(Un)toward Progress: Stories of Modernity and Development in Indonesian Film and Fiction

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‘I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

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Abstract

In this thesis, I trace a powerful narrative theme of 'progress' across several different genres of storytelling: fictional stories in cinema and literature, audience accounts of everyday consumption practices, and the various stories circulating in media, public debate, and academic scholarship. Stories of progress are pervasive and compelling in contemporary Indonesia, whether in 'inspirational' films and novels featuring upwardly mobile young protagonists, or in audience discussions and media debates about the potential of such fictional stories to 'advance' and 'develop' the nation in both material and moral terms. Central to many of these stories are the keywords 'modernity' and 'development.' My project seeks to highlight the flexible and unstable iridescence of these keywords as preferred metaphors for interpreting complex social changes, and also the intimate links these terms share with disempowering colonialist and developmentalist discourses around civilisation and linear trajectories of progress. A key premise of this thesis is that words, language, and stories have concrete impacts on our ways of understanding and interpreting the world, and I suggest that uncritical use of opaque terms like 'modernity' and 'development' can mask deep complexities, reinforce structural inequalities, and erase alternative stories, particularly in postcolonial contexts like Indonesia. My study is informed by critical postcolonial and post-development theory, but I take a cultural studies perspective, focusing on how everyday stories of progress can serve to either challenge or reinforce dominant versions of 'modernity' and 'development.' Indonesia has a long and fraught history with these terms, and certain versions have attained dominance, coming to structure the narratives of progress circulating within and about Indonesia in the post-reform context. I examine how and why particular versions of progress narratives have become so powerful, where these stories are being most strongly articulated and contested, how these stories have shifted since the demise of the long-powerful New Order regime, and the divergent ways in which central keywords like 'development,' and 'modernity' operate across different types of stories, including scholarly accounts, public debates, audience discussions, and textual representations. In order to gain a nuanced understanding of what is going on in these stories, I combine close readings of selected popular films and novels, with audience ethnography, and media

discourse analysis. I argue that a deeper understanding of both the pervasiveness and internal contradictions of progress narratives as they are articulated in each of these area can help us, as scholars, to engage more effectively with contemporary identity politics and debates around religion, region, gender, and history in Indonesia, and also to address representational inequalities in the production of knowledge more broadly. As my study demonstrates, the realm of popular culture offers unique insight into these issues, and therefore my thesis contributes not just to Indonesian studies and critical development studies, but also joins important scholarly debates and conversations around the challenges and opportunities of practicing cultural studies in Asian contexts.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: The trope of progress

This is a study of stories. The stories that authors or filmmakers present in fictional works, the stories that audiences tell themselves and others about their consumption of such stories, the stories circulating in media coverage and debate around certain films or novels, and the stories that are then shared in scholarly accounts of popular cultural trends. During the course of my research into contemporary Indonesian film and fiction, I encountered many different kinds of stories. An academic paper, a news report, a post-film conversation between friends, a popular novel: these are all very different types of stories, but they share important features. They have characters, plots, genre conventions, common tropes, and moral messages. Sometimes the narratives that structure academic papers or public debates are not as obvious as the ones we see in fictional stories, yet they can be incredibly powerful in both shaping and reflecting outlooks and assumptions.

A central narrative theme that I encountered across all these story types was one of progress, frequently described in terms of 'modernity' and 'development.' Inspirational films and novels, featuring upwardly mobile young Indonesian protagonists, were a staple feature of the Indonesian mediascape at the time of my research, and Indonesian audiences consistently expressed a strong belief in the potential of these fictional stories to 'advance' and 'develop' the nation in both material and moral terms. Similarly, in media coverage and debate, leading public figures and commentators regularly discussed the potential positive and negative impacts of various popular films or novels, situating such discussions within broader conversations about balancing perceived influences of 'modernity' and 'tradition' in Indonesia. Subsequent scholarly accounts of contemporary trends in the Indonesian mediascape often circulated similar narratives. Fictional representations of various key social identities come to be descried in academic work both in and about Indonesia as 'struggles over modernity,' a vague and analytically limited phrase, which nonetheless remains powerful and popular across a range of academic fields.

In this thesis, I engage critically with the narrative of progress that I encountered across these different levels of storytelling. I combine close readings of selected popular films and novels, with audience ethnography, and media discourse analysis, to examine ongoing contestations over what it means to be a 'modern' Indonesian citizen. In doing so, I also interrogate the various ways in which academic scholarship engages with the term 'modernity.' This slippery and iridescent term often functions as a convenient and flexible hold-all to describe complex processes of social change. However, 'modernity' as a concept and as a story is filled with internal contradictions, and its vague and unstable nature can mask deep complexities, reinforce structural inequalities, and erase alternative stories, particularly in postcolonial contexts.

The concept of 'modernity' arose from a series of colonial interactions in many different areas of the world, in the process of which 'the West' itself came to be recognised and named, and the opposing idea of 'tradition' also came to be invented. As such, the term is deeply entangled with the narratives of civilisation, progress and development that were formed around these encounters, all of which played a fundamental role in hierarchical ordering of difference, and laid the framework for contemporary inequalities and exploitations. In using the term in this thesis, I draw on critical postcolonial theory to illuminate its deeply compromised histories and suggest that entrenched colonial legacies partly contribute to its ongoing resilience as an analytical concept.[1] The resilience of a term like 'modernity' also lies in its somewhat vague and 'iridescent' quality, which allows it to drastically shift in meaning according to context, and function as a kind of convenient container concept for describing complex realities.[2] While this is arguably a quality of all language, as suggested in poststructuralist thought, certain terms are particularly amenable to being used in such a way. Raymond Williams memorably described these familiar

[1] Key theorists here include Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Harry Harootunian, "'Modernity' and the Claims of Untimeliness," *Postcolonial Studies*, 13, no. 4 (2010); Naoki Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010); Arif Dirlik, "Revisioning Modernity: Modernity in Eurasian Perspectives," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011).

[2] See description of 'modernity' as 'shifting and iridescent' in Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, 15.

yet analytically confusing words as 'keywords' in his influential 1976 work.[3] Taking a cultural rather than an etymological approach to terms like 'art,' 'culture' and 'society,' Williams argued that typical dictionary definitions for these words are both 'impossible' and 'irrelevant,' given their complex layers of meaning, their implied values, and their embeddedness in both 'actual relationships' and 'processes of social and historical change.'[4] His theorisation of the properties and functions of keywords strongly informs my own approach to the concept of 'modernity,' a keyword that I have chosen to focus on because of its centrality across the range of different, and sometimes competing, stories of progress that form the heart of this thesis.

A central premise of my thesis is that stories matter, and I propose to demonstrate that powerful narratives of progress and development, often drawing on politically loaded notions of 'modernity' and 'tradition,' continue to structure so much general and scholarly discourse globally, with concrete effects. Such effects are clearly articulated in the many and varied critiques of 'development' as a political and economic theory and practice. During the final two decades of the twentieth century, influential 'post-development' scholars such as Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Esteva challenged dominant global theories of 'development' and 'modernisation,' arguing that such theories assume a singular linear model of progress, emerging solely in the industrialised capitalist 'West,' and that this model serves to disenfranchise and disempower huge portions of the world's population, who come to be labelled 'underdeveloped.'[5] Despite these compelling critiques, variations of modernisation theory continue to influence contemporary political and economic policies worldwide. Celine Germond-Duret writes that in 2016, the 'modernity thesis' continues to be 'considered a valid model in the development industry,' and that 'development' and 'modernity' are often used as synonyms in this industry, in a way that justifies potentially disastrous outside interventions into the lives of various

[3] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976). See also the updated New Keywords project: Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
[4] Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 17, 22.
[5] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gustavo Esteva, "Development," in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 1992).

populations across the globe.[6] The challenge of how to best achieve inclusive, participatory, and sustainable 'development' practices is a complex and well-studied topic in the field of development studies. Such studies often focus primarily on the economic and political aspects of such challenges; my study, in contrast, seeks to offer an alternative approach to understanding the deeply entrenched problems of developmentalism. My approach is informed by the spirit of critiques like Escobar's, but I take a cultural studies perspective, in order to provide a complementary account of the everyday stories of progress that can serve to both challenge and reinforce dominant ideologies of 'development.' To do so, I examine this important issue through the prism of popular film and fiction, taking contemporary Indonesia as a case study.

As I will demonstrate, Indonesia has a long and fraught history with notions of 'development' and 'modernity.' Certain versions of these terms have attained dominance, and have come to structure the narratives of progress circulating within and about Indonesia in the post-reform context.[7] I argue that far from being self-evident analytical categories, terms like 'modernity' and 'development' have specific histories and contexts. Writing towards the final years of Indonesia's authoritarian New Order regime (1966-1998), during which '*pembangunan*' (development) had become one of the 'most salient keywords' in socio-political discourse, Ariel Heryanto eloquently traced the complex history and context of 'development language' in Indonesia.[8] From its emergence in the late colonial era *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Cultural Polemic) debates among nationalist intellectuals in the 1930s,

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[6] Celine Germond-Duret, "Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Binary Thinking, Indigenous Peoples and Normalisation," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016): 1540-41. See also Gerardo Munarriz, "Rhetoric and Reality: The World Bank Development Policies, Mining Corporations,and Indigenous Communities in Latin America," *International Community Law Review* 10, no. 4 (2008); Balakrishnan Rajagopal, "The Violence of Development," *Washington Post*, August 9 2001; Elspeth Young, *Third World in the First: Development and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Routledge, 1995); Wolfgang Sachs, ed. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992).

[7] The 'reform' era generally refers to the decade following the stepping down of president Suharto in 1998 after thirty years of authoritarian rule under the New Order regime. I loosely designate the subsequent years from 2009 onwards as 'post-reform.'

[8] Ariel Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, The Australian National University Pacific Linguistics Series (Canberra: Department of Linguistics, 1995), 8. See also Jonathan Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1999).

through to its increasing centrality to New Order legitimacy during the 1980s, usage of the term '*pembangunan*' grew and shifted alongside its English equivalent 'development.' 'Modernity' has followed a parallel and sometimes overlapping path. As in many postcolonial contexts, a perceived dichotomy between 'modernity' and 'tradition' has become a perennial subject of debate in Indonesia, and these are inescapable keywords in the various narratives of progress put forward by governments, intellectuals, and citizens.[9] My study looks specifically to post-reform Indonesia, asking: How and why have particular versions of progress narratives become so powerful? Have these stories shifted since the demise of the long-powerful New Order? Where are they being most strongly articulated and contested and by who? What are Indonesians supposed to be progressing towards and for what purpose? What is general and what is particular about the occurrence of these progress narratives in Indonesia? Do central keywords like 'development,' and 'modernity' operate differently across different types of stories, such as scholarly accounts, public debates, audience discussions, and textual representations? How do dominant stories and assumptions of progress structure both scholarly and general understandings of key sites of contestation and identity-making including religion, region, gender, and history? Ultimately, I propose that a more nuanced understanding of both the pervasiveness and internal contradictions of progress narratives can help us, as scholars, to engage more effectively with contemporary identity politics and also seek to address representational inequalities.

The realm of popular culture offers unique insight into these questions, for several key reasons. Firstly, the 'popular' (whether particular popular texts, ordinary conversations, or media discourses) is a site of everyday languages and logics, an arena in which we can trace what Antonio Gramsci calls 'common sense' – in this case the common sense notions of progress that underpin everyday stories.[10] By examining these everyday stories, we can explore the alternative perspectives on 'development' that I outlined above. That is, from the ground-up rather than from

[9] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 15.
[10] Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, ed. John Storey (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998). See also Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 131, 208.

the more common top-down economic perspectives. Secondly, the very notion of 'popular' or 'mass' culture sits at a productively ambiguous point with regard to 'development' and 'modernity.' It is an area where so many anxieties and hopes around 'modernity' and 'becoming modern' coalesce. In public debates around media consumption worldwide, questions frequently arise over whether 'the masses' are consuming quality enlightening entertainment, or being corrupted by derivative mass-produced trash.[11] Such conversations can become particularly loaded in postcolonial contexts like Indonesia, where the translations, adaptations and hybridities so central to popular culture give rise to anxieties around authenticity, foreign influence, loss of 'traditional' genres, as well as 'bastard modernity' or incorrect adoption of 'modernity.'[12] Stories of progress are deeply implicated in these kinds of debates, which is why popular culture is such an important site of inquiry in my thesis. Finally, and related to the previous point, popular culture is usually defined in opposition to both the 'modernity' of high culture and the 'tradition' of folk culture, so sits at a useful in-between space for thinking through around, and past these concepts. My project seeks to make use of the ambiguous location of the popular, and its properties as a site of contestation around 'common sense' definitions of keywords like 'modernity' and 'development,' as I trace stories of progress within and around popular Indonesian film and fiction.

