The history of political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions … but the family here spoken of is not exactly the family as understood by a modern.

—Henry Maine, *Ancient Law*

Postcolonial states typically justify their sovereignty by claiming an organic link to their citizenry that the colonial power did not possess, even as they take up virtually unchanged the physical boundaries of that regime. Foucault was speaking of Europe when he claimed that historically "[the family] disappears as the model of government, except for a certain number of residual themes of a religious or moral nature" (1991:99); the trope of the family remains central to many modern governmentalities. Nationalism has been a "normalizing process that imagined modern collectivities as ethnically homogeneous and inherently masculinist entities [and] depended on the foundational construction of constitutive outsides" (Bunzl 2004:13). In the Austrian context Bunzl analyzes, "homosexuals thus became central players in the social drama of modernity. Constituted as always already outside the margins of respectability, their abjection gave coherence to the fiction of German nationness" (13). In the Indonesian case we do not find homophile movements going back a hundred years, nor do we find an explicit focus upon homosexuality as a social ill. Yet while *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians were not "constituted" per se by the Indonesian state, they are very much a "constitutive outside," the implicit if rarely acknowledged failure of kinship and thus the nation itself.

Just as postcolonial states take up colonial boundaries, so this trope of the family typically indigenizes a notion of the middle-class nuclear family characteristic of colonial sensibilities (Chatterjee 1993; Stoler 2002b). Historically, marriage and family life in what is now called "Indonesia" involved relations between social groups, not just a bride and groom; as a result "the rhetoric of emotions and personal experience associated with marital and sexual relations can be a potent idiom for talking about the self in the context of social groups, categories and relations" (Kuipers 1998:44). The idea that "familyness" (*kekeluargaan*; derived from *keluarga*, "family") is fundamental to being Indonesian dates back to the early

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period of nationalism (Bourchier 1997) and "found its first institutional expression in the 1920s in the establishment of the Taman Siswa national educational movement [founded by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, which set] forth for the first time the idea that the internal order of an organization should be sustained by familial bonds, [providing] a clear model for the form of future Indonesian organizations" (Shiraishi 1997:82; see also K. Dewantara 1959:10–16). Thus Ki Hadjar Dewantara played an important role in establishing both the archipelago concept and the family principle. Alongside Dewantara, other key early nationalist figures such as Sukarno, Hatta, and Supomo helped articulate the family principle as central to what being "Indonesian" meant (Reeve 1985). Like the archipelago concept, the family principle came into its own as a postcolonial trope: "After Indonesian independence, the family ideology was used in educational practice in a different way: all Indonesians became part of a family in which the Indonesian government was the parent and the student-citizens were the children" (Kuipers 1998:137).

By the Old Order’s end, "sexuality had become, in multiple ways, a primary idiom through which national identity was articulated, intra-national divisions were stated or smoothed, and international conflicts were defined and waged" (Dwyer 2000:38). However, it was during the New Order that the family principle (*azas kekeluargaan*) came to the fore as a principle of governance: "There is no question that the remarkable staying power of [the New Order] … depended in large measure on its ability to insert itself deep within the domestic sphere throughout Indonesian society" (S. Brenner 1998:226; see also Chapman 1996). This concept "has a powerful and pervasive ideological presence in modern Indonesia. It is enshrined in the 1945 constitution, and the family language is inseparable from the political language of Indonesia’s New Order" (Shiraishi 1997:81). It was during the New Order that the idea of Indonesia as a familial state (*negara kekeluargaan*) was first articulated by state officials (Bourchier 1997:170). The family principle was inculcated through the public education system, where "school lessons linguistically construct a single model of the family" (Shiraishi 1997:131). As a result, "the traditional family is now merely customary while the Indonesian family is an effect of the nation, deriving its legitimacy and its form from outside itself" (Siegel 1998:87). At issue is thus not just state paternalism (*bapakisme*) or the "state momism" discussed in [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04), but the heteronormativity that links these together to produce the modern family as foundational unit of the nation.

Family planning has been central to the promulgation of this heteronormative family principle. In June 1970, at the outset of his rule, Soeharto established the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (Badan Koodinasi Keluarga Berencana Nasional, BKKBN). From its beginnings

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family planning was used to distinguish the New Order from its predecessor: it "signaled the reversal of the strong pro-natal policy it had inherited from the previous government, which had regarded contraception almost as criminal" (BKKBN 1999:5). In contrast to the pronatalist stance of the Old Order (Dwyer 2000:36), now interpreted as irresponsible, the New Order would control and manage families, and it would be the modernity and prosperity of these families, not their mere number, that would constitute progress. As Soeharto declared in 1993, "Indonesian families should be the place for nation-building" (BKKBN 1999:26). Thus, "The family planning program can be seen as part of a project of redefinition of Indonesian political culture, where the mass of the people are becoming receptive to the right claimed by the state to intervene in civil society, as well as in political life. This is an important part of forging the new society embodied in the New Order’s vision of *kekeluargaan*, with the state embodying paternalistic authority" (Robinson 1989:30–31).

Key to the success of family planning has been disseminating the notion of normative (*normal*) sexuality. Persons who comply with the Family Planning program are known as "acceptors" (*akseptor*); accepting the "transfer of responsibility" for family planning from the state to individual helps make them *normal* (Warwick 1986:455). It is primarily through defining the *normal*, rather than the deviant, that the Indonesian state has linked sexuality and nation (Dwyer 2000:28). Sexuality and nation are to come together in a particular kind of heteronormative family: male head of household, wife who might work but always puts her role as wife and mother first, and two children. This family came to symbolize the stability and integrity of the social order.

As discussed in [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04), this is a sexuality formed through notions of choice and love. It can be shaped by globalizing discourses—Valentine’s Day, for instance, has become a popular celebration of *normal* sexuality—but is seen as originating in Indonesia. While literally clothed in the language of tradition (see [fig. 7–6](#u18_ch07-fig7-6)), its authenticity comes from its link to the nation: "The goal of preserving national unity, fought and won by the youth of the 1920s, continues to this day as the overarching goal of the country’s life as a nation—an end anchored on the nurturing of the family as the strong foundation of society" (BKKBN 1999:20).

This is the paradox of Indonesian postcoloniality: "Authenticity does not accrue but, on the contrary, must be built in as a unique quality that will survive through time, in spite of time" (Pemberton 1994:159). To not follow Family Planning is tantamount to disavowing national belonging; marginalized social groups, such as ethnic Chinese, can thus be presented as resistant to Family Planning (Departemen Dalam Negeri 1974:37; see also Butt 2001). When, for instance, a *gay* man in Makassar said one reason he married a woman was "because in Indonesian culture (*budaya*

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*Indonesia*) the family is a joy of its own," the notion of "Indonesian culture" he deployed is not outside state discourse. Through the "spectacle" of Family Planning, "the Indonesian state at once offers a compelling version of nationalism and sexuality and positions itself as the primary author of national representation. By staging these spectacles, the state works to instill a regime where people monitor themselves and their sexual practices to accommodate to public displays of sexual ‘normalcy’" (Dwyer 2000:41).

By the 1980s the family principle had become a primary mode through which the New Order state articulated its notion of development: the nuclear family, not the citizen in isolation, was construed as the smallest unit of the nation (Suryakusuma 1996:95–97). The ideal citizen response to everything from regional separatism to HIV education was *secara kekeluargaan*, "family style" (among other things, this implies settling disputes without resorting to the law): "The family … bears a heavy burden in the transformation of Indonesia’s population into ‘modern’ citizens of the nation-state" (S. Brenner 1998:228). This concept of the family is not representational but normative; it has been "aimed not at accurately representing the diverse social entities that we call families but at presenting a model that all families are supposed to emulate, directed toward the furthering of goals that always exceed the boundaries of the family itself" (S. Brenner 1998:228).

When the Indonesian state declares that the family is the smallest unit of the nation, it has a specific kind of family in mind, with particular gender and class characteristics: the ideal citizen family is not a "traditional" extended family but the modern, heterosexual, paternalistic nuclear family ([figs. 7–4](#u18_ch07-fig7-4), [7–5](#u18_ch07-fig7-5)), the middle-class family of consumerism (see [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04)). In many understandings worldwide, the middle class "occupies a precarious position along two continua" (Liechty 2003:7)—between poor and rich, on the one hand, and tradition and modernity, on the other. For the Indonesian case I would add a third continuum: the middle class occupies a national space, between local and global. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians lie at the intersection of these three continua and are shaped by the notions of choice found in dominant ideologies of the middle class.

The family principle has a strong temporal element. Families are actively built through the efforts of their members and the state; they are cause and product of national development. They are both foundational element and microcosm of the nation, a domestic Taman Mini: like that theme park, the ideal nuclear family is to be a "perfectly cultural representation" of Indonesia (Pemberton 1994:153): "In the ideologies of the New Order, the family/household is not considered to be autonomous in any way; it is merely a fraction of a national whole, a unit that has no independent meaning or existence apart from the nation-state" (S. Brenner 1998:238). Heterosexuality animates the family principle; in postcolonial Indonesia, men and women are to choose heterosexual marriage based on love.[8](#u20_notex-fns87) Through this choice they make the families that are the building blocks of the nation, and through this choice they also make themselves into proper, authentic citizens who will be recognized by the nation: "[In Indonesia] sexuality and gender may be reified as essential, non-negotiable attributes of national identity" (Dwyer 2000:27).

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Figure 7–4. The "traditional" family. *BKKBN* (1988:24).



Figure 7–5. The "modern" family. *BKKBN* (1988:5).

THE ARCHIPELAGO CHILD

On February 4, 1997, a healthy baby … was born in a small village in the province of West Nusa Tenggara. His birth marked him as the 200 millionth Indonesian citizen and was celebrated as a special occasion…. The President awarded him a special name, Wahyu Nusantaraaji, which literally means "a valuable revelation to [the archipelago]."

—National Family Planning Coordinating Board

Little Wahyu Nusantaraaji was certainly unaware of his name’s significance on that fateful day in 1997, but the naming of this archipelago child reveals how an articulation between the archipelago concept and the family principle is built into, indeed is defining of, Indonesian postcolonial governmentality. The intersection of the archipelago concept and the family principle is illustrated by the well-known map of Indonesia in which each province is essentialized in terms of a single "tradition," signified through clothing on a *heterosexual* couple ([fig. 7–6](#u18_ch07-fig7-6); see also Rutherford 1996:584). Heterosexuality, usually placed at the bottom of such maps, constitutes ethnolocalized "diversity"; the archipelago concept (typically at the top), "unity." Together they literally bracket the national motto of "unity in diversity."

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Figure 7–6. Heterosexual and ethnolocalized couples constituting the nation. Courtesy of Danilyn Rutherford.

The archipelago concept and the family principle intersect even in lower-level official discourse. I recall attending an evening neighborhood Independence Day celebration in 2000 in Makassar; as is typical, a residential street was blocked off and filled with chairs, with a stage at one end. A banner behind the stage read "different but always one" (*beda tetap satu*). On this evening a local official spoke to the crowd, emphasizing that "if you have a problem, go to a local leader; don’t go to the mass media or to outsiders. We should solve our problems family style (*secara kekeluargaan*). Even though we were from different ethnicities (*suku*) and religions, we are all one people (*bangsa*)."

The archipelago concept and the family principle are aesthetic forms and political structures—indeed, they aestheticize the political—and crucially, their intersection is predicated upon the conflation of "heterosexuality" and "choice." The growth of the individuals within the family—and the growth of the family as a unit—*is* national development, not just a metaphor for it. Since the New Order, development has been central to Indonesian governmentality; Soeharto termed himself the "father of development" (*bapak pembangunan*). It was under this discourse of heterosexualized

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development that the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions took form, and while this discourse has been partially discredited in the wake of Soeharto’s fall, no pretender to the throne—reform, civil society, human rights, or regional autonomy—has completely dissociated itself from its assumptions. Development has been linked to the archipelago concept since 1973, when Decree No. IV of the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) stated that the archipelago concept was to be "the concept that forms the basis of Indonesia’s national development," one that "gives life to national development in all its aspects—political, educational, social, cultural, and that of defense" (Kusumaatmadja 1982:12, 25). Another example of the archipelago concept and family principle’s intersection can be seen in that

in each provincial museum [there is] an area set aside as the Ruang Nusantara—the nusantara (archipelago) room, or gallery—where visual comparisons are made between local artifacts and those from elsewhere in Indonesia. The nusantara room might contain, for example, swords or wedding costumes from each province in the archipelago … with the implication that, for all its variations, Indonesia is one…. One of the most widely used kinds of nusantara gallery displays [is] *sets of male and female dolls dressed in wedding garments of each province*—a custom also seen in places like Jakarta’s Taman Mini amusement park. (Taylor 1994:79–80; emphasis added)

These archipelago rooms illustrate how the archipelago concept and the family principle intersect in national discourse: heterosexuality brings together ethnolocalized "tradition" and modern choice; it turns diversity into unity, reproducing national belonging. Throughout its career, the concept of the Indonesian nation has been constructed in terms of a "collective ethical agent" which, through instrumental rationality, creates forms of organization that make the modern Indonesian nation-state possible (Cheah 2003:256). What has largely escaped scholarly attention is how this collective ethical agent, and its form of organization, are founded in heteronormativity.

ARCHIPELAGIC SELFHOOD

To my knowledge Wahyu Nusantaraaji is the only acknowledged archipelago child. Yet *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are also children of the archipelago—dubbing elements of national discourse with global discourses of homosexual desire. Without the archipelago concept and the family principle, the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions would not have taken the forms they have. For example, as the archipelago concept shapes a sense of national subjectivity, the family principle shapes a sense that "heterosexual"

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marriage is the precondition to being a successful citizen. The choice most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians make to marry illustrates how the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are archipelagic—not predicated on a singular selfhood that coheres across time and space, but capable of movement through different "islands" of life that do not need to resolve into one. The archipelago concept thus shares some elements with notions of "double consciousness" like the "Black Atlantic" that "call the very desire to be centered into question" (Gilroy 1993b:190). When in 1987 the magazine *Tempo* inadvertently termed the then-new *gay* zine *GAYa Nusantara* "*gaya hidup nusantara*," not "archipelago style" but "archipelago lifestyle," this mishearing reflected how the archipelago concept was understood to apply to individual citizen lives.[9](#u20_notex-fns88)

The choice to marry indicates how the state’s archipelago concept and family principle are "dubbed" in *gay* and *lesbi* life. For most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians "heterosexual" marriage is assumed, and the beliefs of those who do not wish to marry make no sense, nor did my own claims that I would never marry a woman: why would you want to hurt your parents by not marrying? How will you think of yourself as an adult, as complete? For most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, a multiply narrativized *gay* self or *lesbi* self can be a married, procreating self, even when marriage is to some extent a dreaded event. When a *gay* man turns to his lover in bed and tells him to marry, he is not confused about who he "really" is, nor is he internalizing homophobia or denying reality. He is expressing and perpetuating a subjectivity best thought of as archipelagic, rather than cosmopolitan, diasporic, or hybrid. The idea of a *gay* man and *lesbi* woman marrying each other is so rare because of the way these subjectivities straddle a contradiction—not between "tradition" and "modernity," but between two contradictory state rhetorics, the archipelago concept and the family principle. The first makes possible a subjectivity where the self does not have to be the same in all contexts. This renders thinkable a *gay* or *lesbi* self who is also "heterosexually" married. But the family principle constructs marriage as not only an alliance between families, but a totalizing conjugal relationship providing love, meaning, and purpose as well as sex, children, and a household—uniting the multifarious domains of modern life and engendering national recognition.

My discussion of *gay* and *lesbi* sociality in earlier chapters demonstrates how these Indonesians are the truest children of the archipelago: their senses of sexual selfhood are irreducible to ethnolocality. While those calling themselves *gay* or *lesbi* may think of themselves in ethnolocalized terms—as Bugis, Javanese, and so on—with regard to any number of domains of life, from kinship to religion to illness and health, in regard to their sexualities they think of themselves as *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians. In some cases this link to national discourse is explicit, as when *gay* men

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speak of *gay* identity cards or of working together as *gotong royong*, a term for mutual help promulgated by the state (Bowen 1986), *lesbi* women speak of having "no place" in Indonesia, or both name groups with terms derived from *GAYa*. For an entertainment event, *gay* men will sometimes create a "welcoming line of multi-ethnic ‘women’ of Indonesia in native costumes" (Howard 1996:297). The link to national discourse is also implicit in the sense that the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are distributed across Indonesia, and that *gay*ness and *lesbi*ness are never learned from "tradition" or local knowledge. In the shadow of rhetorics of national belonging, *gay* men and *lesbi* women engage in dubbing culture, troubling the borders between similitude and difference, East and West, asli and dubbing, living apparently foreign subjectivities through reconfiguring state discourse and transforming Western concepts of homosexuality.

As noted in [chapter 2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u11_ch02), persons inhabit multiple subject positions, and those subject positions need not have isomorphic spatial scales. Persons modify subject positions as they inhabit them—subjectivities always exceed the bounds of the subject positions they instantiate—but within horizons of intelligibility. A gay man in the United States can be gay in different ways, but it is unlikely he believes the concept "gay" is unique to Iowa, or to Boston: improvisation usually takes place within the subject position’s spatial scale. Since subject positions can be structured by multiple spatial scales, there is no reason that *gay* and *lesbi* could not be ethnolocalized. Thus it is all the more astounding that the ethnographic materials presented in this book offer not a single unambiguous case of someone understanding themselves as, say, *gay* Javanese or *lesbi* Balinese. For over thirty years persons of the archipelago have been inhabiting these subject positions across multiple lines of difference: class, generation, region, urban versus rural, religion. Yet a powerful similitude, a sense of national subjectivity, links these persons, making all the more salient the failure to attain national belonging, authenticity, and recognition.

The dominant logic of the Western gay and lesbian subject positions originates in "confessional" metaphors, taken up by sexology and psychology since the mid-nineteenth century, that assume an interior self is the origin of subjectivity (Foucault 1978). This self’s authenticity is contingent upon similitude: one is to be the same sexual person in all domains of life. One is to "come out," first by coming out to oneself, then to one’s parents, workplace, and so on. This sense of expansion through time was codified in the mid-twentieth century by psychologists like Erik Erikson—whose fifth stage of self-development, "subjectivity versus role diffusion," valorizes a unitary subjectivity that does not vary with social context—and specifically by psychological models of "Homosexual Identity Formation," sometimes known as "HIF" models. One review of HIF models emphasized that "although ‘coming out’ begins when individuals define

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themselves to themselves as homosexual, lesbians and gay males typically report an increased desire over time to disclose their homosexual identity to at least some members of an expanding series of audiences. Thus, coming out, or identity disclosure, takes place at a number of levels: to self, to other homosexuals, to heterosexual friends and family, to co-workers, and to the public at large" (Troiden 1988:36).

The origin of this "desire over time to disclose" is treated as a presocial, universal need: "to the extent that people routinely present themselves as homosexual in most or all social settings, their homosexual identities are realized" (Troiden 1988:41). In this interpretation, to say one is gay or lesbian only to certain people, in certain places, or at certain times, means one’s self-development is incomplete. Millions of gay and lesbian Westerners live their lives through this dominant ontology of selfhood. This is not a totalizing discourse; there are, for instance, many men and women in the West who have same-gender sex but do not term themselves gay or lesbian, and there are many men and women in the West who term themselves gay or lesbian yet engage in "heterosexual" sex. But in terms of the dominant discourse, such persons are seen as atypical, self-denying ("they’re really bisexual"), even abnormal. This is the power of the confessional discourse of homosexuality, which not only appears in social scientific literature but is produced by gay men and lesbians themselves, as in the following excerpt from a self-help text:

Coming out essentially means letting other people know that we are gay…. It takes a lot of effort to hide who you are … in the long run staying in the closet makes you feel guilty, ashamed, and unhappy. If you have to hide facets of your life, you will never be able to live freely. (Ford 1996:67–68)

These models of Western homosexual subjectivity share a lack of attention to the implicit theory of selfhood that undergirds them:

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures. (C. Geertz 1983:59)

One of the central projects of queer theory has been to denaturalize and destabilize this dominant discourse (e.g., Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1991), but often without reference to sexuality outside the West. Indeed, much of the concern with non-Westerners terming themselves "gay" or "lesbian" originates in a fear that such nomenclature inevitably brings the dominant Western discourse of homosexuality in its wake. Through concepts like "dubbing culture," I hope to indicate how such Western discourses of

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homosexuality are reworked in the Indonesian context, not through "tradition" but through rhetorics of national belonging. *Gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities tend to be "archipelagic"—a more ethnographically and theoretically precise specification of multiplicity than the rather obfuscating term "fluidity." To Westerners the most striking example of this archipelagic self might be that many *gay* men and *lesbi* women marry "heterosexually," do not see this as inconsistent with their subjectivities, and assume that Western gay men and lesbians do the same. When, for instance, *gay* men imagine a better future, it usually takes the form of a *gay* world that is more socially accepted, with more places, bigger events, and more *gay* men in it. Yet few *gay* men outside of activist organizations desire a *gay* world in which *gay* men do not normatively marry women.

This is not a schizophrenic or split subjectivity in the Western sense; a closer analogue would be the metaphor of the self as actor playing different roles (a metaphor *gay* men and *lesbi* women sometimes use). In the West it is easy to imagine how someone could be a teacher and an administrator, a soccer coach and office worker, or a mother and a mountain-climber. It is more difficult for a Westerner to imagine someone being "homosexual" and "heterosexual" at the same time. However, most *gay* men and *lesbi* women consider themselves "open" in reference to the *gay* or *lesbi* world, with no necessary relation to other aspects of life. As one *gay* man put it: "I read the situation first. If it’s open (*buka*), I’m open. If it’s closed (*tutup*), I’m closed. What’s good is: don’t be open right away." Another *gay* man once mused that "in most cases I don’t think it’s right to say ‘closed’ (*tertutup*; the most common term); it’s more correct to say ‘closing oneself’ (*menutup diri*). *Tertutup* means anywhere at all they’re closed, like they can’t accept their situation or they are closed to everyone without exception. *Menutup diri* means that it depends on the location or environment." This grammatical distinction highlights a pervasive sense that what makes *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivity authentic is not uniformity over all domains of life, but participation in the *gay* or *lesbi* world—an island of life that does not necessarily have implications for other islands of life.

Such subjectivities are the kind of homosexuality that dominant Western frameworks see as immature or inauthentic. They are often labeled "situational," as if sexuality (like all domains of life) is not always contextual; the expectation is that sexuality be confessed everywhere. But *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are archipelagic in that their authenticity does not require renouncing other subjectivities. One *gay* man noted that since marrying "my perspective [*wawasan*] has grown, and I’ve been able to compare things with my married *gay* friends about what our lives will be like in the future, how to get ready for that, to find a solution for living in this Indonesia" [*hidup di Indonesia ini*]. To be *gay* and *lesbi*, one opens oneself to the *gay* or *lesbi* world, but for most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians there is no sense that one should ideally open oneself to the world in general. This is why for so many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians the desire to marry "heterosexually" does not contradict a sense of being *gay* or *lesbi* and is not understood as bisexuality. The idea of multiple, fractal, or "dividual" subjectivities can be shaped by "traditional" discourses as well as those of the nation-state, and exists in many parts of the Asia/Pacific region (e.g., Strathern 1988:268–274; 1992:125; Shore 1982:41, 133–141). However, the ethnographic data support the conclusion that the particular form of multiplicity in *gay* and *lesbi* lives has been formed by dubbing Western notions of homosexual selfhood with national discourse, as exemplified by the archipelago concept ([fig. 7–7](#u18_ch07-fig7-7)).

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Figure 7–7. Confessional self, archipelagic self.

It appears that in *gay* and *lesbi* lives the archipelago concept is triply recursive: "worlds" of life make up the self, which is one "island" in a national *gay* or *lesbi* archipelago, which is one "island" in a global gay and lesbian archipelago. On all these levels the archipelago concept permits a nuanced grid of similitude and difference in comparison to confessional and continental discourses, which tend toward binarism. For instance, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians consistently insist that they are "the same" as gay and lesbian Westerners, yet they are also quite cognizant of difference—they do not see themselves as derivative of Western homosexuality, even though it is frequently images and narratives of Western homosexuality that they "dub" from the first time they begin to occupy the *gay* or *lesbi* subject position. They believe that gay and lesbian Westerners (and gay men and lesbians elsewhere in the "Third World," such as Latin America) share a set of desires and practices and inhabit analogous places. Frequently during fieldwork I would ask my *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors if they had questions about the West. I received queries ranging from "Do gay bars really exist?" to "Have you met Leonardo DiCaprio?," but just as often they responded politely that "I feel I already know everything about your life." One *gay* man phrased this as "We’re the same [*sama*], just separated; there is no difference" (*perbedaan*): another said, "It’s the

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same style, *gay* men here and there" (*sama aja gayanya, gay-gay di sini dengan sana*).