Contemporary Indonesia is plagued with inequalities and disappointments over the perceived 'failures' of the reform period. For those who campaigned against it and celebrated its downfall in 1998, the end of the New Order regime had promised to

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[11] Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998); Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[12] On the idea of 'bastard modernity' and debates around incorrect adoption of modernity in the context of Indonesian popular culture, see Bettina David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia," in *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, ed. Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti (Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008). For a discussion of spectres of postcolonial authenticity/inauthenticity, see Marshall Sahlins, "What Is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999). On hybridity and the anxieties it can trigger, see Pnina Werbner, "Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity," in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997). For a discussion around postcolonial nations as 'consumers of a foreign modernity,' see Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam: Sephis, 1997). See also Ashis Nandy, "The Hour of the Untamed Cosmopolitan," *Tehelka Magazine* 6 (2009).

usher in increased tolerance towards religious expression, more equal relations between marginalised regions and urban centres, more diverse gender roles, and a more critical reassessment of national histories of violence. To a certain extent, some of this has occurred. However, it has been difficult to successfully challenge the ideological legacies of the previous regime. I argue that this is partly because the New Order's stories about progress, and long-powerful definitions of 'development' and 'modernity,' remain highly influential. This situation has broader global resonances, for continued use of the opaque hold-all term 'modernity' (by scholars, by the media, by audiences, by authors and filmmakers) often serves to reinforce powerful global and local narratives of development and simplistic linear progress.[13] These exclusionary narratives can obscure complexities and reinforce structural inequalities. While fully acknowledging my own position within such narratives, I hope, in this thesis, to move towards alternative readings of progress or at least pluralised meanings. If we can grasp the pervasiveness and contingency of these narratives, it is possible to imagine and understand more complex present realities and more just and inclusive futures.

During the course of my research for this project, it seemed that despite so many convincing critiques over many years of the central keywords 'modernity' and 'development,' they were not sufficiently problematised in progress narratives, and would often flatten out complex realities. To illustrate these abstract concerns more concretely, I will share a series of stories from my fieldwork research. In February 2013, I had recently begun a year-long fieldwork trip in Indonesia. I was living in a student boarding house (*kos*) in Yogyakarta, and watching a film on one of my *kos*-mates' laptop. The film was called *Negeri 5 Menara* (*Nation of 5 Towers*), based on a 2009 novel of the same name, and it was the latest in a long line of inspirational films, often with religious elements, a trend that had begun back in 2008 with the record-breaking performance of Islamic romance *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*The Verses of Love*), followed shortly thereafter by education-themed drama *Laskar Pelangi* (*The*

[13] For example, Grossberg has examined how the linearity implied in current formations of 'Euromodernity,' and particularly 'neoliberal developmentalism,' has shaped and limited both scholarly and general accounts of social change. See Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*.

Rainbow Troops).[14] On screen, a handsome young teacher at an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), wearing a crisp white shirt and tie with his Islamic *peci* cap, delivers a motivational speech to his young students, boys who have journeyed from all across the archipelago to attend the famous 'modern *pesantren*' in East Java. In a mix of Indonesian, English, and Arabic language, he explains that what makes 'a successful person different to an ordinary person' is 'going the extra miles' and that 'whoever applies themselves truly and earnestly will succeed.' The teacher's speech offers a compelling fusion of Islamic spiritual development and neoliberal individualist ideologies, and the film's protagonist, a boy named Alif from a small village in West Sumatra, who – despite his humble origins – harbours big dreams of a global education, listens raptly. Set in the 1980s, Alif's story is loosely based on the author Ahmad Fuadi's own journey from a tiny Sumatran village to a career as an international reporter, and eventual return to Indonesia, where he established the Menara Foundation, hoping to inspire others to follow in his footsteps. As I sat watching the occasionally pixelated downloaded DVD scenes, I was struck by its representations of idealised 'modern' Muslim masculinities and also how centre-periphery relationships featured in the central narrative of progress as Alif moves from a remote village, to the central island of Java, and then on to global centres of power like Washington and London. Local 'traditions,' while valued, functioned as a constraint in this progress narrative, while Islam was firmly positioned as a key strategic resource of 'modernity.'

I asked some of my *kos*-mates what they thought of the film. I was living at the time with seventeen girls from various parts of Indonesia, all of whom were studying at nearby universities. Our boarding house did not have much of a shared lounge-room area, but we would often congregate and chat in each other's rooms, sitting on the cool tiles in front of noisily whirring plastic fans. Amongst those who had seen *Negeri 5 Menara*, there was unanimous praise of its 'inspirational' and 'educational' qualities. 'Films have a real capacity to change people, to inspire us to succeed,' explained Dewi, a psychology Masters student who occupied the room next to

[14] Affandi Abdul Rachman, "Negeri 5 Menara," (Indonesia: Million Pictures, 2011); Hanung Bramantyo, "Ayat-Ayat Cinta," (Indonesia: MD Pictures, 2008); Riri Riza, "Laskar Pelangi," (Indonesia: Miles Films & Mizan Production, 2008).

mine.[15] Despite the film's setting in an Islamic boarding school and its use of Arabic and Islamic language and imagery, several of my Christian and Catholic *kos*-mates assured me that these kinds of films are not just for Islamic audiences and that 'the Islamic elements' are 'not as important' as the 'universal inspirational messages about education and struggle,' that this story offers. After a little more discussion, the group concluded that this particular film was 'a little bit preachy' and 'not as good as *Laskar Pelangi*,' but still decent 'for an Indonesian film,' and that that these were the kinds of films that Indonesia should be making. 'Better this than trashy horror porn' (*pilem hantu bokep*), laughed Tia, the girl whose room we were sitting in. Everyone joined her laughter and began passionately dissecting the failings of the Indonesian horror genre, lamenting the 'uneducated' consumers who create a market for such stories. During the course of my fieldwork, this was to become a very familiar transition, from the quietly virtuous discussion about 'worthy' cinema capable of inspiring and 'developing' viewers, to the far louder and more joyous criticism of 'less worthy' genres. In discussing matters of taste, audiences would represent themselves as 'modern' and 'moral' on a linear scale of consumer progress; however, their sheer joy in dissecting the horror genre would also reveal some slippage on this scale.

Around the time the film was released, there had been lots of positive media coverage, in a similar vein to the discussion with my *kos*-mates. Like its predecessors, the *Negeri 5 Menara* story, as both a book and a film, was praised by public figures, cultural critics, and journalists for its themes of 'determination, hard work, and friendship,' and for sending 'a powerful message' about 'achieving success and reaching your highest dreams.'[16] In public discourse, these positive, inspirational stories were occasionally contrasted against the horror genre referred to by my friends, but more often, media coverage would compare films like *Negeri 5 Menara* to 'controversial' films from around the same time, ones which offered a more negative or critical representation of multi-ethnic, religiously plural

[15] All quotes taken from field notes, Yogyakarta February 2013. Translations are the author's own. All respondents' names have been changed and replaced with pseudonyms.
[16] Anindya Legia Putri, "Besok Film Negeri 5 Menara Diputar Di Amerika," *Tempo*, 17 May 2013.

Indonesia.[17] Drawn to a dramatic story, the media reported in gleeful detail examples of public protest, calls for censorship, and noisy demonstrations. I had been closely following these kinds of public protests, and found that groups like the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, Islamic Defenders Front) would often be at the forefront of such protests, ostensibly expressing concern over representations of Islam and the negative impacts that such representations would have on consumers and the nation more broadly. Keen to avoid trouble, cinemas and producers would usually withdraw a film, rather than risk violent protests. In these public debates, we can see clashing perspectives on progress. Protesters attempt to marginalise critical voices as disrupting harmony and stability. Meanwhile, media reports represent protesters as 'backward' religious zealots, while simultaneously reproducing similar notions that negative films can be dangerous, and that positive and inspirational films can have a positive developmental effect on the nation.

At an academic conference in Singapore several months later, I heard several papers that discussed representations of hip, modern Islam in Indonesian cinema and television, the rise of Islamic-themed literature and writing collectives, and also the emergence of new censorships fuelled by 'radical Islamists.' During panel sessions, PowerPoint presentations, and discussions over countless cups of lukewarm conference coffee, I paid close attention to the kinds of scholarly stories that emerged. Among both Indonesian and foreign scholars, I sensed a preoccupation with struggles over 'Islamic modernities' taking place in Indonesia at the time. These stories about Islam were often framed by notions of progress, and discussions over whether Islam was a source of 'alternative modernity' or an obstacle to constructing a 'modern' public sphere.

I argue that a recurring narrative theme of progress, shaped by various notions of 'development' and 'modernity,' runs through all of the scenes I have just recounted. But this narrative emerges and operates in slightly different ways at different levels. As I have already noted, 'modernity' and 'development' are loose, cloudy terms, and

[17] Examples of 'controversial' films from the period of my research include the work of Hanung Bramantyo. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of these films, including: Hanung Bramantyo, "Perempuan Berkalung Sorban," (Indonesia: Kharisma Starvision Plus & Dapur Film, 2009); "Tanda Tanya," (Indonesia: Dapur Film & Mahaka Pictures, 2011); "Cinta Tapi Beda," (Indonesia: Tripar Multivision Plus, 2012).

their meanings shift in different contexts. Was the kind of success and 'modernity' espoused in the film scene the same as the success aspired to by my boarding house friends? Were my *kos*-mates' beliefs in the power of films to advance and inspire audiences springing from the same basic assumptions about progress that underpinned the Indonesian media coverage on the power of popular culture to shape the 'modern' nation in both positive and negative ways? Were these various stories of progress fully captured by the scholarly accounts of struggles over 'Islamic modernity' being discussed and analysed at the conference?

Across these four levels of storytelling, the keyword 'modernity' often functions as a convenient hold-all to describe broader, more complex issues. As I will demonstrate in the course of this thesis, there is a lot going on below the surface of these scenes. Scholarly preoccupation with Islam as a potential 'problem' or 'solution' to issues facing the 'modern' Indonesian nation is often based on a fascination with the apparently incongruous mix of Islam and 'modernity.' This fusion does not fit dominant narratives of progress in the social sciences. Indeed, in the post 9/11 context, 'Western' social theory appears particularly ill-equipped to satisfactorily deal with matters of religion and faith in the modern world, hence ongoing scholarly focus on how to best theorise and understand 'Islamic modernity'.

Yet far from being solely a matter of religion, the protests and media debates that I outlined earlier are often shaped by deep histories of state propaganda around what is considered appropriate material for mass consumption. Violent public protest is frequently more about stifling any criticism of the status quo, in the context of shifting power relations in the deregulated post-reform mediascape, than about any specific religion. The New Order version of 'development' (*pembangunan*) was strongly equated with order, stability, and not questioning the status quo, and it is particularly notable that much of the muscle power behind the FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) comes from the same *preman* (thugs, gangsters) who wielded so much informal power throughout the secular New Order regime.[18] Evidently, New

[18] Ian Douglas Wilson, "Continuity and Change: The Changing Contours of Organized Violence in Post–New Order Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006); "As Long as It's Halal: Islamic Preman in Jakarta," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); Loren Ryter, "Their Moment in the Sun: The New Indonesian Parliamentarians from the Old O.K.P," in *State of Authority: The State in Society in Indonesia*, ed. Gerry van

Order discourses around stability and 'development' continue to remain powerful well after the reform period. The continued power of the state narrative of progress is also apparent in audience engagement with popular texts. Young urban Indonesians consistently position themselves as 'modern' and discerning viewers of enlightening and inspirational cinematic material, in contrast to those less 'developed' viewers, whose taste runs more towards trashy and semi-pornographic horror. However, their sheer joy in this criticism, when compared with somewhat boring discussions of more 'worthy' films, reveals an almost playful hyper-obedience to official discourses of progress.

In the texts themselves, narratives of progress operate in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. In representations of marginalised regions of Indonesia, authors and filmmakers represent local 'tradition' as simultaneously a source of strength and a serious constraint to participation in 'modern' life. Trendy young 'modern Muslim' characters are idolised, as are certain gender archetypes formed around notions of the ideal 'modern' Indonesian male and female citizen. These texts often also articulate a certain nostalgia for the imagined simplicity and stability of the New Order's 'era of development,' while at the same time erasing the histories of violence upon which that era was built. A popular film like *Negeri 5 Menara* can, in this way, be a hugely productive entry-point to analyse important intersections between representations of region, religion, gender, and history, and the ways in which stories of progress can both challenge and reinforce ongoing injustices and inequalities across these sites. Moreover, when analysed side-by-side, textual representation, audience negotiations, public debates, and scholarly accounts can provide a complex picture of how keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' function in creating and circulating certain stories of progress.

As dominant metaphors for dealing with complex processes and situations, keywords like 'modernity' often conceal more than they reveal. Functioning as what I call a 'container concept,' they can reduce complex realities into more manageable and digestible accounts. Such concepts contain reference to larger 'universal' narratives and understandings. We look at something that puzzles us and say 'how can I fit this

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Klinken and Joshua Barker (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2009); "Reformasi Gangsters," *Inside Indonesia* 82 (2005).

into a narrative of progress or redemption, or a quest narrative, or a conversion narrative, or a success narrative?' These concepts work best when they are vague but encompassing, which can facilitate the establishment of a superficial consensus, and disguise underlying differences and complexity.[19] They facilitate the creation and exchange of stories, but perhaps not always the best stories. According to cultural studies theorist Lawrence Grossberg, the central project of cultural studies is to 'tell better stories about what's going on.'[20] Cultural studies emerged as a project from the refusal to take for granted and leave unchallenged not only everyday structures and relations of power but also the knowledge and theories that naturalised, and were naturalised by, those relations and structures and inscribed them in a natural order .[21] My thesis is at heart a quest to engage with existing structures of knowledge and 'tell better stories.' I seek to tell these stories by engaging critically with tropes of 'progress,' 'modernity' and 'development,' asking: Where, why and how are dominant narratives of progress being reinforced or challenged? What are some of the disjunctures and paradoxes within this narrative across different sites and levels of storytelling? Is it possible to move toward different or at least more plural versions of progress? In doing so, this project offers a cultural reading of persistent problems faced in the field of development studies, and also contributes new insights on working at the intersection of Indonesian area studies and critical cultural studies, a small but important field which I will introduce in subsequent sections.

'Modernity' and 'development' in Indonesian identity politics

Keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' are not self-evident analytical categories but rather central narrative tropes in stories with specific histories and contexts. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I will trace some of these stories as they are told in classic 'Western' social sciences, in postcolonial critiques broadly, as well as in specific Indonesian debates. As revealed in widespread critiques of the

[19] As I will discuss in Chapter 2, other examples of this kind of hold-all container concept include 'tradition,' the 'West,' and 'capitalism.'
[20] Lawrence Grossberg, "On the Political Responsibilities of Cultural Studies," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 241.
[21] On this point, Isabelle Stengers argues that it is not the function of knowledge to 'ratify…a state of affairs but [to] subject…it to the corrosive dynamics of what could be.' Isabelle Stengers, *Power and Invention* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 143.

development industry and modernisation theory, such stories can have direct negative effects on populations worldwide. In subsequent chapters (Chapter 3-5), I will closely examine examples of progress narratives in contemporary Indonesia, focusing in particular on how different versions of such stories can either challenge or reinforce inequalities and exclusions across important sites of Indonesian identity politics. I approach Indonesia in this thesis as a discursive construct embedded in people's everyday lives, rather than as a fixed, bounded nation-state. Contemporary Indonesia is plural and dynamic: media-saturated, increasingly consumerist, increasingly performatively religious and increasingly rife with contradictions. Notions of the 'traditional', 'the local' and 'the community' are valorised by government officials, media makers and consumers, as well as foreign observers; meanwhile, amongst the same groups, the 'modern' and 'the global' also remain key markers of success. Yet as I have indicated, commonly used words such as 'tradition' and 'modernity' are highly contested and politically loaded terms, products of a very specific historical moment, and subject to complex processes of reinvention. This powerful, complex and contested binary appears to be at the heart of many contemporary debates within Indonesia; however, the reality is far more complicated, as I will demonstrate in the course of this thesis.

During the reform period (*reformasi*) and euphoria following the New Order regime's collapse in 1998, after thirty years of authoritarian military rule, a diverse range of voices emerged in Indonesia's public sphere, advocating a wide range of new approaches to religion, region, gender and history, in a context of political decentralisation, media deregulation and broader global changes. This sheer cacophony was confounding for many scholarly studies during the first decade of the twenty-first century, which invariably concluded that these topics were 'contested' by a 'plurality' of voices, part of an 'uncertain' and 'unfinished' project of reimagining a post-authoritarian nation. Now that the dust of the reform era has settled, it is timely to examine shifting patterns of hegemony and resistance around contemporary Indonesian social identities and the politics of popular cultural representation. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of both Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams, a core premise of my analysis is that dominant or hegemonic ideas or representations can never go fully unchallenged, and similarly, that processes of resistance always operate to some extent within the boundaries of

existing power structures.[22] In this thesis, I examine these interactive processes through the lens of popular narratives encountered in Indonesian cinema and literature, and the stories subsequently told around these texts in media and audience accounts, focusing in particular on how stories of progress circulate and structure the post-reform mediascape.

Although this thesis discusses events and trends from throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, I loosely designate the years from around 2009 onwards as 'post-reform.' During this year Indonesia saw the re-election of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono for a second term, marking the consolidation of a decade of democracy; this timeframe also coincides with a general decline in use of the term '*reformasi*' in local media, as well as an increased tendency to discuss the 'failures of *reformasi*', or refer to the reform era as being in the past. Post-reform Indonesia is a particular historical moment when diverse and multiple sources of power are beginning to solidify and converge. In particular, the widely expressed disappointments with the 'reform' process expressed by both Indonesians and outside observers can reveal important insights into expectations and assumptions about Indonesia's past, present and future. My study examines the role that dominant notions of progress, and their attendant versions of 'development' and 'modernity' play in shaping such expectations.

References to 'modernity' proliferate in Indonesian media, politics and everyday discussion; this vague term is understood in diverse and contradictory ways, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively, sometimes as a force or a process, and sometimes as an outlook or philosophy. To examine both the complexity and concrete impacts of a keyword like 'modernity,' I focus on four major sites of identity politics that have been particularly contested during the reform and post-reform periods: religion, region, gender, and history. I highlight the complex intersections between these sites, and the way that popular cultural representations (and audience negotiations) can both contest and reinforce dominant stereotypes and

[22] Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State."; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). See also Christine Chin and James Mittelman, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," in *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, ed. Barry K Gills (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

master-narratives of progress.[23] Such narratives weave their way through media and textual representations of all four of these sites, as do social and political exclusions and inequalities.

I will briefly introduce these four sites now, but will expand further on them in Chapter 2. Firstly, around religion we have seen increasingly visible and vocal expressions of a range of different Islams in Indonesia's public sphere, and a rising 'popular piety' culture where religious commitment becomes linked with fun, fashion, and urban cosmopolitan identities.[24] In public debate, everyday discussions and scholarly accounts, religion is characterised in discursively unstable ways, sometimes as a 'modernising' force and sometimes as an 'anti-modern' dogma, and it is this discursive instability that I pay particular attention to in this thesis. Secondly, with regard to region and centre-periphery relations, previously 'marginalised' areas of Indonesia have ostensibly benefited from decentralisation and regional autonomy policies, and an increased 'voice' for these areas has been reflected in media and popular cultural representations.[25] Yet, as I will demonstrate, regional inequalities and stereotypes remain, and are often explained in terms of 'underdevelopment.' Local regional 'traditions' occupy an ambiguous position in

[23] As noted above, my theoretical approach here takes into account complex interactions between 'dominant,' 'emergent,' and 'residual' popular cultural representations as outlined in Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. and notions of hegemony and resistance as theorised by Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State."

[24] See for example Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008); Ariel Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture," in *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Andrew N Weintraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Rianne Subijanto, "The Visibility of a Pious Public," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011); James B Hoesterey, "Prophetic Cosmopolitanism: Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Virtue in Indonesia," *City & Society* 24, no. 1 (2012); James B Hoesterey and Marshall Clark, "Film Islami: Gender, Piety and Pop Culture in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 36, no. 2 (2012); Leonie Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture" (PhD Thesis, The University of Amsterdam, 2014).

[25] For more on the politics of decentralisation, see Maribeth Erb, Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, and Carole Faucher, *Regionalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005); Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Decentralisation in Indonesia: Less State, More Democracy?," in *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation*, ed. John Harriss, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Törnquist (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005); Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry Van Klinken, eds., *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Tod Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

this story, with tensions between 'tradition' as source of strength or constraint, and between 'modernity' as opportunity or destructive force. Thirdly, sex and gender have also been key topics during this period, with ongoing discussions around pornography, polygamy, and patriarchal inequalities claiming a central position in public debate.[26] Previously dominant ideal gender archetypes and representations have been challenged in the Indonesian mediascape, as part of a complex dialectic between state ideologies, artistic representations and lived experiences. Women's bodies in particular are often situated at the crossroads between 'modernity,' 'tradition' and nationalism, and official government discourses frequently signify the heterosexual nuclear family as a microcosm of the 'modern' nation and a building block of progress. Finally, official histories of violence have been increasingly challenged by a range of actors in reform and post-reform Indonesia, perhaps most contentiously the long-submerged history of the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings that marked the beginning of the New Order regime.[27] On the other hand,

[26] There is a huge body of work on gender and sexuality in post-New Order Indonesia. Some key examples I draw on include Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tom Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005); Nancy J Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 2 (2007); Barbara Hatley, "Hearing Women's Voices, Contesting Women's Bodies in Post New Order Indonesia," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 16 (2008); Marshall Clark, "Indonesian Cinema: Exploring Cultures of Masculinity, Censorship and Violence," in *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* ed. Ariel Heryanto (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008); Pam Allen, "Women, Gendered Activism and Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 16 (2009); Ben Murtagh, "Gay, Lesbi and Waria Audiences in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39, no. 115 (2011); Rachel Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Moral Visions: Globalization and Gender Controversies in Indonesia," *Qualitative sociology* 34, no. 4 (2011); Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies, eds., *Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia: Sexual Politics, Health, Diversity and Representations* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[27] For detailed historical accounts of this violence and analysis of the social and political implications of New Order constructions of history, see Robert Cribb, ed. *The Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990); Gerry van Klinken, "The Battle for History after Suharto: Order, Development, and Pressure for Change," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001); Henk Schulte Nordholt, "A Genealogy of Violence," in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective*, ed. Freek Colombijn and J Thomas Lindblad (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002); John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup D'etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Katharine E McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, eds., *The*

these histories of violence often continue to be dismissed in Indonesian public debate as a necessary step along the path to becoming a 'modern' state. Here, and indeed throughout these four sites of contestation, terms like 'modernity' and 'development' operate in diverse and contradictory ways, and can often obscure more than they reveal.

In approaching these four major sites of identity politics, I take an intersectional perspective, examining the links and overlaps between these sites as a way to grasp some of the complexities often hidden within dominant linear narratives of progress. According to Laurie Sears, 'arguments based on identity will always need to look at intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, ideology, sexuality, and religion' and when these intersections are taken into account, 'new ways of looking at Southeast Asian histories, politics, and literary cultures appear.'[28] I have paid close attention to such intersections in my analysis, in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the currents of power at work in the popular texts at the heart of this thesis, and also to contribute new insights to studying contemporary mediascapes in the region.

Theorising popular culture

As indicated in the opening section, popular culture is a particularly important site of hope and anxiety around 'modernity.' John Frow and Meaghan Morris define popular culture not as an imposed culture or as a spontaneous oppositional culture of the people, but rather a terrain of negotiation and interaction between the two, 'a contested and conflictual set of practices of representation bound up with the processes of formation and reformation of social groups.'[29] Popular culture in Indonesia is an illustrative example of this. In post-reform Indonesia, media and

Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965-68 (Singapore: NUS Press for Asian Studies Association of Australia, 2014).

[28] Laurie J Sears and Carlo Bonura, eds., *Knowing Southeast Asian Subjects* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 62.

[29] John Frow and Meaghan Morris, "Australian Cultural Studies," in *What Is Cultural Studies?*, ed. John Storey (London: Arnold, 1996), 356. See also Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Ralph Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Tony Bennett, "The Politics of the 'Popular' and Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, ed. Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986).

popular culture are important sites of contemporary cultural production, reproduction and contestation, and frequently become the subject of public debates. Although the tensions and contestations over various aspects of contemporary Indonesian social identities, as described above, are not always discussed explicitly in popular texts, the fact that films and novels are created and consumed within the context of these tensions makes them key sites of analysis.[30] In her work on Indonesian media in the reform period, Krishna Sen points out that 'the conventional media theory divide' between 'politics and persuasion' on the one hand and 'leisure' on the other 'has never held particularly sway in Indonesian studies.'[31] This is because 'television, radio and even popular music, all prescribed and proscribed by earlier regimes, had politicised entertainment' in ways not immediately obvious 'in Western democratic contexts.'[32] Yet despite Indonesia's mediascape offering such a rich opportunity for studying the politics of popular cultural representation, cultural studies approaches have been relatively limited in scholarly approaches to the region.[33] Instead,

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[30] Ariel Heryanto, ed. *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008).