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are, in my experience, always aware that the terms *gay* and *lesbi* have analogues outside Indonesia, though the degree to which they feel they have knowledge about these analogues varies. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, the West tends to be an unknown and strange place, both attractive and threatening. "California," for instance, is someplace (a region? a town?) in or near America: "Is it bigger than the city of Surabaya?" I was once asked; "Is it near Hollywood?" Yet with regard to being *gay* or *lesbi* the West is, at a fundamental level, familiar. When *gay* Indonesians talk about possible differences between the lives of gay Westerners and their own, comparisons are almost always drawn along an axis of openness and closedness. To wit, it is a sense that the West is more opened (*terbuka*), which denotes social acceptance and political rights. It is imagined in utopian terms: there must be lots of tempat ngebers that are busy all night long, ubiquitous *gay* discos and cafes, and a general ease in finding sexual and romantic partners. It is usually assumed that these gay Westerners have relationships with other men marked by romance and sexual variety.

Nevertheless, *gay* men tend to assume that gay Westerners marry women. A few have learned from tourists (or, more rarely, mass media) that this is not so, but even such reports may not sway their minds. For instance, Ikbal’s discovery that I did not plan on marrying was a source of unending consternation. One night at *Texas* he informed me that "I may be living in the big city, but at heart I’m still a village boy. I know I’m influenced by a lot of foreign concepts, but what I do is receive those things that are good and the other things I just ignore." When I asked: "What do you take and what do you reject?" he replied: "I’ll use you as an example. You are very friendly and good. So excuse me for saying so, but what I reject is you saying that you’re never going to marry. I reject this Western thing where you say something is not possible when you haven’t even made an effort. I reject the idea that *gay* people don’t marry and have children. How can you say it’s not possible for you when you haven’t tried?"

One difference between *gay* men and *lesbi* women is that *lesbi* women more often believe that the West is a worse place than Indonesia. This appears to be a product of the violence (domestic and otherwise) experienced by Indonesian women, combined with Hollywood images of the West as a place of unbridled violence, and occasional mass media reportage on homophobic violence. As one *lesbi* woman put it: "It’s better here than in America, right? Because there the antigay people are stronger than here." In its November 1997 premiere issue, the *lesbi* zine *MitraS* ran the following commentary:

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There is definitely no place for G [*gay*] & L [*lesbi*] people to act as freely as those who live on the Western half of the globe. Go ahead and dream about it! But that doesn’t mean that G & L people in the Western nations are always more lucky than we who are quiet in Indonesia. "Anti" groups appear along with the increased activities of G & L groups…. What’s more, the actions of who are "anti" can even take the form of violence towards a person who has made themselves known as G or L…. We in Indonesia feel like were are emasculated, that our freedom to move is very limited; however, the reaction from groups in society is not yet too harsh; it’s still at the degree of a "phobia." So which is better? It depends on the opinion of each [*lesbi*].

Yet none of these speculations about the West implies a radical alterity—it is a matter of degree not kind, "opened" or "closed," not Other. A *gay* man from Surabaya once emphasized that "here people are less open. Well, in here [*di sini*] they are opened, but out there [*di luar*] they are not." This *gay* man was speaking to me in a disco, wearing women’s clothes and makeup for a playback competition. Yet we were having a conversation about the United States and Indonesia, and the deictic terms "in here" and "out there" referred not just to the walls of the disco, but to the boundaries of a *gay* world understood as an archipelago of places within the Indonesian nation.

For my *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors, gay and lesbian Westerners are distant but present, conceptually near even if they had never met one before myself. The structure of imagination is analogous to the way an Indonesian at one end of the archipelago imagines Indonesians at the other end of the archipelago. I have never heard anyone speak of the possibility that an ETP like bissu or warok might be found in the West, but it is self-evident that gay and lesbian Westerners exist and are linked to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians in a grid of similitude and difference for which I can think of no better moniker than "archipelagic."

The relationship between *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians and national discourse is one of resonances, borrowings, and transformations: as noted earlier, only occasionally does it become the topic of direct commentary. It is thus quite different from the "Queer Nation" movement in the United States, an ironic, camp-inflected mimicry of nationalism (Berlant and Freeman 1993). That *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are complexly imbricated with state discourse does not make them experience-distant: they are deeply felt senses of selfhood, founded in rhetorics of the nation, that do not supplant ethnolocalized subjectivities but interact with them in an additive manner (after all, the valorization of pluralism is central to the state’s self-presentation as an archipelagic container of diversity). The state stands as inadvertent idiom for *gay* or *lesbi* subjectivities. For this reason the proper parallel is not Queer Nation, but how Western gay,

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lesbian, bisexual, and transgender subject positions are normatively structured by the idea that sexuality is a core element of self-identity that must be confessed and integrated into all domains of life to be ontologically valid—but this indebtedness to nineteenth-century psychoanalytic thought does not mean that such Westerners support or even know of psychoanalysis.

Just as a minority of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians plan on never marrying, so there are those who see archipelagic selfhood as painful, undesirable, or inauthentic. Donny was a relatively wealthy *gay* man living in Surabaya. When I asked him if *gay* men could become *normal*, he replied, "It depends on your wishes. I choose the middle road. Not *biseks* [i.e., thinking of himself as bisexual], but the road of moderation between sex and my career." For Donny, "my career is proof that I’m normal" (*karir saya bukti bahwa saya orang normal*). He felt that his career was "an escape to forget … sex? No, not sex. Scratch that from your notes. It’s to forget a beautiful dream … that cannot be achieved. This is our life here."

I will take seriously Donny’s request to scratch the idea of "escape" from my notes. His discomfort with archipelagic selfhood is not a simple function of class; persons with similar sentiments can be found among working class *gay* men and *lesbi* women, and many wealthy Indonesians see no conflict between their subjectivities and "heterosexual" marriage. However, the view of the world expressed by Donny and others shares a key feature with the majority of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians who embrace archipelagic subjectivities: a concern with the performance of good and successful deeds—from one’s "career" to everyday acts of kindness. These deeds, known as *prestasi*, are crucial to *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. The importance of prestasi indicates how, as Donny intimates, being *normal* is about more than heterosexuality: it is about a kind of personhood-as-career where "success" carries momentous implications for recognition and belonging.

SEXUALITY AND NATION

I am a regular IndonesianWho works for the Indonesian peopleIn an Indonesian style [*dengan cara Indonesia*]

—Ki Hajar Dewantara

The "style" of *gay* and *lesbi* life demonstrates how sexual citizenship (see Evans 1993) is key to the economic and political workings of the postcolonial Indonesian state. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians reconfigure state hegemony in a manner the state never intended. *Gay* and *lesbi* are the clearest

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cases of truly national subject positions, irreducible to ethnolocality, and moreover synthesizing East and West in a manner consistent with longstanding tropes of the "modern Indonesian" (Frederick 1997).

Yet this very irreducibility to ethnolocality marks the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions as failures: exceeding the state’s own discourse of national belonging, they can never have the "traditional" diversity that represents the raw material to be unified by the archipelago concept. However, while *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are marginal to the body politic, in one sense their subject positions are a kind of distillation of national discourse, an ultimate achievement of the national project. In another sense, their presence challenges the state’s own mode of governmentality. The *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions do not participate in the ethnolocalized logic of territoriality: they do not hope one day to have an island of their own because they belong to the archipelago. These subject positions are places where the state’s own tactics of recognition and belonging are revealed by their absence; they symptomatize the contradictions of the postcolonial state. These national subject positions reveal the mechanics of how the state requires the production of ethnolocalized identities. The *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions are supreme but unanticipated examples of the postcolonial state’s efforts to carry out the five consequential words of Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution, still in effect—"The government shall advance Indonesian national culture" (*Pemerintah memajukan kebudayaan nasional Indonesia*)—a goal that for the state is "a crucial aspect of its nation building" (Acciaioli 1997:289; see also F. Ali 1997; Hooker and Dick 1993). At the same time, they implicitly critique the postcolonial state’s self-representation as arbiter of tradition, authenticity, modernity, and belonging.

In the Dutch East Indies, racial categories defined a colonial governmentality "concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to oblige—new forms of life to come into being" (Scott 1995:193). The mixed-race person blurred the boundary between colonizer and native, raising the specter of a "metamorphosis" that would destabilize the racial logic of colonial rule (Stoler 2002b:6). Because Dutch colonial discourse assumed that reproduction (and thus miscegenation) was heterosexual, homosexuality received little attention: while not desirable, it was assumed not to produce mixed-race children (Stoler 1995:96). Like the borders of the nation, this understanding of sexuality was taken from colonial into postcolonial discourse. Proper sexuality is central to acting in what Dewantara—the person credited with bringing the term *nusantara* into nationalist discourse—terms an "Indonesian style." It is the substitution of choice and love for

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arrangement. Choice implies the possibility of failed choice; with this substitution, homosexuality becomes thinkable as something that constitutes persons and reflects on them (rather than on the bad arrangements of a family whose child divorces the spouse selected for them). This postcolonial context shapes how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians think of their subjectivities as modern: clearly not passed down through tradition, dubbing transnational discourses of homosexuality, and having a national scope, but in a failed way. They are not recognized. They are "of" the archipelago, yet their style does not belong. Lyotard notes:

In the Introduction to [Kant’s] third Critique, the dispersion of the genres of discourse is … dramatized to the point that the problem posed is that of finding "passages" (Uebergange) between these heterogeneous genres…. This object could only be a symbol. Let’s say, an archipelago. Each genre of discourse would be like an island; the faculty of judgment would be, at least in part, like an admiral or like a provisioner of ships who would launch expeditions from one island to the next…. This interventionist force has no object, and does not have its own island, but it requires a milieu—this would be the sea. (1988:130–131)

For the Indonesian state, the archipelago metaphor addresses the problem of dispersion within the nation—difference—in a world where globalization appears ubiquitous, even banal. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians rework this archipelago metaphor and in so doing forge "genres," styles, that invoke the national and transnational. The dominant imagining of the Western life course is as a race course; either "each man is an island" or not being able to stand alone makes you a "dependent." You start at one place and move forward in time and space to the finish line. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, we could say figuratively that the course is more like a sailing course, tacking back and forth among landing points widely dispersed in space-time, and the self is an archipelago. But even this is insufficient. For *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, the self is not that which moves from island to island; it is the water itself, lapping up on multiple shores at the same time. After all, the etymology of both "archipelago" and "nusantara" refers not to a set of islands, but to the water between them. It is this sense of the self as the thing between the "islands," the water lapping on the shore, that explains how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians feel linked to distant but familiar Others across the globe. It is a style of selfhood forged through dubbing the discursive resources at hand within a horizon of power.

Nikolas Rose has noted how "Third Way" political theory in the West increasingly understands the politics of behavior in terms of "the values, beliefs, and sentiments thought to underpin the techniques of responsible

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self-government and the management of one’s obligations to others" (2000:1399). The postcolonial Indonesian state appears to have anticipated the West in this regard. Ever since the New Order’s rise, national belonging has been defined in terms of not just status but the performance of good deeds. What the state terms "national discipline" is an ethical practice, a development-in-miniature where the citizen prospers through good deeds (prestasi), of which the nuclear family is one of the most significant. As one married *gay* man put it: "It’s a prestasi if we’re married; it means we have responsibilities. We are no longer like a child, but an adult…. People who have a family are listened to, they receive a greater share [of respect] compared to a child."

Throughout my fieldwork, discussions of good deeds were a common theme among *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians (and also warias). Again and again *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would speak about the possibility for social acceptance by saying "it comes back to us." It was assumed that if they behaved well and contributed to the social good, they would be more recognized. One of the most ubiquitous phrases I encountered in all three of my primary field sites was that of wanting to be "accepted by society" (*diterima oleh masyarakat*). As one *gay* man put it, "We have to do better than society."