[31] Krishna Sen and David T Hill, *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Although relatively small in number compared with other areas of enquiry, the studies that have been carried out on Indonesian media and popular culture are fascinating and insightful. Some great examples include Philip Kitley, "Fine Tuning Control: Commercial Television in Indonesia," *Continuum* 8, no. 2 (1994); David T Hill and Krishna Sen, eds., *The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Melani Budianta, "Plural Identities: Indonesian Women's Redefinition of Democracy in the Post-Reformasi Era," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2002); Bernard Arps, "To Propagate Morals through Popular Music: The Indonesian Qasidah Modéren," *Qasida poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* 1 (1996); Bart Barendregt, "Sex, Cannibals, and the Language of Cool: Indonesian Tales of the Phone and Modernity," *The Information Society* 24, no. 3 (2008); Bart Barendregt and Wim van Zanten, "Popular Music in Indonesia since 1998, in Particular Fusion, Indie and Islamic Music on Video Compact Discs and the Internet," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 34 (2002); Inaya Rakhmani, "Regime and Representation: Islam in Indonesian Television, 1962 to 1998," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2013); Katinka van Heeren, "Return of the Kyai: Representations of Horror, Commerce, and Censorship in Post-Suharto Indonesian Film and Television," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007); Emma Baulch, *Making Scenes: Reggae, Punk, and Death Metal in 1990s Bali* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Clark, "Indonesian Cinema: Exploring Cultures of Masculinity, Censorship and Violence."; Hoesterey and Clark, "Film Islami: Gender, Piety and Pop Culture in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia."; Tom Boellstorff, "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian 'Gay' and 'Lesbi' Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World," *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 2 (2003); Edwin Jurriëns, *From Monologue to Dialogue: Radio and Reform in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39, no. 114 (2011); "Social Participation in Indonesian Media and Art: Echoes from the Past, Visions for the Future," *Bijdragen tot de*

scholarly focus has often been placed on institutional and economic processes of nation building and social conflict, from a strategic studies and political science perspective, or on exotic 'traditional' cultures, from an anthropological perspective. Carlo Bonura and Laurie Sears, Ariel Heryanto, and Leonie Schmidt have all criticised this narrow focus as constraining and impeding a more complex understanding of contemporary Indonesian realities.[34] My own thesis seeks to contribute to the small but important body of cultural studies scholarship focused on Indonesia.

Throughout this thesis, I draw on several key cultural studies approaches, methods and theories, while also critically reflecting on their limitations in explaining and interpreting the particular objects of my research. I understand cultural studies as a diverse field of study encompassing many different approaches and academic perspectives, united by a common concern with the political nature of contemporary culture.[35] Much cultural studies research concentrates on how a particular medium or message relates to matters of ideology, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and so on, and how this can empower or disempower certain people. 'Texts' studied in cultural studies include not just written language, but any

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taal-, land-en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia 169, no. 1 (2013); Andrew N Weintraub, ed. *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (New York: Routelege, 2011); "Dangdut Soul: Who Are 'the People' in Indonesian Popular Music?," *Asian Journal of Communication* 16, no. 4 (2006); Pam Nilan, "Romance Magazines, Television Soap Operas and Young Indonesian Women," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2003); Mark Hobart and Richard Fox, eds., *Entertainment Media in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Eric Sasono, "Islamic Revivalism and Religious Piety in Indonesian Cinema," in *Performance, Popular Culture, and Piety in Muslim Southeast Asia*, ed. Timothy P Daniels (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013); Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*; *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014); Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."

[34] Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*, 6-7; *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, 17; Carlo Bonura and Laurie J Sears, "Introduction: Knowledges That Travel in Southeast Asian Area Studies," in *Knowing Southeast Asian Subjects*, ed. Laurie J. Sears (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 4; Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture," 15.

[35] See John Storey, "Introduction: The Study of Popular Culture and Cultural Studies," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

meaningful artefacts of culture, including films, music, photographs, and fashion.[36] Moreover, the focus is not on the texts in isolation, but on the web of power relations that operate and exist outside the texts. With this in mind, my project analyses not just popular Indonesian films and novels, but also the stories that circulate around such texts.

Given this project's central concern with tracing pervasive stories of progress across several different levels, cultural studies' commitment to contextuality and interdisciplinarity heavily informs my methodological and theoretical approach. Cultural studies must take different shapes – theoretically, methodologically, and politically – as it tries to make sense of, and respond to, different contexts and questions.[37] Mimi White and James Schwoch's image of a matrix, template, or spreadsheet is a highly useful way to visualise cultural studies methodologies and theoretical approaches. They suggest that 'rather than a single model which emphasizes or theorizes the boundaries of cultural studies,' it is more useful to sketch 'the parameters of a large spreadsheet with many reasonably possible cells to activate.'[38] And, while a single research project may occupy certain cells of the spreadsheet, it is possible to explore the entire matrix over a longer research career, an approach which 'positions cultural studies as a site of innovation' by proposing 'strategies of intellectual invention instead of disciplinary containment.'[39] This visual representation of cultural studies interdisciplinarity has strongly informed my

[36] Given limitations of scope, I have restricted my focus in this thesis to film and literature, as convenient and illuminating sites to analyse authorial narrative construction and conscious consumption habits. Music, performance, radio, and television are also highly important sites (with varied genre conventions and authoritative connotations) and worthy of future studies in their own right.

[37] Chantal Cornut-Gentille D'Arcy, "An Interview with Lawrence Grossberg: Personal Reflections in the Politics and Practice of Cultural Studies," *Atlantis Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 32, no. 2 (2010): 109. See also Chris Burgess, "The Asian Studies 'Crisis': Putting Cultural Studies into Asian Studies and Asia into Cultural Studies," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 129; Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, "On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies: 'British' Cultural Studies in an 'International' Frame," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 361; Richard Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?," in *What Is Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (London: Edward Arnold, 1996).

[38] Mimi White and James Schwoch, eds., *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 6. For a related discussion of the cultural studies project as primarily about the identification and analysis of different 'formations,' 'assemblages,' or 'problem spaces,' see Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 223.

[39] White and Schwoch, *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*, 7.

attitude and approach in this thesis. I selected methodological and theoretical perspectives based on the particular contexts and conjunctions I found myself working within, and I have sought to examine not just what a particular theory can tell us about my research findings, but how my research findings can illuminate, extend, or challenge certain aspects of – and hidden assumptions within – the theory itself.

For this particular project, I have utilised mixed methods, including media discourse analysis, audience ethnography, and close readings of popular texts, in order to access and interrogate several different types and layers of storytelling. I will elaborate on these methods in more detail in coming sections. The theoretical approaches I have drawn on throughout this thesis are similarly all aimed at understanding particular conjunctures. For instance, as I explained earlier, my overarching theoretical concerns involve metatheories of 'modernity' and 'development,' and their resilience as keywords in stories of progress. Among the huge corpus of scholarly work on 'modernity' and 'development,' I focus primarily on critical postcolonial and post-development theories, which attempt to disrupt and reframe dominant scholarly narratives and understandings of progress.[40] Other analytical frameworks I engage with throughout this thesis have all been chosen specifically for their relevance to my particular case studies. This context-driven selection of specific theoretical perspectives allows me to assess the benefits and limitations of applying such frameworks to my cases. For instance, in examining the power attributed to popular narratives in Indonesian media discourses and public debates, I draw on media theory around 'mass culture' as discussed in the work of Dominic Strinati, and I also engage critically with related scholarly studies of self-help genres, censorship processes, populist morality, and Islamic modernities.[41]

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[40] Key postcolonial theorists whose writings inform my thesis include Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*; *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Joel Kahn, *Modernity and Exclusion* (London: Sage, 2001); Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*; Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*; Dirlik, "Revisioning Modernity: Modernity in Eurasian Perspectives." For critical development studies theory, I have focused on the work of Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*; Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*; Germond-Duret, "Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Binary Thinking, Indigenous Peoples and Normalisation."

[41] Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*; Bridget Roussell Cowlishaw, "Subjects Are from Mars, Objects Are from Venus: Construction of the Self in Self-Help," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no. 1 (2001); Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul:*

When analysing the Indonesian horror genre as a type of cinema that audiences love to hate, I employ aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of taste, Cornel Sandvoss and Johnathan Gray's work on fandom and anti-fandom, as well as selected film theory around national and international cinema.[42] My close textual analysis of selected popular literature is informed by Raymond Williams' categories of 'dominant,' 'residual' and 'emergent' representations, and also by intersectionality theory as espoused in the work of feminist scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, who argue that we cannot begin to understand the multidimensional aspects of systemic injustice without taking into account the ways that different social identities (i.e. race, gender) can combine to become more than the sum of their parts and result in powerful processes of subordination.[43] Each of my theoretical engagements throughout these case studies is aimed at helping to trace narratives of progress through selected popular film and literature and the stories that surround them. In each case, I engage critically and reflexively with these theories and approaches, revealing where and how they can be useful and enlightening, while also reflecting on their limits and gaps in their explanatory power across different contexts.

Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008); Heidi Marie Rimke, "Governing Citizens through Self-Help Literature," *Cultural studies* 14, no. 1 (2000); Jennifer Lindsay, "Media and Morality: Pornography Post Suharto," in *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*, ed. Krishna Sen and David T Hill (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Ronald Lukens-Bull, "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Modernity and Tradition in Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2001); Johan Meuleman, ed. *Islam in an Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes Towards Modernity and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."

[42] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984); Cornel Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Jonathan Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003); Robert Phillip Kolker, *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2009 [1983]).

[43] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*; Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991); Patricia Hill Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998).

Towards a critical cultural studies

Questions around the limits and translatability of cultural studies lie at the heart of some of the most important contemporary debates in the field. In this thesis, I join vital conversations around Asian cultural studies, the site of some of the most innovative and exciting scholarly work of recent years. Despite cultural studies' aim to pluralise and contextualise knowledge, there remains an ongoing tension between its North Atlantic origins and its application and relevance in other areas of the globe. Robert Stam, Ella Shohat, Cameron McCarthy, Michael Giardina, Jin-Kyung Park, and others, have noted a 'pattern of uneven development within the field of cultural studies itself,' and criticised its deeply ingrained Eurocentrism.[44] Jon Stratton and Ien Ang argue that most 'global' cultural studies just sees 'Western' cultural studies crossing national boundaries 'in unreflexive national terms.'[45] In response, a range of exciting initiatives have emerged throughout Asia, in an attempt to pioneer a new kind of cultural studies and to transform and disrupt existing geographies of knowledge.[46] A key figure in the establishment of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies (IACS) community was Kuan-Hsing Chen, who characterises Asian cultural studies as a 'project of decolonization' and has famously suggested using 'Asia as method.'[47] Another member of this scholarly community, Leo Ching, has argued that for 'truly liberated subjectivity to emerge, the critique of colonial and new forms of oppressive and hegemonic mechanisms (neocolonial and postcolonial) must be an ongoing process of unlearning and reconstructing', recognising that the production of knowledge cannot be understood as universal, 'without location and

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[44] Cameron McCarthy et al., "Introduction: Cultural Inter/Connections," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 5, no. 2 (2005): 142; Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "De-Eurocentricizing Cultural Studies: Some Proposals," in *Internationalizing Cultural Studies: An Anthology*, ed. A Abbas and Erni J Nguyet (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 481. See also Shome, who argues 'de-eurocentrism is not always equal to decolonization', since while 'cosmopolitan urban spaces may well thrive in Asia too, there is also a continuing disempowerment in various rural corners of the world.' Raka Shome, "Post-Colonial Reflections on the "Internationalization" of Cultural Studies," *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5-6 (2009): 696.

[45] Stratton and Ang, "On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies: 'British' Cultural Studies in an 'International' Frame," 362.

[46] For instance, the journals *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, and the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (later *Critical Asian Studies*).

[47] Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Preface: The Trajectories Project," in *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

without history.'[48] In Asian cultural studies perspectives, 'Asia' is 'not a geographical designation but a historical and social construction,' and scholarly focus is on *inter-Asia* dynamic processes, rather than a search for some essentialised 'Asian' cultural studies.[49] As a project, Asian cultural studies aims to pluralize knowledge, making it accessible, working in the spaces between nations, between disciplines, and between different types of institutions. Melani Budianta points out that in her experience cultural studies is not an abstract scholarly project, but is vitally linked to grassroots movements.[50] Ultimately, with its aims to 'transform geographies of knowledge,' the inter-Asia cultural studies approach resonates strongly with my own concern with the ongoing pervasiveness of certain versions of 'modernity' and 'development' that structure powerful narratives of progress, both in Indonesia and globally.