By implication, the social nonrecognition of *gay* and *lesbi* sexuality indexes a failing on the part of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians themselves. One *gay* man in Bali described how happy he was to have learned where *gay* men hung out at night: "But I still wasn’t satisfied, in the sense that I thought ‘Is this all?’ Just going to Puputan and hanging out, it didn’t seem to have any meaning. I thought that gay people could have some positive contributions too, some ‘value plus’ [*nilai plus*]." Sex is never counted as a prestasi, and both my *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors often expressed frustration that society, to the degree it was aware of them at all, saw them as interested "only" in sex. Even if unsure what this acceptance would entail, it was a deeply and consistently expressed aspiration. The notion of "society" invoked here and elsewhere by *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians *never* in my fieldwork referred to ethnolocalized groupings. It always indexed a public culture (*masyarakat luas, masyarakat umum*) understood in national terms. One *gay* man defined society as "a group living together, needing each other, building a single life, helping each other [*saling tolong menolong*]." Prestasi bring meaning to sociality: "What’s important," a *gay* man once explained, "is that our activities are good and don’t shame our families." *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would castigate each other for only caring about throwing parties, or stealing each other’s girlfriends or boyfriends, or gossiping, rather than doing something "positive" (*positip*).

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One of the clearest illustrations of the importance *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians place on the dialectic between good deeds and belonging can be found in the informally produced magazines or "zines" that they have been creating since 1982 (Boellstorff 2004c). In these zines we find a recurrent trope: the idea that love can be the ultimate good deed demonstrating that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are worthy of national inclusion. In these zines, *gay* Indonesians assume that prestasi must be visible to society to have these effects of inclusion. However, since it is difficult to speak positively of same-sex love in Indonesia, love fails as a prestasi. Belonging is deferred, and tropes of separation permeate *gay* zines as a result.

The link between love and nation often appears explicitly in zines; one of many examples is the short story "*Selingkuh*," a term that among *gay* men refers to having sex with a man other than one’s boyfriend (see [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04)). The story appears in the zine *GAYa Nusantara* ("archipelago style," the same name as the group in Surabaya that has published this zine since 1987). In this story Adam and Sam are lovers who each, unbeknownst to the other, take out a personal ad in *GAYa Nusantara* to find a new sex partner. When Sam gets a reply he is excited:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yess! Sekali lagi Sam bersorak-sorak bergembira, bergembira semua, sudah bebas negri kita, untuk s’ lamaamanya…. Aduh, sampe keterusan nyanyi-nyanyi lagu perjuangan … [10](#u20_notex-fns89) | Yess! Once again Sam shouted with happiness, everything was happy, our nation is now free, for all time…. Oh my, to the point that I accidentally sing a song of the struggle … |

When Sam’s joy leads him to sing a song from the anticolonial struggle, he breaks character to address the zine reader directly. When Adam receives *his* reply and is preparing for his blind date, he showers and dresses himself "carefully and in the shortest possible time (like the Proclamation) [*kayak proklamasi aja*]."[11](#u20_notex-fns90) *Proklamasi* refers to the famously short (two-sentence) Declaration of Independence read by Sukarno on August 17, 1945, Indonesia’s Independence Day. These are ironic and joking references to the nation, but the joke’s bite comes from their appearance in a zine that, like all zines, regularly contains writing that employs nationalist discourse. Of course, it turns out that Adam and Sam have unknowingly chosen each other’s personal ads; when they learn this, they celebrate their renewed love with a night of raucous sex. This story’s author is from Ponorogo, the region of Java where "traditional" homosexual relations between warok actors and their gemblak understudies originate (see [chapter 2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u11_ch02)), yet there is no mention of this "tradition"; *gay* love and *gay* belonging are national matters.

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Heterosexist logics of national recognition can make nonnormative sexualities and genders into not only perversions but subversions, threats to national authenticity (Bunzl 2004). As Peter Jackson notes in the case of Thailand, homosexuality can be seen to represent more of a danger to national society than transgenderism, since transgenderism can be made to fit within a heterosexist logic where those who desire men must be effeminate and those who desire women must be masculine (Jackson 1999b:238). Homosexuality can also be seen as more threatening than transgenderism due to the widespread Southeast Asian assumption that inner states should match exterior bodily presentations (S. Errington 1989:76). Warias, who identify themselves as men with women’s souls, properly display this inner mismatch in their cross-dressing, as do the lesser-known tombois. In contrast, *gay* men and ceweks have a "desire for the same," but this is not clearly exteriorized; they can appear *normal*. The cultural expectation that exterior presentation should match inner state or belief has been politicized before; during the Soeharto years one of the most successful ways to create fear of a by-then nonexistent communist movement was to describe it as an "organization without shape" (*organisasi tanpa bentuk*); that is, a collectivity whose exterior did not match its interior, just as it was supposed that individual communists were failing to exteriorize their political beliefs. With their difficult-to-read sexualities, *gay* men and effeminate *lesbi* women can be interpreted as possessing desire "without shape." Such a desire without shape appears inauthentic. As noted in earlier chapters, the concept of *asli* (authenticity) has been important to how the Indonesian state defines its legitimacy. It is the ultimate criterion for belonging; what belongs to Indonesia and is deserving of recognition is that which is authentic. It is a filter for responding to forces of globalization; through authenticity it will be possible to know what is compatible with being Indonesian. In 1952 Mohammad Hatta, first vice-president of Indonesia, emphasized that "the location of our homeland as an archipelago … has always led us to mix a lot with the foreigners calling here…. We can enrich our culture by making use of foreign cultures without forgetting the basis of our own" (Hatta 1970:287–288).

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians talk about notions of authenticity quite frequently, as when joking about gender. They also talk in negative terms about people who are hypocrites, using terms like *munafik*, *hipokrit*, or *palsu*. In so doing they reflect how "the growing popularity of words to describe hypocrisy … is … significant. All these words imply betrayal of a single Real reality" (Anderson 1990:151). I have often encountered *gay* men using terms like *munafik* in everyday speech to speak about sexual duplicity—*gay* men who have a boyfriend but then also carry on affairs with other men. In more reflective contexts like interviews, *gay* men

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speak not only in terms of relationships, but of desire, as in the case of the *gay* man from Surabaya who said in [chapter 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04) that "We can’t be hypocrites: if a man likes a man that means he’s *gay*." A third use of terms like *munafik* in more reflective contexts indexes movement between the *gay* and *normal* worlds, as when a *gay* man in Bali spoke of *gay* men who would make fun of effeminacy at work to keep themselves above suspicion as "hypocrites." In a discussion with a group of *gay* men in Surabaya, one man noted how "I feel I’m munafik, that I’m sinning, because in the everyday world [*dunia umum*] it’s like I’m a regular man, but in my [*gay*] world my asli self is totally visible." A *gay* interlocutor from Makassar also explicitly brought together hypocrisy and authenticity when he said that "some people say I’m a hypocrite because I’m married, but that’s not true. I know who I am; I’m clear about myself. And even though I’m married, I identify [*mengidentifikasi diri*] as an authentic gay [*gay asli*]."

Indonesian postcolonial discourse takes ethnolocalized aspects of subjectivity like "Javanese" as self-evidently authentic, the diversity that is both precondition for national belonging and its product. In contrast, *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are a dub for which there is no authentic original. They are self-evidently *not* ethnolocalized, a distinction they share, uncomfortably, with the postcolonial state. In state discourse it is the archipelago concept that mediates ethnolocalized authenticity and the danger of national hypocrisy; it is through this self-same concept, as well as the family principle, that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians reconfigure ostensibly Western concepts of sexuality. *Gay* men and *lesbi* women dub nationalist discourse and in so doing dub the foreign "gay" and "lesbian" into *gay* and *lesbi*, into a set of identifications, sexual practices, and social contexts they feel to be authentically Indonesian. They give lie to the "common misperception" that "whatever is not recognizably local or is obviously borrowed—the institution of the Presidency, say, or Garuda Indonesia Airways—is foreign, specifically Western, and therefore by definition not part of Indonesian culture" (Liddle 1988:6). On the margins of local, national, and transnational rhetorics of selfhood, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians live their lives archipelago style.

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# CHAPTER EIGHT

The *Gay* Archipelago

TRANSLATING SELFHOOD

In the proceeding chapters I have investigated how the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions—licensed by no tradition, marketed by no corporation, and supported by no official—are taken up on the margins of society by thousands, if not millions, of Indonesians. I have emphasized how the national, not ethnolocalized, character of these subject positions has important consequences for *gay* and *lesbi* lives and also indicates how an anthropology of similitude can contribute to understanding intersections of globalization and postcoloniality. The concepts "*gay*" and "*lesbi*" are certainly shaped by globalizing processes, but the *nation* is the spatial scale and cultural-political-economic form through which *gay* and *lesbi* are experienced as social facts.

As noted earlier, this does not mean that *gay* and *lesbi* are not shaped by other spatial scales (ethnolocalized, global, regional) with regard to other aspects of their lives, nor does it mean that ethnolocalized (or globalized) *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions could not appear in the future. It means that to date and from their inception, these subject positions are lived "archipelago style." For two reasons neither I nor those interlocutors with whom I have spoken about the subject believe ethnolocalized *gay* or *lesbi* subject positions will emerge in the immediate future. First, the cultural dimensions of current moves toward regional autonomy have been predominantly expressed in a heteronormative language of revitalizing tradition that excludes concepts like *gay* and *lesbi*. Second, since subject positions are shaped by the historical circumstances during which they first took form, and since the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions were formed during the New Order era, it seems likely they will retain national spatial scales for some time.

What we find in Indonesia is a *gay* archipelago and a *lesbi* archipelago: noncontiguous fields of social relations stretching across a national stage, and a predominant sense that one’s *gay*-ness or *lesbi*-ness is one island in an archipelagic self. The relationship between nationalism and difference is thus more complex than the clear black lines of modern maps suggest (Gupta 1992).

I have also emphasized the importance of mass media to the consolidation of *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities. Fragmentary mentionings of Western

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homosexuality frequently appear as the means by which *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians come to know of themselves as such. *Gay and lesbi* subjectivities emerge as a kind of reading practice of the West. This impact of mass mediated coverage of Western homosexuality is particularly interesting because the resulting subjectivities are *national*, not transnational per se. This is why I find the notion of "dubbing culture" useful: it indexes forms of language reterritorialization that trouble dominant definitions of translation. Being *gay* and Indonesian is like hearing Tom Cruise "speak Indonesian" through the magic of dubbing. It is self-evidently inauthentic—out of cultural joint—yet socially efficacious. Somehow, you the Indonesian listener can understand what Tom Cruise is "saying"; somehow, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians "belong." The process of transforming messages from "outside" Indonesia is not unique to *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians; youth culture, for instance, environmental movements, or Islamic and Christian communities of various kinds do this too. But what makes the case of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians special is the lack of institutional or corporate powers that intentionally contribute to the translocation. Misunderstandings that a "Gay International" contributes significantly to subjectivities like *gay* and *lesbi* reflect the assumption that such organized forces are necessary for "globalization" (Massad 2002). The phenomenon of "dubbing culture" indicates this not need be the case.

Feminist and postcolonial analyses have highlighted how Western understandings of translation posit a "strong generative" original and "weaker and derivative" product that encodes hierarchies of male-female or colonizer-colonized (Simon 1996:1; see also Niranjana 1992:1). Some of these analyses employ an idea of "translational culture" for how "newness enters the world" (Bhabha 1994:212; see also Chakrabarty 2000:17; Spivak 2000). This is a view of translation as metaphor, but also a literal "mode of translation" that through "localization" creates unforeseen possibilities (Rafael 1988:xviii, 15). These analyses often understand translation to be the production of completed texts: "in creating coherent and transparent texts and subjects, translation participates—across a range of discourses—in the fixing of colonized cultures" (Niranjana 1992:3). But if, as Niranjana notes, translation is interpellation, then what happens in dubbing? With this translational form, no coherent or transparent text or subject appears: the original and its "translation" are held together, side by side, without any unification or even the hope for such unification.

If "translational culture" can be construed in terms of *les belles infidèles*, the unfaithful woman, then "dubbing culture" is queer. Dubbing appears nonprocreative; it places two things alongside each other without clearly giving birth to something new. A power relation exists: few Indonesian films, for instance, get dubbed into English, and most Westerners

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do not lip-synch Indonesian popular music. It is not a free-for-all where anything gets put together with anything. But neither is it a rigid system where Western domination determines postcolonial reality. The lifeworlds of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians indicate a more contingent inequality—queering translational theories of culture, indicating how unexpected selfhoods can be dubbed from hegemonies that might otherwise appear total, and globalizations that might otherwise appear seamless and beyond question.