With my background in Indonesian area studies, I am particularly drawn to the suggestion that ideas from cultural studies can somehow help rehabilitate aspects of the much-critiqued field of area studies. For according to Naoki Sakai, 'in one context after another in the last few decades, Area Studies seems to have lost its aura as an academic specialty, its attractiveness as an intellectual pursuit, and its justification as a policy-oriented strategy,' and now exists 'without intellectual legitimacy.'[51] This is due to a number of factors, perhaps most obviously its rootedness in colonial discourses about the mapping of 'areas' to classify and order the world. The historical conditions that produced area studies are telling. The discipline emerged during the global political climate of the Cold War, as an attempt to 'understand the enemy,' and moreover, area studies' lineage also harks back to Oriental and African Studies conducted by colonial administrators before the Second World War.[52] Hence, area studies has often been labelled a colonial structure, a discipline that is 'afraid of Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Studies precisely

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[48] Leo Ching, "*Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* and the Decolonial Turn," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 184.
[49] Muto Ichiyo, "Asia, Inter-Asia, and Movement: Decolonization into the Future," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 181.
[50] Melani Budianta, "Shifting the Geographies of Knowledge: The Unfinished Project of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 174-75.
[51] Naoki Sakai, "From Area Studies toward Transnational Studies," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 266.
[52] Burgess, "The Asian Studies 'Crisis': Putting Cultural Studies into Asian Studies and Asia into Cultural Studies," 125.

because they may well be forced to reflect upon the disciplinary conditions of their knowledge production.'[53] Carlo Bonura and Laurie Sears argue that rethinking the practice of area studies is 'not a call for "better," more "precise," or more steadfastly "scientific" knowledge that would ground the field', but rather 'it is a call to come to terms with the politics, tensions, and gaps involved in the production of knowledge about a particular region of the globe.'[54] They do not aim to foreclose the possibilities of area studies scholarship, but instead aim to 'qualify the knowledge of area studies' and point to the ways in which 'all claims to disciplinary knowledge must recognize the limits on their ways of knowing.' In line with this, my project seeks to reveal such limits, and looks towards potential intersections between area studies and cultural studies as a way of gaining new insights beyond these barriers.

The intersection between area studies and cultural studies is an important site in the rethinking of both approaches. Chris Burgess notes that 'traditional area studies, as a colonial structure rooted in the (Cold) War, has become anachronistic' and suggests that one strategy through which conventional area studies may be reconfigured and revitalised is by 'more fully and warmly embracing those movements or networks such as cultural studies that can be seen as responses to global changes.'[55] 'New' intellectual movements such as postmodernism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies have, as noted by Stuart Hall, 'emerged out of the crisis of the humanities' at the tertiary level, as a response to changing global realities, and can therefore help other disciplines to work through and engage with such realities.[56] By embracing the fluid, plural, interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies, it may be possible to achieve what Arjun Appadurai calls a 'new architecture for area studies' which makes a decisive shift away from 'trait' geographies, in which areas are conceived as relatively immobile aggregates of traits like language or culture, to 'process

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[53] Harry Harootunian and Naoki Sakai, "Japan Studies and Cultural Studies," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 7, no. 2 (1999): 595; Sakai, "From Area Studies toward Transnational Studies," 273.
[54] Bonura and Sears, "Introduction: Knowledges That Travel in Southeast Asian Area Studies," 4.
[55] Burgess, "The Asian Studies 'Crisis': Putting Cultural Studies into Asian Studies and Asia into Cultural Studies," 121.
[56] Stuart Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities," *The Humanities as Social Technology* 53 (1990); "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity and Its Futures*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press/The Open University, 1992), 301.

geographies,' which see areas as spaces of action, inaction, and motion.[57] Several other scholars have embraced the idea that cultural studies can recuperate area studies, and also vice versa, with Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet pointing out that cultural studies and area studies both need each other, Julian Millie and Emma Baulch describing the rich opportunities that exist at the intersection of these two disciplines, and Ariel Heryanto describing their connection as 'intimate.'[58] Arguably, it is in arenas outside the academies of U.K. or U.S. cultural studies that a robust spirit of cultural studies critical inquiry is really alive, meeting the challenges outlined by Lawrence Grossberg in his reflections on the political responsibilities of cultural studies:

> How do we create questions, vocabularies and concepts that sufficiently capture the complexity of forces, technologies, and struggles operating in the midst of numerous struggles over, and transitions among, different visions and formations of possible futures? How do we imagine questions and languages that sufficiently capture multi-polar, mutli-temporal, multi-scalar webs of connectivity, relationality, and difference which are driving the creation of contemporary geo-economic, political and cultural formations and spaces, and new subjectivities and collectivities within and across them?[59]

These are significant ongoing challenges and questions as cultural studies moves into the future. My study contributes to such important scholarly conversations, by working at the intersection of Indonesian area studies and critical cultural studies to find new ways of analysing 'modernity' and 'development' as keywords in popular cultural contexts. I seek to reflexively examine how and why certain progress narratives also gain dominance within the scholarly fields of cultural studies, and indeed inter-Asian cultural studies itself. My critical cultural studies approach sheds light on areas that tend to be neglected in political or economic studies of 'development.' If we can recognise the pervasiveness of certain dominant stories of

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[57] Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2000).

[58] Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet, "The Spectre of Europe: Knowledge, Cultural Studies and the 'Rise of Asia'," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014): 8; Emma Baulch and Julian Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013); Ariel Heryanto, "The Intimacies of Cultural and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013). See also Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture," 18-19.

[59] Grossberg, "On the Political Responsibilities of Cultural Studies," 245.

progress across all levels of popular cultural production, consumption, and debate, then we can better seek ways to challenge their deep embeddedness and seek alternative visions and understandings.

Research methods and materials: A multi-modal approach

When I began research for this thesis, I had been studying Indonesian language and literature for more than a decade, and had already spent significant periods of time in Java, Bali, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. During a previous project on authorial engagement with 'traditional' *wayang* shadow-puppetry narrative techniques in 'modern' Indonesian literature, I became fascinated by the different ways that the 'modern' and the 'traditional' were imagined and utilised by key literary figures in Indonesia, and in subsequent local and international interpretations of their work. In contrast to that previous research, which dealt with texts that were read and debated among fairly small and elite literary circles of Indonesia, for this project I actively engaged with the realm of the popular. I sought out texts that reached a larger segment of the population, and investigated how these audiences engaged with popular texts and folded them into their everyday lives, as well as how the mass media incorporated references to popular texts as part of wider public debates and discussions. Meaghan Morris has claimed that her cultural studies projects are 'less interested in music or TV than in how these cut across and organize the various times/spaces in which the labour as well as the pleasure of everyday living in carried out.'[60] In a similar way, this project is not solely about particular films or novels, but rather the web of social relationships they become entangled in, and the stories of progress that are told in and around these popular texts.

Informed by a critical engagement with the interdisciplinary and contextual cultural studies research methods outlined in the preceding section, I have combined in this thesis four major analytical and methodological angles: text, context, audience, and theory. My aim in combining these approaches is to capture what Edwin Jurriens calls (with reference to Neil Postman's 1970 work) a 'media ecology.'[61] A media

[60] Meaghan Morris, "On the Beach," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 467.
[61] Jurriëns, "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited."

ecology approach treats the mediascape as a complex environment, which both shapes and is shaped by its inhabitants, including media producers, media consumers, and media critics. Jurriens argues that the conceptualisation of media as an environment can help us to look beyond current 'audience interpretation' models of cultural studies, towards more complex and comprehensive systemic analyses. With this in mind, I have paid equally close attention to the content of popular films and novels, the way they are discussed amongst audiences, the way they are debated in the Indonesian media, and the way they are analysed in scholarly work. By conducting research across these four areas, I have sought to map out an 'ecology' of the Indonesian mediascape. This multi-modal focus on text, context, audience, and theory has helped me to gain a nuanced understanding of situations, processes, and structures underpinning contemporary Indonesian popular culture production, distribution and consumption, and the varied ways that certain stories of progress are created and contested in each area. While insights from each of these four angles of interrogation overlap and appear throughout the chapters, each chapter is primarily focused on one of these angles of interrogation, which I will introduce in more detail below.

Firstly, the texts themselves. Popular novels and films are an incredibly productive site of cultural analysis, as they present a vast repertoire of images and representations of the society in which they are produced. In his study of popular piety in post-authoritarian Indonesian film, Ariel Heryanto notes that although popular cultural representations are rarely meant to be 'a true representation of any social reality,' they cannot be 'entirely disassociated' from the social dynamics in which they are created, circulated and consumed, so they 'raise questions about which aspects of a given society are foregrounded, which are exaggerated, distorted, overlooked, or excluded' as well as how and why such representational choices are made.[62] Furthermore, subsequent debates in the media, blogs and TV interviews over the authenticity and validity of particular narratives can shed light on the entertainment media's role as a 'cultural space' in which different notions of Indonesian identity are contested and negotiated.[63] Although production and

[62] Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture," 64.
[63] For an analysis of Indonesian religious soap operas as a kind of 'cultural space,' see Subijanto, "The Visibility of a Pious Public."

consumption are often characterised in cultural studies as the most important 'determining moments' of text (as described in Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory), the text itself nevertheless continues to hold useful insights.[64] In this thesis I use close textual readings to identify details that are sometimes glossed over in media and audience accounts, but which are nonetheless important as they contribute to how the texts are received, and also articulate some of the shifting and intersecting identity politics of post-reform Indonesia. A close reading of texts is valuable to enrich our understanding of the complex dialectic between dominant state ideologies and authorial agency in shaping and influencing fictional representations.

My choice of these two narrative types (novels and films) was influenced by a number of considerations. Firstly, these genres both offer opportunities to analyse a relatively formal and discrete narrative, with clearly constructed characters, story arcs, and moral messages. Consumption of these genres is usually a conscious choice and a time commitment for audiences and readers, compared with other entertainment media, like music, which is more often consumed in the background of daily life. Also, the most popular Indonesian films of the new century have all been based on best-selling novels. This provides a useful opportunity to analyse the transformation of novel into film, which can increase our understanding of how the novels are received, perceived, and engaged with. The audience bases for each media are quite different in scale – many more people in Indonesia watch movies than read books – and it is therefore revealing to investigate how a story initially aimed at a relatively small audience is then adapted to appeal to the wider film-watching public. Moreover, in Indonesia, typical 'Western' distinctions between books and films as quite different consumer experiences (private, domestic consumption of books versus public attendance at the cinema) often does not hold true. From my own experience, which is supported by Ben Murtagh's audience-research work, the most popular location to watch films in Indonesia is at home on television or on the computer screen with friends.[65] Therefore, in the Indonesian context the two types of texts under consideration can be brought into more direct comparison, in terms of consumption style, than is usually possible. I conceive of

[64] Stuart Hall, "Coding and Encoding in the Television Discourse," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Unwin Hyman, 1980).
[65] Murtagh, "Gay, Lesbi and Waria Audiences in Indonesia," 395.

these as 'popular narratives' in a general sense, rather than specifically a novel or film, which also relates to my attempts to contextualise these stories beyond the pages of a book or the screen of a cinema. On the other hand, the material differences in these media types (written versus visual/aural) provides a useful point of comparison, and raises questions regarding censorship impulses and the various authoritative connotations of different kinds of media.

While I had already been following Indonesian literature and cinema for many years, I began to analyse popular films and novels more systematically when I began research for this project in 2011. I translated sections of novels and cinema scenes, and traced dominant themes and trends. The texts that make their way into this thesis are only a small portion of those I analysed during the course of this research, and I selected them based on several factors. The texts appearing in the pages of this thesis are among the real standout 'blockbusters' of the reform and post-reform era, in terms of sales figures. They are the texts that were popular and regularly discussed during the time of my ethnographic research. Another key consideration in my choice of texts is the amount of attention, discussion and debate they garnered in the public sphere following their release. The sheer popularity of some texts demonstrates they struck a chord with Indonesian audiences, prompting questions around what aspects (religious, ideological, political) contributed to this. Similar questions arise in the case of those stories that provoked controversy or public protest.[66] These texts are sites of contestation and negotiation, offering an insight into competing representational projects around the key sites of religion, region, gender and history I introduced earlier, and into how keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' are used by authors and filmmakers and subsequently reproduced in literary and film criticism.

Although there is significant overlap between their narrative themes, I have loosely categorised the texts under four trends, which closely correspond to the four sites of contestation I outlined earlier: religion, region, gender, and history. Firstly, as representative of popular 'Islamic themed' stories, I discuss romantic drama *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*The Verses of Love*, a 2004 novel by Habiburahman El Shirazy adapted

[66] For some key examples of controversy and public protest around Indonesian film, see my discussion of the works of director Hanung Bramantyo in Chapter 3.

for cinema in 2008 by Hanung Bramantyo), boarding school coming-of-age tale *Negeri 5 Menara* (*Nation of 5 Towers*, a 2009 novel by Ahmad Fuadi adapted for cinema in 2011 by Affandi Abdul Rachman), and critical Islamic feminist story of struggle *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (*Woman with a Turban*, a 2001 novel by Abidah El Khaliequy, adapted for cinema in 2009 by Hanung Bramantyo).[67] Secondly, as examples of 'inspirational' tales of success set in different regions of Indonesia, I have selected feel-good rural rags-to-riches tale *Laskar Pelangi* (*The Rainbow Troops*, a 2005 novel by Andrea Hirata adapted for cinema in 2008 by Riri Riza), nationalist mountain-climbing adventure story *5cm* (a 2005 novel by Donny Dhirgantoro adapted for cinema in 2013 by Rizal Mantovani), as well as the aforementioned *Negeri 5 Menara*.[68] Thirdly, for stories of gendered experiences and sexualities, I return to *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, and also examine Laksmi Pamuntjak's historical novel *Amba* (2012), and Ayu Utami's highly philosophical *Seri Bilangan Fu* (*Fu Numeral Series*, 2009-2014). Finally, to examine stories that reimagine histories of violence, I analyse *Amba*, *Seri Bilangan Fu*, and Leila Chudori's family saga of exile and homecoming *Pulang* (*Homecoming*, 2012).[69] I refer to many of these texts throughout all chapters, but Chapter 5 in particular is devoted to close readings of these texts, examining their various representations of social identities and progress narratives.

Keywords such as 'modernity' and 'development' feature heavily in the various progress stories offered within these four narrative trends. Religious dramas, popularly known as '*sastra dakwah*' or '*film Islami*', portray 'modern,' urban Indonesian Muslim characters' everyday struggles with life, love and faith. The idealised figures that appear in this genre appeal to dominant collective imaginings that are closely tied with broader social and political processes, involving the

[67] Habiburrahman El Shirazy, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Jakarta: Penerbit Republika, 2004); Bramantyo, "Ayat-Ayat Cinta."; Ahmad Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2009); Rachman, "Negeri 5 Menara."; Abidah El Khalieqy, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat, 2001); Bramantyo, "Perempuan Berkalung Sorban."

[68] Andrea Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi* (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 2005); Riza, "Laskar Pelangi."; Donny Dhirgantoro, *5cm* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2005); Rizal Mantovani, "5cm," (Indonesia: Soraya Intercine Films, 2012).

[69] Laksmi Pamuntjak, *Amba* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012); Ayu Utami, *Bilangan Fu* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2008); *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2010); Leila S Chudori, *Pulang* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2012).

emergence of Islam as a symbolic commodity linked to upward mobility and 'development.' Inspirational stories about poor children from remote areas of Indonesia, who despite their limited means succeed in pursuing a 'modern' global education, tie into wider political processes of decentralisation, increased regional autonomy, and growing urban awareness of outer regions of Indonesia, as well as feeding into the growing popularity of the self-help and motivational personal development industry. Stories which examine new spaces for female sexuality, and question dominant narratives of national history, are also related to broader socio-political changes and competing stories of progress in post-reform Indonesia. Ultimately, the shifting popularity the trends I have outline above, the public debates they trigger, and the interactions, contestations and compromises between them, produce some intriguing answers to my central research questions.

Another of my four angles of analysis is the stories told by audiences. Throughout this thesis I share several examples of films and novels entering everyday audience discussions and actions. These kinds of references infiltrate, permeate and saturate everyday life in a way that underlines the central position of popular narratives in contemporary Indonesia, particularly among young urban Indonesians. My approach here is animated by a critical engagement with the traditions of cultural studies research, which demands 'radical contextualism' when dealing with texts and audience research.[70] Given the embeddedness of popular media in all aspects of daily life, it is vitally important to examine, in Umberto Eco's terms, the 'realised' as well as the 'virtual' text; that is, the ways in which the text is consumed and interpreted.[71] For me, during my fieldwork, texts were often realised collectively with my Indonesian friends via USB downloads in cramped boarding houses; during special visits to the cinema in sleek multi-storied air-conditioned malls; during trips

[70] See Janice Radway, "Reception Study: Ethnography and the Problems of Dispersed Audiences and Nomadic Subjects," *Cultural studies* 2, no. 3 (1988); Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996); Paul Willis, *Moving Culture: An Enquiry into the Cultural Activities of Young People* (London: Gulbenkian (Calouste) Foundation, 1990). Abercrombie and Longhurst have also argued that 'the qualities and experiences of being a member of an audience have begun to leak out from specific performance events which previously contained them, into the wider realms of everyday life.' For more detail, see Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian J Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998).
[71] Umberto Eco, cited in Andrea Press and Sonia Livingstone, "Taking Audience Research into the Age of New Media: Old Problems and New Challenges," in *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*, ed. Mimi White and James Schwoch (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

to the beach or other local holiday destinations, where my travel companions would re-enact cinema scenes; on longer term excursions accompanying friends as they carried out volunteer work in remote areas; and in a range of other highly varied life contexts.[72] A deep understanding of the context of media consumption, achieved through extended ethnographic audience research, has allowed me to explore the ways in which popular narratives become meaningful in the lives of young urban Indonesians.

I conducted my multi-sited study of popular cultural consumption practices between February 2013 and March 2014, across six Indonesian cities (Padang, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Banjarmasin, Makassar, and Manado). I chose urban centres with significant student populations and I lived in student boarding houses, holding focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with more than one hundred Indonesian university students. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian language, and recorded with participants' consent. I combined a mix of formal (university) and informal (boarding houses, cafes) settings, in order to gain a deeper insight into audience attitudes and behaviours. For instance, there were distinct discrepancies between formal, official, and 'proper' responses to (and interpretations of) progress stories that would surface in university settings, and the responses I would hear in more casual and relaxed settings. Demographically, participants were aged between 18 to 26 years; the sample was gender balanced and drawn from across a range of faculties at leading universities in each city.[73] This demographic of young urban educated people is by far the largest audience for films and novels, and most of our conversations centred on consumption practices, popular tastes and trends, the relevance of various themes, and the social roles of popular texts in Indonesia. I also engaged in everyday participant observation; while living in student boarding houses, I regularly shared film viewing experiences, and participated in daily conversations touching on a whole range of topics of interest to young urban Indonesians. During this research I came across quite varied responses within my target demographic, depending on region, religion, gender and so on. But there were also some

[72] Importantly, when I refer to watching 'film' here, I mean not just cinemas, which are expensive and not the primary site for most people's film consumption, but also the more frequently-accessed illegal VCDs and downloaded copies.
[73] On the significance of the youth demographic in Indonesia, see Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

surprisingly consistent similarities. The everyday lives and conversations of urban youth in all of these very different locations were strikingly similar.[74] One key recurring theme in my interviews, for instance, was what kind of entertainment genres are valued, and which are dismissed; I will examine this in detail in Chapter 4, where I show how audience self-representation is tied up with questions of class, distinction and powerful state ideologies around national cinema. In addition to my urban research, I seized opportunities to venture further afield (including to Bantul in Central Java, Cianjur in West Java, Maninjau and Bukit Tinggi in West Sumatra, Kuala Kapuas in Central Kalimantan, and Soppeng in South Sulawesi), joining friends as they travelled away from urban centres for weddings, holidays, family visits, and volunteer work. This allowed for stronger comparative insights and deepened my understanding of rural-urban relationships and mobility within Indonesia.

The next area of analysis I turn to is context. Popular cultural texts are produced and consumed in specific social and political settings, and it can be difficult to analyse such texts effectively without a detailed account of these contexts; therefore, as well as looking at the content of popular texts, this thesis is also concerned with broader debates in the Indonesian media, the background of key authors and directors, as well as public controversies surrounding the release of certain texts. In examining the contexts of popular cultural consumption and public debate, I draw on Arjun Appadurai's notion of 'mediascapes.'[75] The 'mediascape' is part of Appadurai's 'elementary framework' for exploring global flows and disjunctures, and is closely related to four other global 'landscapes', namely 'ethnoscapes', 'technoscapes', 'financescapes', 'ideoscapes', all of which are the building blocks of what (extending Anderson) Appadurai calls 'imagined worlds.'[76] For Appadurai, mediscapes 'provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of

[74] In the same way, Iwabuchi has pointed out in his work on 'Asian urban centres' that the lifestyles and concerns of urban youth are highly similar across national borders. See Koichi Iwabuchi, ed. *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese Tv Dramas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).
[75] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[76] Ibid., 33-38. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

news and politics are profoundly mixed.'[77] These mediascapes also raise 'subtle questions of what sets of communicative genres are valued in what way (newspapers versus cinema, for example) and what sorts of pragmatic genre conventions govern the collective readings of different kinds of text.'[78] Here, social truths or realities are not stable, but are constantly defined and re-defined in competing discourses. Norman Fairclough argues that 'changes in society and culture manifest themselves in all their tentativeness, incompleteness and contradictory nature in the heterogeneous and discursive shifting practices of the media.'[79] Debra Spitulnik also sees mass media as a highly useful site of analysis 'because of their extensive accessibility and scope,' which allows them to 'serve as both reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases, and discourse styles.'[80] Moreover, 'people's active engagements with mass media, along with the social circulation of media discourse and its intertextual connections, are key components in the construction and integration of communities.'[81] My approach to studying context is informed by these perspectives, which characterise media analysis as a dynamic and complex area, involving not just production and passive consumption, but reception, engagement, and the repeating, recycling, and recontextualising of media discourse.

During background research in the lead up to my fieldwork, and throughout my project, I regularly collected and analysed media materials from Indonesian media outlets. I traced public debates and controversies, and analysed the way that popular texts were discussed in the Indonesian media. I focused in particular on what key public figures, religious leaders, politicians, and intellectuals had to say about particular trends and debates. My sources for this research were mainly online news sites, including Tempo, Kompas, Detik, Jakarta Post, Jakarta Globe, and others (some in English and some in Indonesian language). Tracing the way that popular texts were reported on and debated in these Indonesian media sources has allowed me to radically contextualise my textual analysis and audience ethnography. With this in mind, in Chapter 3 I examine public debates in the Indonesian mediascape,

[77] Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," 35.
[78] Ibid., 36.
[79] Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 52.
[80] Debra Spitulnik, "The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 6, no. 2 (1997): 161.
[81] Ibid.

various attempts to prescribe and proscribe different popular films or novels through censorship and self-help discourses, and the shifting, contradictory ways that keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' feature in such debates. I propose that by examining more closely the life of popular narratives beyond the pages of a book or the cinema screen, we can better understand broader issues that Indonesian commentators are concerned with, as well as dominant discourses that position the consumption of popular narratives as a powerful transformative process. It is in the arena of media reportage and public debate that notions of 'tradition,' 'modernity,' 'progress,' and 'development,' most frequently emerge, which is why this is such a key area of analysis in this thesis.

Finally, I turn to theory. Or, more precisely, the stories we share as scholars. For academic work is a kind of story too, and I approach these stories as another object of critique and analysis throughout this thesis. As I indicated in preceding sections, this project is partly about critically assessing existing academic meta-language and ways of knowing and describing the world. Stuart Hall encourages us to 'theorise with an open horizon,' for 'Cultural Studies… does not believe in the finality of a finished theoretical paradigm.'[82] Lawrence Grossberg similarly notes that 'in cultural studies, theory and context are mutually constituted, mutually determining. In that sense, cultural studies "desacralizes" theory in order to take it up as a contingent strategic resource.'[83] Here, I take theory itself as an object of study, examining how stories of progress operate in development studies, postcolonial criticism, contemporary social research on Indonesia, and also in cultural studies itself. I primarily focus on the varied ways in which scholars use keywords like 'modernity' in constructing or deconstructing progress narratives, and which versions of these narratives come to gain dominance in scholarly conversations.

[82] Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in *Stuart Hall Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 147.
[83] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 27.

Structure of the thesis

In the opening of this chapter, I 'panned out' from the scene being enacted on screen, to the audience conversations around the text, then to the media and public debate, and finally to the scholarly literature surrounding such texts and debates. Throughout the rest of this thesis I will zoom back in on each of these moments in more detail. My thesis comprises four main chapters, devoted to theory, context, audience, and text respectively, plus an introduction (Chapter 1) and conclusion (Chapter 6). While I draw on all four of the approaches across all chapters, each chapter is animated primarily by one particular angle of interrogation.

In Chapter 2, I am mainly concerned with theory, the stories told in academic scholarship. I critically examine scholarly approaches to notions of 'modernity' and 'development' both in Indonesia and globally, paying close attention to which particular narratives of progress gain dominance, as well as why, when and how these dominant stories are challenged. Focusing first on the 'high-level' meta-theory, I trace histories of the term 'modernity' in Western social sciences, in extensive postcolonial critiques, and in specific Indonesian debates throughout the twentieth century. I also sketch the links between 'modernity' and 'development' and important criticisms of 'developmentalism.' This is necessarily a partial and limited review of a vast range of literature: I focus on the work of several key theorists, as well as influential theoretical turning points around multiple, alternative, exclusionary modernities, (re)invented traditions, dualisms, colonial legacies, and the disempowering impacts of development discourse. I argue that despite so many important and convincing critiques of 'modernity' as an analytical framework, the term remains resilient, and I propose that that is partly because 'modernity' functions as a central keyword, a container concept, a preferred metaphor for interpreting complex social changes. Its power also lies in its intimate connections with compelling narratives of progress and civilisation that remain so influential around the globe. With this broader scholarly context in mind, the remainder of the chapter turns to specific research on contemporary Indonesia by both Indonesian and foreign observers, demonstrating how dominant narratives of progress, as well as keywords like 'modernity,' function in scholarly interpretations of four key sites of identity politics: religion, region, gender, and history. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate

that certain stories of progress are dominant and pervasive, and that these stories can flatten out complex realities and mask structural inequalities.