The two greatest conceptual barriers to understanding *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities are the rush to "tradition" as an explanatory principle, and the assumption that culture is by default local. These barriers are rooted in a theory of knowledge predicated on difference. The "archipelago style" of *gay* and *lesbi* life forces a consideration of how grids of similitude and difference are bound up with processes of globalization, and so must be included in the act of social analysis. Doing so reveals how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians do not fit the "Gay Planet" trope of immanent similitude or the "McGay" trope of unbridgeable difference. They cannot symbolize globalization’s triumph, nor can they fill a queer "savage slot" that seeks an Other to "constitute the West as we know it" (Trouillot 1991:18). They chart a third, archipelagic path between similitude and difference, one that resists conflating difference with distance: others may be near at hand while one may share a bond of similitude with those on "islands" far away. Never have I heard a *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesian say they were Western or wished to become Western; nor have I heard a *gay* or *lesbi* Indonesian say they were completely distinct from gay and lesbian Westerners. The question is by what rubrics these Indonesians experience mediations of similitude and difference. I suggest that the answer lies in reconfigurations of national and global discourses productively glossed as "dubbing."

A kind of dubbing culture has always been central to the Indonesian national project. Key to the transformation of the "Dutch East Indies" to "Indonesia" was the transformation of "Malay" into "Indonesian." By the beginning of the twentieth century, Malay had become not just the language of trade and administration, but a means by which information from outside the Indies entered the archipelago: it "began to bring to the Indies the literatures and the events of the world and of one’s neighbors…. Somewhat abruptly, via the medium of the lingua franca, most places in the world began to be felt in the Indies" (Siegel 1997:18–19). It is in the latter national context that the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions, with their entailment of global connectivity, have taken form. Whereas warias understand their subjectivity as national (Boellstorff 2004b), *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians *think the transnational through the national*: the waria subject position took form through a colonial "Malay archipelago" while the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions took form through a postcolonial national archipelago.

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## TABLE 8–1.Apparent isomorphisms.



Given the waria subject position’s origin in this colonial encounter, and the *gay* (and *lesbi*) subject position’s origin in the postcolonial state, one can draw a parallel between language ideology and regimes of sexual subjectivity: "waria" is to "*gay*" as "Malay" is to "Indonesian." It might appear that a developmental path exists ([table 8–1](#u19_ch08-tab8-1)).

What such a developmentalist interpretation misses is how *gay* (and *lesbi*) Indonesians see themselves in national, not global, terms. Its neat narrative of displacement elides how, for instance, the waria subject position does not appear to be in the process of being replaced by the *gay* subject position. Through the notion of "dubbing culture," I hope to have set forth an ethnographically grounded theoretical framework for considering how, recalling Bhabha, newness enters an apparently already globalized world through conjunctural processes that are shaped by power relations but not just the "translation" of them. Dubbing neither seeks nor rejects the authentic; it lies alongside the authentic, opening up new possibilities for reconfiguration. It is not "meta" but "para"; it operates not through claiming causal hierarchy, but through a cultural logic of juxtaposition.

TRAVELING ARCHIPELAGOES

Because so few *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians travel outside Indonesia, and as a result the globalizing forces that make the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions possible are reconfigured through national discourse, I have emphasized neither other non-Western queer subject positions nor international travel. I have worked to construct an ethnographic corpus and theoretical architecture that reflect *gay* and *lesbi* lifeworlds, even while drawing upon

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Western intellectual debates. Yet this book has been inspired by, and can be placed in the context of, a growing literature on persons outside the West who use terms "derived" from "gay" and "lesbian."[1](#u20_notex-fns91)

A few *gay* men and *lesbi* women are able to travel to the West—because they are from a wealthy family and go for education, pleasure, or to visit relatives; because they are working-class and obtain work on a cruise ship or elsewhere; or because they have a Western partner who brings them to the West for a visit or longer-term residence. My *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors who were able to visit the West speak of confounded expectations. Some return to Indonesia telling stories of amazing social acceptance and community: bars, discos, feminist groups, saunas, bookstores. Udin, a *gay* man in Surabaya who had lived for a few months in Melbourne, recalled these differences in terms of social acceptance, using terms common to state rhetoric like *wawasan* and *gotong royong* (Bowen 1986), and the archipelagic idea of a distributed set of places:

The most striking difference was really the social acceptance [*penerimaan masyarakat*]…. I realize that it’s not the case that in all Western nations, America or Australia, their people can accept them as if it’s nothing, no, it’s not like that, but there are certain locations where the general public already knows "this is the place [*tempat*] so we can expect that," yes? … People’s perspective [*wawasan*] is wider…. Here, maybe because were accustomed to mutual aid [*gotong royong*], people ask about all our affairs, "What what what? Where are you going? Where have you come from?" … So, it probably just depends on culture.

However, many of my *gay* and *lesbi* interlocutors who had traveled outside Indonesia returned feeling that the West is a worse place to live. Made, from Bali, had a lover who brought him to see the lover’s Western Australian hometown:

Before, I used to think that gay life in the West was easy: open and free. I thought gay people didn’t pay attention to gossip from society or anything. And that the government acknowledged their existence, and so on. But it turned out that my thinking was completely wrong, and I had to turn it around 180 degrees. For instance, I got invited to Western Australia. Well, it turned out that gays there were very closed, especially in the small town where my lover worked. There were no other openly gay people there, and because my lover is a teacher, he had to be closed too. So I thought, "Well, apparently it’s just the same as here in Bali!" It was a learning experience for me, homework for me; I realized that I had to explain to my friends back in Bali that gay life in the West was like that.

Nira, a *lesbi* woman originally from northern Sumatra, had lived in Bali for many years and met Western lesbians:

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My most recent relationship lasted five years. It was with an American woman: she went to Amherst and is from a wealthy family. We lived together here in Bali for five years, and she took me to America with her once: we were there for a little over a year, on the East Coast. I liked Provincetown and North Carolina. But I didn’t really like America. All we did was sit around with her friends, talking in their houses over coffee, their voices so loud and the TV blaring all the time. I didn’t like it; I was bored! It’s hard to get me to leave Indonesia; I’m very proud of Indonesia, a fanatic for Indonesia you could say.

Some *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians who never leave Indonesia are able to meet gay and lesbian Westerners, but this can be difficult, since few Indonesians speak English, and Western tourists tend not to spend long periods of time in the urban centers where the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds are most extensive. When it does happen it is often at sites like shopping malls, where it is sometimes possible to meet a Western tourist or expatriate by "playing eyes." It is usually gay expatriate Westerners (and the occasional gay Western anthropologist), not gay tourists, who sometimes go to tempat ngebers. The concentration of tourists in Bali makes it a special case; *gay* Indonesians sometimes go to Bali for the purpose of trying to meet a gay Westerner, regardless of language barriers. Because of their more limited mobility, socializing between *lesbi* women and Western lesbians tends to be limited to upper-class urban contexts or the tourist industry in Bali. For Ita in northern Bali, contacts with Western lesbians were a never-ending source of fascination:

I meet lots of Western *lesbi* women here at the restaurant. I can tell by the way they look, or they ask: "I see you have a ring. How long have you been married?" I just tell them, "I’m not married; this is from my girlfriend." They’re usually very nice to me. Some of them have had problems with their families too; I even met one, from Sweden I think, who’d been thrown out of her family because she was *lesbi*. Isn’t it funny that there are no other words for *lesbi* women, how *lesbi* women have the same name the world over. I’ve met tourists from everywhere, from Italy, from Switzerland, and no matter where they’re from, they look it up in their dictionaries and it’s always the same: lesbian.

While travel outside Indonesia is a rare theme in the lives of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, internal migration and travel (in search of work, to visit relatives, or for pleasure) is much more common, as it is for Indonesians generally. For many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians, travel within the nation provides an opportunity to encounter and reflect upon a sense that being *gay* or *lesbi* is national. When *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians move from one part of Indonesia to another, they expect to find *gay* men and *lesbi* women there, and particularly for the case of *gay* men moving to cities, suspect where they may be found. For instance, Udin had traveled not only from

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Surabaya to Melbourne, but to another island in the early 1990s, to one of the early *gay* and *lesbi* Congresses. The trip confirmed his sense that being *gay* was part of a national style, and his reflections on the experience were once again peppered with terms common to state rhetoric like *wawasan* and *menyatukan* (unify):

UDIN: When I got there I saw lots of people who had lots of perspective [*banyak wawasan*], had a high level of perspective [*wawasan yang tinggi*] … people who had concepts and knowledge, yet some of them were unwilling [*malu*] to be called "*gay*" [in public].

TB: So when you met these people from across Indonesia, did you think they were similar or different to you?

UDIN: In principle they were the same [*sama*] … there were a few differences I guess, but they were in a personal style [*secara pribadi*], not in terms of group style [*secara kelompok*]…. All the same [*sama semua*] … we get the influences of the West … and, what’s the word for it, unify [*menyatukan*] them, and in the end develop openness within the *gay* community.

THE POLITICS AND ETHICS OF BELONGING

The Indonesian nation-state is predicated on heterosexuality, on the *normal*, and thus on the denial of queerness. By taking *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities seriously, we "queer" the Indonesian nation-state, illuminating the foundational moment of sexual exclusion that naturalizes itself as the traditional and authentic.

The question of belonging is central to the experience of being *gay* or *lesbi*. These concepts are self-evidently not from tradition, family, or ethnolocality; yet they are experienced as both intimate aspects of selfhood and national phenomena. The most enduring Western stereotype regarding homosexuality and transgenderism in Indonesia (and Southeast Asia more generally) is that these regions are "tolerant." Although it is true that there have been—and in some cases, still are—socially recognized roles for male-to-female transgenders as well as widespread acceptance of secretive homosexual behavior, transgenderism and homosexuality are hardly valorized in contemporary Indonesian society. Although homosexuality and transgenderism usually escape official comment, if directly asked, most religious and state authorities swiftly condemn transgenderism and homosexuality as sinful and incompatible with "Indonesian tradition."

It proves helpful to develop a distinction between heterosexism (the belief that heterosexuality is superior to other sexualities) and homophobia (a psychologized fear or hatred of nonnormative sexualities). While

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heterosexism and homophobia often co-occur, this need not always be the case, and in Indonesia historically heterosexism has not implied homophobia. This lack of "gay-bashing" has often led non-Indonesians to misrecognize "Indonesian culture" as "tolerant" of homosexuality. Since the late 1990s there have been a few cases of unprecedented violence toward *gay* men when they stake a claim to the public sphere. While such "political homophobia" is disturbing (Boellstorff 2004d), it remains exceptional, and for most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians their oppression takes the form of a lack of recognition (which for some includes a pressure to marry "heterosexually" when they do not wish to do so). For instance, when *gay* men speak of wishing to be "accepted by society," they usually hope not that the social pressure to marry would disappear, but that they would not be the target of shaming gossip and could carry out their same-gender affairs in the *gay* world undisturbed.

*Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians are aware they do not fit into dominant cultural norms; even if they marry "heterosexually," their "desire for the same" is not recognized as authentic. But when these Indonesians speak of wishing to be accepted by society in everyday conversation or more formal contexts like zines, "Balinese culture" or "tradition" is not the entity from which they seek acceptance. Nor is it Westerners or other Southeast Asians. Rather, it is a public culture conceived as national. Yet rarely is this a desire for recognition as understood by Western queer rights movements, and rarely does it take the form of a political movement. Since *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians rework Western concepts of homosexuality through the lens of state discourse, their existence begs the question of politics and belonging.