Chapter 3 delves into the context of popular cultural consumption in Indonesia and the intimate links between popular texts, self-development narratives, and public moralities. I examine censorship and self-help as two sides of the same coin, and highlight some of the difficulties that 'Western' social science faces in effectively theorising notions of morality and religion. Throughout this chapter, I closely analyse public debate and media representations to examine the transformative power attributed to popular novels and films, by both Indonesian audiences and the Indonesian media. This perceived power leads to efforts to proscribe and prescribe them, and I engage here with several theories around self-development genres and new censorships. I argue that descriptors like 'modern' and 'traditional,' which frequently surface in public debates around censorship, often function as shorthand for more complex issues, such as postcolonial nationalism, regional inequalities, and pan-religious public morality. The chapter concludes by critically engaging with the trope of 'Islamic modernity' that emerges in much scholarly discourse around these matters, arguing that excessive focus on the apparently incongruous figure of the 'modern Muslim' reveals more about underlying assumptions around 'Islam' and 'modernity,' particularly in the post-9/11 context, than it does about how this trope functions in the Indonesian mediascape, and the purposes and effects of this story in the local context.

In Chapter 4, I reveal how audiences characterise their own consumption tastes and position themselves on a linear scale of progress from the imagined 'uneducated masses' through to the 'enlightened modern viewer.' In doing so, I highlight some of the challenges of practicing cultural studies in transnational perspectives. To analyse audience members' critical engagement with the Indonesian horror genre, I apply theories of 'anti-fandom' that have come out of U.S. cultural studies. There are many resonances between Indonesian anti-horror sentiment and U.S. anti-fandom, but also some important divergences. I use these gaps and disjunctures as a departure point for reflecting on some of the challenges and opportunities of working at the intersection of Asian studies and cultural studies in the contemporary scholarly context. I demonstrate the importance of taking into account local histories and

contexts, and reveal how contemporary processes of audiences crafting social capital through film choices are steeped in long-powerful colonial, nationalist and authoritarian discourses around national cinema in Indonesia. Focus on change, liberalisation and diversification has been the norm in studies of the Indonesian mediascape since 1998. Less studied are the continuities in public discourse regarding the role of the media in shaping society. The ongoing resilience of such discourses arguably reflects the continued power of deeply entrenched New Order era ideologies. This in turn reflects how many political power structures and social realities in contemporary Indonesia remain unchanged and uncontested, and echoes the ways in which broader hegemonic narratives of progress continue to be so influential around the globe.

Chapter 5 closely analyses selected popular fiction. I focus on identity politics around region, gender, and history as portrayed by contemporary Indonesian authors, and argue that only by examining the complex intersections between these sites can we understand why some dominant stereotypes and master narratives are apparently easily challenged, while others are powerfully resilient. To do so, I draw on literary theory around dominance and co-optation, as well as intersectionality theory, to examine how overlapping structures of inequality can be mutually reinforcing. I select several novels as a case study of how themes of violence, female sexuality, and regional mythology interact in complex and sometimes unexpected ways within these narratives. This case study ultimately demonstrates the ways in which popular fiction can both reinforce and contest dominant ideas around progress, 'modernity,' and 'development.'

Chapter 6 reflects on the powerful narrative theme of progress that I have traced across several different levels of storytelling. I argue that its continued resilience is linked to legacies of colonialism, developmentalism, global structures of capitalism, and also the inherent appeal of keywords like 'modernity' as hold-all descriptions for complex processes of social change. Cultural studies as a field of research reproduces its own narratives of progress, and in this final chapter I reflect on the limits of scholarly storytelling. I conclude by reiterating some of the dangers of simplistic linear visions of human progress, highlighting potential challenges and

alternatives to these dominant narratives, and suggesting possibilities for future research projects at the intersection of Asia studies and critical cultural studies.

Today, scholars in general rightly view keywords like ‘modernity’ warily and critically. But I argue that it is important to continually revisit and reinvestigate such terms, as they remain very powerful in the popular imagination, and as scholars, we need to recognise the tendency to slip easily back into uncritically using these categories in our own work as well. The main reason for my concern here, and an issue that has been well-studied in postcolonial scholarship, is how ‘modernity’ is often not a simple description but a disguised prescription, a somewhat confused category of Western social thought, deeply entwined with colonial encounters and global inequalities, that has come to shape powerful global narratives of ‘development’ and identity-making. These global narratives idealise a certain version of linear progress to strive towards, a scale against which individuals and societies can be measured, judged and potentially targeted. Although terms like ‘modernity’ are ‘just words’ they can really impact worldviews, reinforce deep inequalities and injustices and simply get in the way of a more complex understanding of the world. My concern is therefore tied to cultural studies’ preoccupation with the discursive power of everyday language, and attempts to tell ‘better stories’ about what is going on in the world. Uncritically using a term like ‘modernity’ can foreclose possibilities and alternatives, because of its classifying and simplifying tendencies. The shifting instability and flexible iridescence of container concepts like ‘modernity’ can also hide (and therefore reinforce, by reducing possibilities to challenge) dominant power relations. These are big issues, big words, big problems, and I do not claim to be able to solve them by speaking from some neutral space outside the powerful narratives of progress and modernity with which I am engaging. But I do hope that in some small way, I can contribute to opening new ways of looking at the problem, and in doing so, avoid some of the traps of this pervasive story of progress – progress towards or against a shifting, iridescent, and often exclusionary ‘modernity.’

Chapter 2

Stories of Scholarship: 'Modernity' and 'Development' in Academic Discourses

The first genre of storytelling I turn my attention to is academic scholarship. I trace the ways in which narrative tropes of 'modernity' and 'development' appear in scholarly work. These keywords have been extensively theorised in social sciences and humanities scholarship, and despite important attempts to critique and deconstruct such terms, they remain central to many contemporary accounts of social change. Because it is neither practical, nor particularly useful, to provide an exhaustive review of decades of global research around 'modernity' and 'development' in a highly diverse range of fields, in this chapter I limit my focus to several key examples of ongoing scholarly debate around the terms, with particular focus on postcolonial critiques that seek to challenge the dominant narratives of 'Western' social science. While structured in a similar way to a classic literature review chapter, my aim here is not to simply summarise existing literature, but instead treat scholarly work as one of several genres of storytelling under analysis in this thesis.

As indicated in Chapter 1, my approach is influenced by Raymond Williams' theoretical ideas around 'keywords.' The familiarity of certain words can often mask deep complexities, histories, and internal contradictions; these convenient yet difficult-to-define words, including 'art,' 'culture' – and indeed 'modernity' and 'development' – are what Williams calls keywords, through which it is possible to trace social changes via the medium of language. Within these keywords, we find 'a history and complexity of meanings; conscious changes, or consciously different uses; innovation, obsolescence, specialization, extension, overlap, transfer,' and often 'changes which are masked by a nominal continuity so that words which seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings' come to 'express radically different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings and

implications.'[84] For Williams, some of the most important social changes and historical processes occur *within* the realm of language, which is why a study of keywords can be so revealing.[85] In this chapter I closely examine the connotations and contested meanings of 'modernity' and 'development' as keywords in academic scholarship.

I begin by outlining some classic conceptions of 'modernity' in social sciences metatheory. I then turn my attention to deep colonial legacies at work within this keyword, and the various ways in which postcolonial scholars have contested and redefined 'modernity' and sought to challenge dominant 'Western' narratives of progress. Critical reassessment of global 'development' discourses and the disempowering links between developmentalism and modernisation theory are an important part of such challenges. After examining broad critiques of 'development' on a global scale, I then address specificities of the Indonesian context. In Indonesia, dominant notions of 'development' and 'modernity' have been shaped by a range of historic factors, including legacies of Dutch colonial occupation, heated nationalist debates during the independence struggle, and the strongly developmentalist agenda of the New Order government. I examine how connotations of the Indonesian keyword *pembangunan* (development) overlap with its English language equivalent, and the ways in which *pembangunan* ideology has shaped notions of national progress and identity in Indonesia. Looking specifically at religion, region, gender, and history as four major sites of contestation in the post-reform Indonesian mediascape, I review selected scholarly research around these four sites, and the ways in which such research draws on tropes of 'modernity' and 'development' in interpreting contemporary Indonesian realities. I conclude by reflecting on the function of flexible and iridescent keywords like modernity and development in describing and understanding complex processes of social change, and also on the role of academic scholarship in producing and circulating certain stories of progress.

[84] Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 17.
[85] Ibid., 22. 22. See in particular Williams' accounts of the keywords 'Development' (102-04) and 'Modern' (208-09).

Metatheory and master narratives of social science

Social science metatheory has frequently been preoccupied by the idea of progress, and within this narrative, the keywords 'development' and 'modernity' are central. For centuries, in both general and academic discussions, the keyword 'modernity' has been a preferred trope for describing and interpreting both positive and negative social change. Emerging in the context of industrialisation and colonial encounters, 'modernity,' 'modern,' 'modernisation,' and their derivatives are used to describe, to categorise, to include and to exclude, to narrate stories of progress and stories of degradation. Scholars have understood 'modernity' as everything from a temporal period, to an outlook, an attitude, a philosophy, an artistic movement, a discursive cultural space and even an analytical framework. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I find it most useful to examine 'modernity' as a keyword in a story.

Within classical narratives of Western social sciences, the 'modernity' process is typically associated with change, technological development, and departure from imagined 'traditional' practices and outlooks. Depending on one's perspective, this can be a positive or negative process. The classic Western narrative generally identifies two distinct strands of 'modernity': socio-political modernisation and aesthetic modernism. Socio-political modernisation, as described by Weber, Marx, Hegel and others, encompasses processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, the emergence of mass media, increased mobility and education, as well as cognitive transformations such as rationalism, secularism and individualism.[86] The aesthetic strand of modernity, on the other hand, as championed by modernist artists, involves processes of innovation, self-expression and transgression in the creative sphere.[87] In both cases, there is a bright side and a dark side to the term: the positive aspects of socio-political 'modernity' have been thought to include increased economic

[86] See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H Gerth and C Wright Mills, trans. H H Gerth and C Wright Mills (New York: Routledge, 2009); Lawrence A Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics, and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton 1972); Richard Norman and Sean Sayers, *Hegel, Marx and Dialectic: A Debate* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

[87] See Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P E Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1972]); Matei Călinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

prosperity, political freedom, advanced technology, and so on, while the negative impacts include feelings of alienation and loss of community in a meaninglessness world. Aesthetic 'modernity,' which rose in opposition to socio-political modernisation, and flourished in realms such as art and literature, is often characterised positively for its rejection of conservative middle-class ethos and embrace of 'surface,' transience, speed, and novelty as an inspiration for creativity; meanwhile, its darker characteristics include narcissism, hedonism, self-absorption, and rejection of moral constraints.[88] These classic conceptions of 'modernity', encompassing both the social and the aesthetic, and within each, the light and the dark, remain highly influential. The concept of 'tradition,' which is deeply entwined with, and indeed imagined and created alongside, the idea of 'modernity,' has a similar history of opposing 'light and dark' visions, with notions of community, identity, and rural idyll commonly contrasted with close-mindedness, superstition and backwardness. As I will elaborate in later sections, the 'tradition' and 'modernity' dichotomy is a central trope in stories of progress, and the relationship between these binary partners is complex and mutually constituting.

Throughout the Enlightenment and European industrialisation, Western social theory frequently framed 'modernity' as a positive force of progress.[89] However, during the twentieth century, darker connotations of the term began to dominate scholarly accounts. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels famously described how 'all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.'[90] Writing in the shadows of war and dictatorship, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno lamented that despite its promises of rational enlightenment, 'modernity' had brought irrationality, destruction and a 'culture industry' that manipulated its consumers into political passivity.[91] Later in the twentieth century, scholars writing of 'late modernity,' 'liquid

[88] For an extended theoretical discussion on the light and dark sides of the two 'classic strands' of modernity, see Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, 8-9. Also, for a more concrete and localised example of how these categories are understood and used in the Malaysian context, see Christopher A Furlow, "Malaysian Modernities: Cultural Politics and the Construction of Muslim Technoscientific Identities," *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2009): 203.
[89] Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Colonialism & Modernity* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 54.
[90] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002), 223.
[91] Theodor W Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, vol. 15 (London and New York: Verso, 1997 [1944]).

modernity,' and 'postmodernity' frequently echoed these earlier sentiments. Marshall Berman takes Marx's quote above as the very title of his study and Zygmunt Bauman characterises the 'liquid modern' human as isolated in a sea of commercialisation, cut off from traditional support networks.[92] Others have been more optimistic about the 'reflexivity' that characterises modernity (Anthony Giddens) and the 'flows' it entails (Arjun Appadurai).[93] Some scholars have implied that 'modernity' has potential but needs rescuing from current trajectories. A case in point here is Bruno Latour, who 'aims at saving what is good and valuable in modernity and replacing the rest with a broader, fairer and finer sense of possibility.'[94] 'Modernity' itself becomes subject to improvement and progress in these kind of stories, which focus on whether 'modernity' is progressing in the right or wrong direction.