In "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor notes that the contemporary "demand for recognition" in the West presupposes a notion of authenticity: "We might speak of an individualized identity, one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself" (1994:28). This is the confessional discourse of a selfhood that begins "in myself," gaining authenticity through exteriorization and recognition. The Western metaphor of "coming out" draws upon this confessional discourse. In the West, many treat politicization as the final realization of "coming out" and thus the ultimate form of homosexuality (notwithstanding grudging acknowledgment of "men who have sex with men," lesbian continua, and other figures of the incompletely recognized sexual minority). Politicization is interpreted as doing for the community what "coming out" does for the individual: assert a claim to rights, achieve a continuity between domains of life, secure an ongoing sense of self. By the late 1980s this conception of politicization was appearing in guises like Adam’s frequently cited "five elements of modern homosexuality," which included "Exclusive homosexuality, now possible for both partners, has become

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an alternative path to conventional family norms" (1987:6)—not an element to which all *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians would subscribe. This view of politicization as coming-out-writ-large is common in Western analyses of "global homosexualities":

In over fifty countries around the globe, persons with homoerotic inclinations are "coming out" publicly, organizing movements for recognition and human rights, and, by doing so, challenging the authority of the traditional family, religious doctrine, and state power. (Likosky 1992:xv)

There are impressive parallels in the names of organizations: many countries have known "gay liberation fronts," "revolutionary leagues," and so on, indicating that movements follow more or less comparable paths, pass through the same phases, and draw names from other social and political movements with which there is some resemblance in terms of ideology, goals, or methods of resistance. (Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel 1999:369–370)

However, the amount of recognizably activist activities undertaken by *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians has been irregular and quite peripheral to the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds. The first *gay* organization, Lambda Indonesia, announced its existence to the world in March 1981. The first nationwide congress of *gay* organizations took place in Kaliurang (near Yogyakarta) from December 10 to 12, 1993, and further congresses were held in 1995 and 1997, each with around fifty participants.[2](#u20_notex-fns92) Yet in the mid-1990s the total amount of activism among *gay* men seems to have decreased: long before the post-Soeharto rise of political Islam, *gay* men involved in organizations complained how most *gay* men were interested only in entertainment events. Beginning about 2002 there has been an increasing amount of activist work among *gay* men (appearing on television, for instance, or participating in national conferences), but such activities remain exceptional.[3](#u20_notex-fns93)

*Lesbi* women have also engaged in organizational work since the 1980s, though their greater confinement to the domestic sphere and general exclusion from HIV prevention funding have made this work difficult. In Bali and Makassar, for instance, tombois have worked to build a greater sense of community. In the early 2000s a *lesbi* group in Jakarta inaugurated a website and listserv that generated sustained discussion and several events in the city. A tomboi group formed in Makassar in 2000 succeeded in obtaining funding from foreign donors for HIV prevention work among tombois. *Lesbi* women engaged in organizational work share with their *gay* counterparts a frustration with those uninterested in activism. In 1994 one woman expressed this frustration in a zine article entitled "GTM" (*Gerakan Tutup Mulut* or the "Closed Mouth Movement"):

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It feels like of all peoples in the world, the people who like the Closed Mouth Movement more than anyone else are lesbians…. Indonesian lesbians are like red, newborn babies…. In truth we have already been born into the world, but in the same manner as a new-born baby, so we still have not done anything. Not yet a few words, much less speaking, only shrill crying! … Compared with lesbians in the West, who we can say have moved to adulthood, who can shout about their situation to demand attention, we are still far behind.[4](#u20_notex-fns94)

The overall situation, then, is as follows: Indonesia has over two hundred million citizens, yet there are only a handful of *gay* or *lesbi* groups that could be glossed as "organizations" even in an informal sense; most of them exist for only two or three years before disbanding. Given that most such "organizations" have between two and ten active members, I estimate that from the 1980s to the early 2000s there were never more than one hundred *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians at any one time who participated in activism in the Western sense of the term. Languages of politicization sometimes appear—as when, soon after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, letters to the zine *GAYa Nusantara* began calling for an "Indonesian *Gay* Party" or "Pink Triangle Party,"[5](#u20_notex-fns95) or when *gay* activists in the city of Yogyakarta have held rights protests covered by the local newspaper. However, such incidents remain relatively small and ephemeral islands in the *gay* and *lesbi* archipelagoes. Unilinear narratives of a global movement are troubled further by the fact that gay men and lesbian women in other Southeast Asian nations, notably the Philippines and Thailand, do engage in recognizably political activities—gay pride marches, protests directed at government bureaucracies, letters in the mass media, demands for legal reforms.[6](#u20_notex-fns96) Additionally, there is a long history of activism by ordinary Indonesians in spheres ranging from religion to the environment and women’s rights. How are we to explain the "failure" of Indonesian *gay* and *lesbi* politics, and what does this tell us about a *gay* and *lesbi* politics of recognition?

Taylor highlights how the Western politics of recognition depends on the belief that selfhood is at stake: "The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor 1994:25).

One of the greatest paradoxes of the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions is that while they have a national spatial scale and draw upon national discourses, their cultural logics do not seem to demand the link between meaningful selfhood and political recognition that Taylor identifies as so important in the West. Yet a desire to be accepted by society is a recurring theme in *gay* and *lesbi* narratives. It is part of the *gaya* or style of being

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*gay* or *lesbi*, recalling Foucault’s notion of a "style of life" as "a mode of ethical elaboration" (Halperin 1995:72). There appears to be an implicit equation of societal acceptance and homosexual love: *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians "desire the same" and desire that the nation love them. It is largely an unfulfillable desire, so that a separation from national society is assumed to be the inevitable consequence of being *gay* or *lesbi*, even though these are "national" ways of being (see Boellstorff 2004c).

It is significant that *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians speak so often of a desire to be recognized by society (*masyarakat*) and so rarely of a desire to be recognized by the government (*pemerintah*): the link between *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities and national discourse is not that of Western ideas of a "queer nation." As an "out" Western gay man, I would sometimes describe the idea of gay rights to my *gay* interlocutors, who often reacted with shock: why would someone want to be known as *gay* in all domains of one’s life? Why would you want to do that to your parents, to your spouse, children, and coworkers? What possible benefit would this bring? Do you get a raise at your job? To be "open" usually implies participating in the *gay* world, not to trouble the boundaries of that world by becoming more accepted in the *normal* world. The idea of activism makes an archipelagic life largely untenable. For example, Amin, a *gay* man in Surabaya, was taken aback when he learned that Dédé Oetomo openly shared a home with his male lover: "if two *gay* men live together, that’s too much." One *gay* man in Makassar saw activism as a kind of improper borrowing:

We don’t need to say—excuse me for saying this—like *GAYa Nusantara*, that we’re a "*gay* group" and stuff like that. In my own opinion, we don’t need to open ourselves [*membuka diri*] too much, unless society itself makes comments. We don’t need to proclaim ourselves [*memproklamasi diri*]. We have a tendency to imitate the West too much. Between us and the West there are great differences [*beda sekali*]…. In the West, I feel that the openness is great. For instance, in regard to parents. There, if the parents know that their child is *gay*, it’s no problem, because it’s regarded as their private affair. Here, it can’t be like that. Here, even if the parents know, they’ll do anything to get the child to marry, they’ll do anything so that the child will not become *gay*. So the biggest difference is social acceptance [*penerimaan masyarkat*]…. For instance, in the West, you can kiss your boyfriend in public, right? But here, that’s very opposed. Society will not like it.

When talking about the belief in much of the West that in Asia homosexuality is tolerated, another *gay* man replied:

In Indonesia, it’s the worst. *Gays* do not have any protection…. It’s true that you can have sex with anyone here. But it has to be done secretly…. Here in

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Indonesia, if someone’s boss finds out they are *gay*, they can be fired for no reason…. If I imagine that happening to myself, I’d think: I have rights as a *gay* person; why am I fired from my job? I haven’t bothered anyone! It’s my personal business.

In both of these cases, reflections on the idea of activism lead to an emphasis on *difference* rather than similarity. When comparing Indonesia and the West, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians usually imagine recognition as the primary axis of difference. They tend not to think that gay and lesbian Westerners engage in different kinds of sexual acts, or lead radically different lives (for instance, they often assume that gay and lesbian Westerners mostly marry "heterosexually" as they do). Where they imagine difference is in the idea that gay and lesbian Westerners are more recognized by society: they can kiss in public, for instance. Increasingly, *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians contemplate fragmentary news that there is something like "marriage" between gay men or lesbian women in the West—particularly since Holland, the former colonial power, became in 2001 the first nation to permit same-gender marriages. Given the importance of "heterosexual" marriage in *gay* and *lesbi* lives and its explicit conflation with proper citizenship in postcolonial Indonesia, this interest is understandable.

Yet the idea of recognition for same-gender relationships is dangerous as well as enticing, because of the clear threat it poses to a *gay* or *lesbi* world kept distinct from the *normal* world. In the West, claims to cultural citizenship are articulated through a language of the visible: *identity* allows the state and civil society to *identify* claimants to equality. For the Western queer subject, being "out" is a prerequisite to a progressive politics. But for many *gay* men and *lesbi* women, visibility would jeopardize important boundaries between islands of their archipelagic subjectivities.

Rather than label *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians as self-hating or backward, the details of their own self-understandings might offer clues. Over and over again these Indonesians emphasize acts rather than statuses: the idea that one can become *gay* or *lesbi* through "addiction," or the idea that good deeds lead to acceptance. Alongside a politics of recognition, this suggests the possibility of an ethics of recognition. In [chapter 2](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u11_ch02), I discussed how my understanding of subject positions draws from Foucault’s later work on modes of subjectivation and technologies of the self—"The most neglected side of Foucault’s work, and perhaps now the most important for anthropology" (Knauft 1996:164). Perhaps *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians evince an ethics of recognition that construes belonging in terms of a "care for the self" rather than a concern with the image of self mirrored back by society.

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Such a perspective might reveal acts of resistance that otherwise might not be seen as political—for instance, the entertainment events that *gay* men often organize. A more extended example: in northern Bali, Tuti and Ita, the *lesbi* couple who ran a restaurant, recalled how they met Esthi. This twenty-one-year-old woman had come from a village many miles inland to the tourist zone in search of work, but soon fell in love with Karlina, a *lesbi* friend of Tuti and Ita. Tuti managed to employ Esthi at her souvenir shop, and at the time I met them Esthi and Karlina had been lovers for over two years. News of Esthi’s relationship eventually made it back to her parents, who called her back to the village with the excuse that there was a Hindu family ceremony she needed to attend. When Esthi arrived she was confronted by her parents, and her mother threatened to commit suicide: "If you go back and then you hear later that I’ve killed myself, you’ll know it’s because of what you’ve done." Esthi’s parents also threatened to kick her out of the family, saying, "If you leave here and go back to Karlina, we will not consider you our child any more and you can never come back."

Esthi fled her village in a panic and returned to Karlina and her friends at the restaurant. Soon her father, together with several uncles and male cousins, came looking for her, but upon arriving they were greeted by Tuti and Tuti’s older sister, who had come to accept that Tuti was *lesbi*. Tuti and her sister sat down with Esthi’s father and "explained what it meant to be *lesbi*, that *lesbi* women weren’t bad people." Esthi’s father seemed to accept Tuti’s argument and returned with his relatives to the village to explain the situation to Esthi’s mother. A few days after this encounter, Tuti was still pleased with the outcome: "We don’t know what will happen, but we’re hoping Esthi’s mother will understand eventually. Part of the problem is that they live out in the village; they don’t get to see gay and lesbian tourists like people do here. So it’s just something with which they have no experience; that’s half the problem."

This example of Esthi and Karlina’s relationship illustrates how an ethics of recognition does not stand outside social context. In comments as applicable to Indonesia as the West, Taylor notes that "it is not surprising that in the culture of authenticity, relationships are seen as the key loci of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Love relationships are not just important because of the general emphasis in modern culture on the fulfillments of ordinary needs. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity" (Taylor 1994:36). Recognition, authenticity, and sexuality are fused in this understanding of belonging—an understanding that, like the nation-state form itself, underlies the constitution of the Indonesian subject.

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Figure 8–1. Outside Ngurah Rai airport, Bali. Courtesy of Jane H. Patten.

POSTLUDE

Through "dubbing culture," *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians come to sexual subjectivities that challenge common understandings of globalization. Whenever exiting the airport in Bali during my fieldwork, I would pass by the sign shown in [figure 8–1](#u19_ch08-fig8-1). Like elsewhere in Asia, Indonesians have proven capable of relocalizing McDonald’s in a way that furthers its corporate goals, but also reworks "fast food" to new ends (J. Watson 1998). This sign would always remind me how, while many aspects of *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians’ lives are unique, others reflect broad patterns of culture and globalization.

I have referred to the *gay* and *lesbi* subject positions as the greatest success stories of Soeharto’s New Order—the greatest examples of subject positions irreducible to ethnolocality—albeit success stories the state never intended to facilitate into being. In doing so, I draw from these subject positions the insight that a new Indonesia need not rest on obliterating or revitalizing the past, but realizing that the past is never as set in stone as it makes itself out to be. *Gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians show their fellow citizens that it is possible to imagine a new kind of national belonging where difference stands no longer as raw "diversity" to be ground into national "unity," but glittering islands of possibility in an archipelago of tolerance and justice.

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Books seem to be worlds in themselves, but like any text they demand painful choices as to what will be included and what will be left out. As this book closes I am haunted by all I have left unsaid, all the islands of the *gay* archipelago not visited: stories that remain ensconced within my fieldnotes and my memory. Yet one story in particular comes to mind as I reflect on "dubbing culture" and the paths by which *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians find meaning, community, and love. The paths by which *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians insist they belong.

*Setting*: Makassar. *Place*: the vast athletic field where *gay* men play volleyball in the afternoons. *Time*: April 15, 1998, four o’clock. I remember.

I remember standing in the field; there are dark clouds to the east, but no one seems to mind. There are hundreds of people on the field, mostly young men. At the north end of the field several games of soccer are underway; to the south the basketball courts are a frenzy of motion and chatter. I am with about twenty-five *gay* men, an island of the *gay* world between soccer and basketball. The *gay* men are playing volleyball twelve at a time, six on each team. Everyone else sits and talks along the sidelines. One of the *gay* men misses a shot and lets out an ear-piercing shriek. A *gay* man sitting with me remarks, "Wherever we are, we’re visible." Visible and yet not visible, I think to myself: many of these *gay* men will go home to their wives and children. This is one of many islands of the *gay* archipelago; its lines of connection, binding together lives and loves, invisible to the *normal* world.

I remember how, many games later, the setting sun is shining red on the underbellies of the clouds and the evening call to prayer booms from the great mosque just down the road. It starts to rain and the athletic field is all motion to its edges. Several *gay* men get on a minibus with me; some of the many *gay* men who have taken care of me though my years in Indonesia, teaching me more than any book can say. I remember the streets of Makassar rushing by in the rain and the fading sun’s glow; the dash to the front door of my little house. We are inside and making tea and turning on the television: it’s "Word Quiz," a popular game show. I remark there’s a similar show in the United States, and they say "It’s like there are no new ideas here—we just use ideas from the West." But the statement carries no tone of chagrin; it is the way things are in this world, and obvious that "using" an idea means making it into one’s own style.

I remember that a couple of hours later the visitors have left and Irwan, one of the two *gay* men living with me, has come home from a conference on "Fighting AIDS from the Bugis and Makassarese Religious and Cultural Perspective," sponsored by the provincial Department of Health. As a member of a local AIDS organization he was invited to attend. I sit down to drink tea before dinner with him. Unlike most folks in town, these government officials know terms like *homoseks* and *gay*, and Irwan

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is worried that tomorrow the conference will turn into a platform for saying that being *gay* is not compatible with being Indonesian—"Indonesian," he says, not "Bugis" or "Makassarese," even though that’s what the conference is ostensibly about. Irwan says he wants to give people at the conference a different perspective (*wawasan*).

I remember how, after a few moments, Irwan gave me, offhand, a definition of culture and belonging as simple and powerful as any I’ve ever heard. I remember how he looked down at his steaming tea and said: "Culture is something that is created by humans and then believed. There are people who have created ‘*gay*’ here in Indonesia and believe in what they have created. So *gay* is part of Indonesian culture."

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Notes

CHAPTER ONEINTRODUCTION

1. Tombois often called themselves *lesbi* during my fieldwork; see also Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan (1988:19–20).

2. *Lesbi* sometimes refers to masculine and feminine women and sometimes only to feminine women. *Lesbian* has been part of the Indonesian language since at least the early 1980s. The widespread preference for *lesbi* over *lesbian* is probably because in the Indonesian language *-an* is a common suffix that typically derives nouns from verbs, such as *makanan* "food" from *makan* "eat" (Sneddon 1996:30–31). *Lesbian* thus feels like a compounded term, particularly because it is three syllables long, rather than Indonesian’s typical two-syllable root word structure.

3 . Here, as throughout this book, I do not italicize "gay" when referring to non-Indonesians.

4 . The pioneering works by anthropologists on "Indonesia" emphasize mass media (Heider 1991) or history (Siegel 1997) rather than ethnography.

5 . I owe this phrase to Stephan Helmreich.

6 . See, for instance, Joseph Massad’s (2002) essay concerning what he terms the "Gay International" in the Arab world. While Massad’s attention to unequal global power relations and the problematic nature of human rights discourse is salutary, his implicit theory of globalization, participation in the stereotype that homosexuals are upper class (362, 372–373), and assumption that the apparent "movement" of "gay" is always brute mechanical transfer (383) all follow the McGay trope that "gay" is irredeemably Western (382). Given the resonance between "Gay International" and "Communist International," the former term could be seen to suggest a global gay menace by participating in the McCarthyist stereotype that homosexuals recruit.

7 . Concerns of similitude and difference are not limited to postcolonial and queer theory; they have been one of the animating concerns of anthropology (from the "psychic unity of mankind" to "cultural relativism") and also of Southeast Asian studies, under the figure of "continuity and change" (Benda 1972; Smail 1961).

8 . See also, inter alia, Anagnost (1997); Bowen (1997); S. Brenner (1998); Cohen (1995, 1998); Ivy (1995); Kahn (1993); Mills (1995); Ram and Jolly (1998); Stivens (1998); Tanabe and Keyes (2002); Tsing (1993).

9 . The irony is that postmodernism is associated not with elitism but with effacing the distinction between high and low culture (compare "modernist" Mondrian to "postmodernist" Warhol, or "modernist" Schönberg to "postmodernist" Glass).

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CHAPTER TWOHISTORICAL TEMPTATIONS

1. Homosexuality appears in the Dutch colonial penal code (*Wetboek van Strafecht*), Article 292 (which remains Article 292 in the Indonesian penal code), but is oriented toward sexual assault and sex below the age of consent. This law was apparently never enforced before the late 1930s. Dutch civil law was derived from the Napoleonic Code, which gave little emphasis to homosexuality. In comparison, British common law was significantly more disapproving of homosexuality, still visible in the harsher legal regimes of former British colonies like Malaysia and Singapore. The lack of attention to homosexuality in the Dutch East Indies is particularly surprising given the relatively large number of military prosecutions for homosexual behavior in nineteenth-century Holland itself; one discharged navy officer claimed to have had sex with forty-one Indonesians during a two-and-a-half-year stint in the colony (Hekma 1991:283).

2 . Halilintar Lathief, comments at the National Conference on Male Sexual Health, Puncak, Indonesia, September 6, 2004.

3. Some bissus dress androgynously only for ritual purposes and otherwise appear as *normal* men, complete with wife and children: "[E]ven a ‘normal’ married man seems to be capable of being a bissu as long as he merely conducts himself half as man and half as woman during the ritual" (Chabot 1996[1950]:194). See also Hamonic (1975:125); Lathief (2004:58); Mattulada (1974).

4. See Wilson (1999); *Tiras* no. 16, thn 1, 18 May 1995, special insert p. H.

5 . They were also a favorite subject of colonial ethnographers; see, e.g., the summary provided in Karsch-Haack (1911:188–215).

6. This narrative is apparently taken in full from an article published in the newspaper *Persamaan* on Monday, February 13, 1939. It is summarized in Budiman (1979:111–113). Amen Budiman was a historian based in Semarang (Central Java) who wrote on Indonesian homosexuality and transgenderism (Budiman 1979, 1982). Budiman claimed to have discovered this narrative in *Pimpinan Islam* (1940), Mohammad ‘Ali Alhamidy, pp. 60–61, publisher unknown, but I have been unable to locate this text. The version here is taken from Alhamidy (1951:47–48).

7 . Ulrich Kratz, personal communication, October 5, 2004.

8 . See Kratz (1978). My analysis is based on Budiman’s edited and Indonesianized version of the narrative (the original was in a mixture of Javanese and Indonesian), but I am here interested in the broad outlines of Sucipto’s life, not a close linguistic analysis. I will use Budiman’s modernized spelling of "Sucipto’s" name.

9 . A city in Java.

10 . By 1940 enough arrests had taken place that a sample of one hundred arrested men could be used for a study on homosexual prostitution and disease (Simons 1940).

11. See Gouda (1995: [chaps. 4](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u14_ch04) and [5](#u15_ch05)).

12 . Sucipto’s biography was discovered in Overbecks’s papers. Ulrich Kratz, personal communication, October 5, 2004.

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CHAPTER THREEDUBBING CULTURE

1. *Oxford English Dictionary,* second ed., vol. 4.

2 . This phrase references Oetomo (1997).

3 . Homosexuality was removed as a psychological disorder in January 1982 in Indonesia.

4. "*Aku Menemukan Kepribadianku Sebagai Seorang Homosex*," Anda, no. 44 (July 1980):26, 30.

5. The inside title was: "This is a real shock—the first time in Indonesia: Girl [*cewek*] married with a girl. The marriage ceremony attended by the parents and 120 guests."

6. Reported in *Gaya Hidup Ceria*, no. 1 (8/82). The Western magazine in question was not named.

7. *Report on Lesbians in Indonesia*, p. 2.

8 . See Heider (1991) and Sen (1994) for detailed historical and contemporary accounts of Indonesian cinema (both works were published before the rise of private television in Indonesia). Heider notes that between 1945 and 1990 the number of films produced yearly in Indonesia ranged from zero (in 1946 and 1947, for instance) to over one hundred in 1977 and 1989 (19).

9. *Popular* (May 1997):33. Despite an illustrious history of film production and a number of directors producing serious films (Heider 1991; Sen 1994) "the 1980s saw the near-collapse of the domestic film industry" (Hefner 1997:94) due to competition from Hollywood and other exporters, coupled with the New Order’s stifling censorship policies. During the 1990s domestic production was dominated by soft-porn films targeting lower-class audiences. For example, of the twenty-seven films produced in Indonesia in 1996 that received nationwide distribution, only one had a theme other than sex (*Popular* [May 1997]).

10. E.g. *Nusa*, March 6, 1998.

11. *Popular* (March 1996):53.

12. *Nusa*, March 18, 1998.

13. *Bali Post*, March 1, 1998, p. 8.

14. On March 15, 1998, the Balinese newspaper *Nusa* ran a two-page exposé on *lesbi* life composed of ten articles. While much of the coverage was sensationalistic, several articles called for greater social acceptance of *lesbi* women.

15. For instance, in 1997 *Popular* magazine sent a reporter to cover the Gay/Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney; he related tales of hanging out in gay bars and meeting a lesbian couple as well as the lesbian executive director of the event (April 1997:44, 48–50). International events like the Gay Games are covered, as are same-sex rights and domestic partner legislation in Europe, the United States, and South Africa. See, e.g., "Homoseks Marriage: An Example of Moral Pluralism*"* [*Perkawinan Homoseks: Contoh Pluralisme Moral*], *Kompas*, June 12, 1996. See chapter 9.

16. Imported programs come from around the world, with many favorites from India, Latin America, and Japan. To my knowledge, however, *gay* and *lesbi* seem to be formed exclusively with reference to programs originally in English and originating above all from the United States, as these examples indicate.

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17. For instance, many print media carried articles on Doug Savant, the actor playing the gay character Matt Fielding in *Melrose Place* (e.g., *Bintang*, May 28, 1997).

18. Examples of significant interviews with Oetomo appear in *Jakarta Jakarta*, May 22–28, 1993; *Popular* (July 1995); and *Matra* (August 1999).

19. "Tayangan yang Menjadi Buah Bibir," *Talk Show*.

20. *Kompas*, June 25, 1997. This comes from a *pojok* or "corner column": "the essence of the pojok is biting, anonymous comment on the latest news…. The art of pojok writing is one of allusion, innuendo, sarcasm, and mock surprise" (Anderson 1990:142–143).

21 . In the wake of these protests, RCTI and SCTV "cleaned up" their shows, which in RCTI’s case included firing Debra Yatim in favor of a less controversial moderator.

22. *Nusa*, November 28, 1997.

23. Since about 2003 there have appeared some soft-porn taboids such as *X-Pos* that speak openly about homosexuality (and all forms of nonmarital heterosexuality), using images of Western bodies found on the Internet. Around this time some male sex workers also began advertising their services (barely concealed as "massage") in tabloids like *Memorandum*. Fundamentalist Islamic groups have protested such publications on occasion; an event held by *X-Pos* in Central Java in 2004 was raided by an Islamic group that made threats and burned all the copies of *X-Pos* they found but did not injure anyone. Should such more explicit mass media images and texts persist and expand, they will undoubtedly shape how *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians come to their sexual subjectivities.

24 . See, inter alia, Anderson (1983), J. Errington (1998), Maier (1993), Siegel (1997), Sneddon (2003).

25 . The five private stations at the time were RCTI, SCTV, TPI, Anteve, and Indosiar. The number is increasing. Estimates of the proportion of shows originating outside of Indonesia range from two-thirds (Wahyuni 2000:116) from the United States to 50 percent from the United States and Europe combined (Groves 1996:42).

26. *Republika* (Jakarta), May 2, 1996. RCTI was not only the first private television station to go national (in 1995), but the first to begin broadcasting, in 1989. Even the government television station TVRI was introduced only in the late 1970s (Lindsay 1997:117, 113).

27. As does *negotiate*; these subjectivities are not negotiated in the sense that Maira (1999) speaks of an "identity dub" among South Asian Americans in the New York club scene.

28. Here I use *articulation* in its English sense. The term originally entered social theory through Marx, but *Gliederung* has only the first of the two meanings noted above. The root word, *Gleid,* means "limb" or "joint" but can also mean "penis" *(ma¨nnliches Glied).* Surely there is great potential in a psychoanalytic treatment that links the moment of speech to erection.

29. Lydia Liu notes that in studying how "a word, category, or discourse ‘travels’ from one language to another," we must "account for the vehicle of translation" and address "the condition of translation" itself (1995:20–21, 26), a concern

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with a long history in anthropology as well (Asad 1986; Streck and Maranha˜o 2003).

CHAPTER FOUR ISLANDS OF DESIRE

1. For instance, in 1951 Alhamidy spoke of sex between women as "usually done *suka sama suka*, not by force" (1951:48).

2. With regard to *gay* men in Jakarta, Howard notes they "hold a distinctive conception of homosexuality as a social product rather than as a feature of an internal, biological[ly] based sexual orientation" (1996:109).

3. In Howard’s primary sample of fifty-one *gay* men in Jakarta, "22 … described becoming aware of their gay identities" after having been seduced (Howard 1996:133).

4. See S. Wieringa (1999a:218). This is also the driving force in *Menguak Duniaku*, where at one point three women vie for Hen and even initiate sexual contact (Prawirakusumah and Ramadhan 1988:33, see also 36, 118–119, 121). Even as one of these women ends her relationship, she speaks of her desire and Hen’s tomboi desire as the same (159).

5. This appears to be the case even in the 1930s’ southern Sumatra incident described in [chapter 3](The_Gay_Archipelago__Sexuali00001.docx#u12_ch03).

6 . The identity/behavior binarism originated in nineteenth-century notions of acquired (situational, circumstantial) versus innate (congenital) homosexuality (see Bleys 1995).

7 . Historically, only in cases of physical or mental disability, or of high-status women unable to find suitable husbands, is there any evidence of an honorable way to avoid marriage (Florida 1996; S. Errington 1989).

8 . For instance, Barth (1993), Jones (1994), Hoskins (1998), Niehof (2003).

9 . "Very often the first conflicts and disappointments [between parents and children who had been given a ‘modern’ education] centered around the choice of a wife…. In such communities marriage did not merely represent the union of boy and girl, but a further extension of all kinds of family relationships…. It is thus not altogether surprising that in the literature of the young Indonesian generation, which began to appear in this atmosphere of conflict between modern and traditional Indonesian culture, the conflict, in all its aspects, was a major theme" (Alisjahbana 1966:30–31; see also Hatley and Blackburn 2000).

10 . See also Rodgers (1995:3). This link between postcolonial self and nation is not unique to Indonesia: frequently in postcolonial literature "an individual’s story represents that of an entire collectivity by narrating a return to the roots of identity (both individual and collective) and the birth of political consciousness" (Hayes 2000:13).

11. *GAYa Nusantara* 102 (2003):5.

12. Heteronormativity, of course, has been a key element of nationalist discourse since its beginnings (Eder, Hall, and Hekma 1999; Mosse 1985) and has played a role in debates over definitions of proper citizenship in Euro-America (Beriss 1996, Berlant 1997; Borneman 1992; Duggan and Hunter 1995; Parker

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et al. 1992; Warner 1999). In contemporary postcolonial societies, debates over national belonging can take forms that incorporate, in various ways, these European origins of heteronormative nationalist ideology (Garcia 1996; Heng and Devan 1995; Jackson 1997, 1999; Lancaster 1995; Lumsden 1996; Manalansan 2003; Mankekar 1999; McLelland 2000; D. Murray 1996, Parker 1999; Sang 2003; Schein 1996).

13 . In one sample, 89% of sixty-two unmarried core interlocutors planned on marrying women.

14 . Though I knew of no cases personally, interlocutors in more than one field site spoke of cases where a tomboi and waria married each other, with the tomboi wife becoming pregnant in some instances.

15 . "Javanese women are generally more deeply committed than men to the social and economic welfare of the family and therefore rarely overstep the marital boundaries. They are tolerant of their husbands’ irregularities because men are considered to be by nature irresponsible. Their sexual promiscuity is called being nakal (naughty), which is the same term applied to disobedient or unruly children, there being no connotation of adult misdemeanor; and they are expected to be nakal both during their bachelorhood and after marriage. When a woman is young, her injured pride makes her angry upon discovery of her husband’s infidelity, but, as she grows older and there are children, she is more concerned with the loss of money that might otherwise be spent in the family’s interests" (H. Geertz 1961:131). See also Brenner (1998:149–157) and Suryakusuma (1996).

CHAPTER FIVEGEOGRAPHIES OF BELONGING

1. Because most *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians come to their sexual subjectivities with little face-to-face interaction, it is possible to be *gay* or *lesbi* without contact with the *gay* or *lesbi* worlds, leading a celibate life or having sex with *normal* men or women. Letters to newspapers identifying the writer as a *gay* or *lesbi* person who has never met another indicate that such Indonesians exist. I have no way of estimating how many *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians live separate from the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds.

2 . I draw from two interlinked traditions in my analysis of these ethnographic materials. The first is the work of feminist and queer geographers who have emphasized how gender and sexuality are produced through spatial relationships (Bell and Valentine 1995; Ingram, Bouthillette, and Retter 1997; Massey 1994). Second, I draw on the work of thinkers who examine how the "practices of everyday life" shape how space is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (Lefebvre 1991:39; also Bourdieu 1977; N. Brenner 1998, 1999, 2000).

3. *Gay* men and *lesbi* women began using the Internet in significant numbers around 1995, but the first online editions of magazines, *gay* chat groups, and other computer-based activities did not begin until mid-1998. The effect of the Internet on *gay* and *lesbi* subjectivities is still uncertain but sure to increase. Internet use adds new class and educational barriers to the *gay* and *lesbi* worlds,

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since one must know how to use a computer and be able to access it with some degree of privacy.

4 . Tunjungan Plaza is to my knowledge the only mall in Indonesia that has, for certain periods of time, had stores that sold condoms and sex toys (Kroeger 2000:121).

5 . Sabang is in Indonesia’s extreme northwestern corner (in the province of Aceh) while Merauke is in the extreme southeastern corner (in the province of Papua [formerly Irian Jaya]). Ironically, both of these provinces currently have strong separatist movements.

6. "Several [*gay* Indonesians in Jakarta] told me of their ‘discovery’ of the idea of homosexuality after reading an article on homosexuality in the women’s magazine *Sarinah* in 1981" (Howard 1996:254).

CHAPTER SIXPRACTICES OF SELF, TESTS OF FAITH

1 . The notion of "style" has appeared in other contexts with regard to the conjuncture of nonnormative genders and sexualities; for instance, Tonga (Besnier 2002) and the Philippines (Johnson 1997). For further discussion of citizenship as performative, see, e.g., Kuipers (2003).

2. *Lesbi* women refer to these masculine and feminine genderings with a variety of terms. A few know the English terms "butch" and "femme," but more often they employ paired sets of terms from standard Indonesian vocabulary: *masculin* versus *feminin*, *kelakian* (maleness) versus *kewanitaan* (femaleness), *cowok* (boy) versus *cewek* (girl; see Blackwood 1999), *gaya laki-laki* (male style) versus *gaya perempuan* (female style), and the Javanese terms *sentul* (masculine) versus *kantil* (feminine). In Makassar and other parts of Indonesia, feminine *lesbi* women can be termed *lines*; this is a *gay* language transformation of *lesbi* that also sometimes refers to *lesbi* women in general.

3 . For instance, in a television commercial shown nationally in 2000, a mother comments on her favorite brand of laundry detergent as her young daughter is shown walking home from school, wearing a school uniform and also a Muslim headscarf. As the little girl runs home, getting dirt and chocolate ice cream on her headscarf, the mother opines "my girl is a real tomboi."

4. The only case to my knowledge of an ethnolocalized term for tomboi is Bugis *calalai’*, but in urban southern Sulawesi at least this term does not appear to be in common use. Most of my tomboi interlocutors there did not know of this term and used "hunter" and/or "tomboi" to describe themselves.

5. Two *ngondhek* men in a sexual relationship may be jokingly referred to as *lesbi* by other *gay* men, even though many *gay* men know that *lesbi* relationships are usually between tombois and ceweks.

6. Ngondhek (sometimes spelled ngondek) appears to be the best-known term (see Howard 1996:301). There are a range of other terms for male effeminacy with varying degrees of national circulation, including *mégol* (mostly in South Sulawesi), *kewanitaan* (an abstract noun derived from *wanita*, "woman"), *kriting* (curly), *lémbéng* (mostly in Java), and *feminin*.

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7 . See Butler (1993); Foucault (1978); Halperin (1995); Sedgwick (1991).

8. Published in *GAYa Nusantara* 51 (August 1997).

CHAPTER SEVENTHE POSTCOLONIAL STATE AND *GAY* AND *LESBI* SUBJECTIVITIES

1 . I develop my theory of hegemony in dialogue with Birmingham School theorists like Stuart Hall despite the fact that some anthropologists believe that such theorists (and many anthropologists) have strayed too far from Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony (Crehan 2002; Kurtz 1996).

2. This recalls Bourdieu’s concept of habitus: "Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*" (Bourdieu 1977:167, emphasis in original).

3 . "Spatial metaphors, both implicit and explicit, form a pervasive mode of organizing consciousness in [Island Southeast Asia]" (S. Errington 1989:13).

4 . Proyek Penelitian Keagamaan (1984:5).

5 . The usual formula, the Indonesians argued, would result in over ten thousand miles of border due to the number of islands within Indonesia. See Kusumaatmadja (1982); Proyek Penelitian Keagamaan (1984:5). This declaration that Indonesia was an archipelagic state is known as the "Djuanda Declaration" after the name of the prime minister at the time (Proyek Penelitian Keagamaan [1984:5]).

6 . Proyek Penelitian Keagamaan (1984:8).

7 . Centre for Strategic and International Studies (1991:17–18).

8 . There is an extensive literature on the relationship between the postcolonial state and marriage in Indonesia, as well as the sexism of the family principle. See, for instance, Blackburn and Bessell (1997); Hatley (1997); Sears (1996); Sen (1998); Suryakusuma (1996); Tiwon (1996).

9 . Tempo no. 36, thn. 17, November 7, 1987:105.

10. *GAYa Nusantara* 83:28–29 (2001).

11. *GAYa Nusantara* 83:29 (2001).

CHAPTER EIGHTTHE *GAY* ARCHIPELAGO

1 . Some key works in this literature I have not yet cited include Donham (1998), Elliston (1999), Sinnott (2004), B. Tan (1999), M. Tan (1995).

2. The first national congress (*kongres nasional*) for the nationalist movement was also held in Yogyakarta, in 1908, the first "to include all levels of society" regardless of ethnicity or religion (K. Dewantara 1950:10).

3. In this history of activism, the figure of Dédé Oetomo looms paramount. This raises fascinating questions about the relationship between individuals and social formations, a difficult topic for anthropology, with its focus on the transindividual. Oetomo’s activist orientation reflects his association with gay and lesbian

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organizations at Cornell in the United States while a doctoral student. He has also cultivated connections with gay and lesbian activists worldwide since attending the International Gay Association Conference in Wina, Austria, in July 1983, linkages further strengthened by HIV/AIDS work. Oetomo’s decades of activism, fluency in English, and international connections make him not only one of best-known *gay* men in Indonesia but one of the most atypical (Oetomo is also both openly atheist and ethnic Chinese).

4. *GAYa LEStari* (July 1994).

5. *GAYa Nusantara* 57:10 (1998); 58:8 (1998).

6 . See, inter alia, Jackson (1997); Manalansan (1995); Morris (1997); Thongthiraj (1996).