Invisible in many of the above scholarly stories of 'modernity,' however, are the narrative's intimate links with colonial experiences and histories, as well as capitalist expansion. There is also an underlying assumption that European 'modernity' is an objective reality rather than a historically contingent and often politically loaded keyword, which carries significant baggage. The concept of 'modernity' in fact arose during a series of colonial interactions in many different areas of the world, in the process of which 'the West' itself came to be recognised and named.[95] As such, the term is deeply entangled with the narratives of civilisation, progress and development that were formed around these encounters, all of which played a fundamental role in hierarchical ordering of difference, and laid the framework for contemporary forms of racism and neo-imperialism.[96] Within classic Western

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[92] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambidge: Polity Press, 2000).
[93] Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, ed. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy."
[94] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 145.
[95] Gillen and Ghosh, *Colonialism & Modernity*; Timothy Mitchell, ed. *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*; Christopher Lloyd GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).
[96] Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 230.

narratives of 'modernity,' there are clear hierarchical relationships, which as Ien Ang points out, 'posit Europe as the sole "motor" for progressive historical change in the world, as the unique bearer of modern civilization, and as the deliverer of modernity to the rest of the world.'[97] Naoki Sakai notes that in this unequal context 'only in the mirror of the West… could the Rest reflectively acquire its civilizational, cultural, ethnic, and national identities' and therefore 'modernity in Asia is unavoidably *colonial modernity*.'[98] Rey Chow and Dipesh Chakrabarty have made similar points, about Europe's status as 'the original' modernity, which all other nations must strive to emulate, but always in a somewhat imperfect way.[99] By paying more attention to the colonial origins of the 'modernity' concept, postcolonial critiques have shown how it is possible to move beyond assessments about whether processes of 'modernity' are positive or negative, whether as a force 'modernity' is productive or destructive, towards questions around its unequal effects and the erasure of alternative conceptions of the world. In other words, while Western social theory has praised or lamented the idea of 'modernity' for centuries, only since the advent of postcolonial theory has there been serious attempts to deconstruct and reimagine the term, and the dominant narratives of progress in which it remains entangled.

Scholarly engagement with the concept of 'modernity' has become increasingly nuanced throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, with many scholars taking a postcolonial perspective to trace the historical and cultural embeddedness of 'modernity,' stressing its often exclusionary tendencies and highlighting the potential for multiple, contingent and alternative modernities. Chakrabarty questions dominant narratives around 'modernity' by exploring the politics of exclusion involved in defining the modern, asking 'can the designation of something or some

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[97] Ien Ang, "Eurocentric Reluctance, Notes for a Cultural Studies of 'the New Europe'," in *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1998), 76.

[98] Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," 244, 443. Emphasis in original.

[99] Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*. Such imperfect translations and adaptations, meanwhile, give rise to anxieties by both the colonised and the colonisers about 'bastard modernity,' or incorrect adoption of 'modernity.' For examples of this in the context of Indonesia, see David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia," 183-84. For a broader theoretical discussion, see Nandy, "The Hour of the Untamed Cosmopolitan."

group as *non-* or *premodern* ever be anything but a gesture of the powerful?'[100] This question has been taken up by many other scholars. Joel Kahn offers a powerful critique of modernity as exclusionary and attempts to rehabilitate it by looking for 'ethnographic,' 'embedded,' 'popular,' and 'inclusive' understanding of the 'principles of modernity.' Joel Kahn's work on *Modernity and Exclusion* has illustrated that even the most 'universalist Western modernity and modernization' continues to exclude, deprive, and deny various groups of people globally. He argues that there can 'never be an abstract theory of modernity that is not "contaminated" by the cultural and historical contexts within which processes we label modernisation take place.' There is, however:

> [T]he possibility of both divergent modernisms and, hence, of multiple modernities... It is perhaps only through such a concept of a contingent, diverse and embedded modernity, one moreover within which we as analysts are just as implicated as are our 'objects' of analysis, that we […can] begin to think about making a contribution towards a decoupling of the intimate connection that exists between racism and modernity.[101]

Kahn is optimistic that once we move away from 'disembedded, avant guardist' notions of 'modernity as a set of unchanging philosophical and aesthetic principles,' it becomes clear that these principles are in fact highly contested, and therefore 'it is possible to envisage that what was once exclusive can through time become inclusive (as well as the other way around).'[102] Here, Kahn is seeking room within the dominant progress narrative – seeking to expand this story to include a broader, more diverse range of characters and plots.

Other scholars have advocated even more explicitly pluralising our understandings of modernity. Shmuel Eisenstadt, Dilip Gaonkar and others have proposed using terms like 'multiple' or 'alternative' modernities, in order to capture the variable ways in which 'modernity' supposedly unfolds across time and space. Eisenstadt's *Multiple Modernities* posits that the history of modernity is 'a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs' carried forward by a wide range of social actors, who may hold 'very different views on what makes societies modern', and resulting in highly unique expressions of modernity throughout the

[100] Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, xix-xx. Emphasis in original.
[101] Kahn, *Modernity and Exclusion*, 24.
[102] Ibid.

world.[103] In a similar vein, Gaonkar's *Alternative Modernities* calls for us to 'provincialize' Western modernity by thinking 'through and against its self-understandings' in order to 'destabilize the universalist idioms, historicize the contexts, and pluralize the experiences of modernity.'[104] Gaonkar encourages a 'culture specific and site-based reading of modernity,' in order to disrupt the classic Western narratives of progress I outlined above. He argues that re-reading the narrative in this way 'decisively discredits the inexorable logic that is assigned to each of the two strands of modernity' in the classic story:

> The proposition that societal modernization, once activated, moves inexorably towards establishing a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism) and a certain type of institutional order (popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy) irrespective of the culture and politics of a given place is simply not true. Nor does cultural modernity invariably take the form of an adversary culture that privileges the individual's need for self-expression and self-realization over the claims of the community.[105]

For Gaonkar, instead, at every national or cultural site, different elements of 'modernity' are combined in a 'unique' manner, in response to local situations, politics and culture. The idea of alternative modernities has been influential and widely embraced in a broad range of scholarly accounts that examine the specificities of 'modernity' and 'modern' life in various global contexts.[106] Where Khan's 'exclusionary modernities' work seeks to expand the narrative of progress to include different characters and settings, the 'alternative modernities' framework seeks alternative narrative perspectives and ultimately different versions of the progress narrative.

Suggestions of multiple, alternative, and inclusive modernities offer relatively optimistic accounts of how this central keyword can be extricated from dominant narratives of progress. However, some scholars are more critical and pessimistic about the possibilities of redeeming or recuperating 'modernity' from its

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[103] Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 2.
[104] Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, 15.
[105] Ibid., 15-16.
[106] See, for instance, Gurminder Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Gerard Delanty, "Multiple Modernities and Globalization," *Protosociology*, no. 20 (2004); Johann P Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000).

exclusionary and colonial origins. Arif Dirlik, for example, advocates a critical-historical understanding of 'modernity,' in which 'alternative modernities' may have existed historically, but have been subsumed by the victory of 'Euro-American capitalist modernity' over these historical alternatives.[107] For Dirlik, present claims to alternative modernities are 'deeply compromised through entanglement in capitalist modernity,' and:

> If Europe is to be 'provincialized', it is in this early phase of modernity, when European modernity was one among others, rather than the present when capitalist modernity, globalized, provides the grounds for modernity globally.[108]

Unlike the alternative modernities of an earlier time, Dirlik suggests that, 'the alternatives of contemporary global modernity are not alternatives to, but alternatives within, a capitalist society of which Euromodernity is an inextricable formative component.'[109] Theorising or critiquing 'modernity' from 'within modernity' is therefore an impossible task, for 'the very critiques of modernity are informed by and are expressed in language and concepts that are its products.'[110] This is an important warning, and points to the fact that the classic Western social science version of 'modernity' and progress remains the 'original' narrative, while postcolonial critiques are the same story reworked from a different narrative perspective. In other words, the meanings and associations of 'modernity' as a keyword are challenged and deconstructed, but still within an overarching story of progress.

This powerful progress narrative also permeates scholarly theories around another central keyword, 'tradition.' Often defined in a binary relationship with 'modernity,'

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[107] See also Woodside's revisionist overview of the bureaucratic politics of preindustrial China, Vietnam, and Korea, which suggests that these areas offered a modernity which has been lost and overlooked by the grand narrative of Western modernity. Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities: China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Hazards of World History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[108] Dirlik, "Revisioning Modernity: Modernity in Eurasian Perspectives," 286.
[109] Ibid., 299.
[110] Ibid., 296-7. See also "Reading Ashis Nandy: The Return of the Past, or Modernity with a Vengeance?," in *Dissenting Knowledges, Open Futures: The Multiple Selves and Strange Destinations of Ashis Nandy*, ed. Vinay Lal (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). For potential sources of ontological confusion around multiple or alternative modernities, see Elsje Fourie, "A Future for the Theory of Multiple Modernities: Insights from the New Modernization Theory," *Social Science Information* 51, no. 1 (2012).

these two keywords create and invent one another.[111] Indeed, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* suggests, tradition is not necessarily the sum of *actual* past practices that have continued unchangingly into the present; rather, tradition is more often a 'modern' trope, which seeks to 'establish continuity with a suitable historic past.'[112] The notion that tradition can be newly constructed and serve political and social functions, such as the formation of nation states as 'imagined communities,' has been powerful in scholarly accounts of social change.[113] As in the case of the alternative and multiple modernities frameworks discussed above, the invention of tradition framework has encouraged more complex understandings of human agency in cultural processes, and also how power relations, particularly colonial ones, shape such processes.[114] However, within scholarly work on 'invented traditions,' the ongoing persistence of oppositions between 'pure' and 'corrupted' tradition, 'lost' and 'reclaimed' tradition, 'genuine' and 'spurious' traditions indicates that the concept still remains deeply entangled in dominant narratives of linear progress.[115] Ultimately, scholarly engagement with the notion of

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[111] As noted by Sakai, 'whether it denotes a set of socioeconomic conditions, or the adherence of a society to selected values, the term 'modernity' can never be understood without reference to this dichotomy.' Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," 449. For a detailed study of tradition and modernity as mutually constitutive in the Indonesian performing arts, see also Matthew Cohen, *Inventing the Performing Arts: Modernity and Tradition in Colonial Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016).

[112] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Around the same time, similar scholarly ideas were independently developed in the Pacific region, with the publication of a special issue of the journal *Mankind.* See Robert Tonkinson and Roger M Keesing, "Reinventing Traditional Culture: The Politics of Kastom in Island Melanesia," *Mankind* 13, no. 4 (1982). See also a number of other theorists who have shown that tradition and how it is imagined and (re)invented are inherently political processes Charles L Briggs, "The Politics of Discursive Authority in Research in the Invention of Tradition," *Cultural Anthropoligy* 11, no. 4 (1996); Dorothea Schulz, "Praise without Enchantment: Griots, Broadcast Media, and the Politics of Tradition in Mali," *Africa Today* 44, no. 4 (1997); Hari Singh, "Tradition, U.M.N.O. And Political Succession the Malaysia," *Third World Quaterly* 19, no. 2 (1998).

[113] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

[114] Ton Otto and Poul Pedersen, eds., *Tradition and Agency: Tracing Cultural Continuity and Invention* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 21, 327.

[115] For more detail, see several critiques of dichotomous ideas around tradition vs. custom, elite vs. popular, real vs. invented, traditional communities vs. modern communities, and so on, articulated in Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Arif Dirlik, "The Past as Legacy and Project: Postcolonial Criticism in the Perspective of Indigenous Historicism," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (1996); Stephen Vlastos, ed. *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California

'tradition' is an important element of stories around progress, particularly given its mutually constitutive links with 'modernity.'

Despite a wide range of convincing critiques, the powerful keywords 'modernity' and 'tradition' continue to feature heavily in dominant narratives of progress and development throughout the globe. Given all the important deconstructing work discussed above, scholars are naturally wary of using the terms 'modernity' and 'tradition' in simple uncritical ways. Today, scholars rightly view these two words – and the complex entanglement of concepts lurking behind each of them – as deeply embedded in a range of historical and ideological processes. However, I argue that it is important to continue to pay close attention to these keywords, as they remain a very powerful binary in the popular imagination, and as scholars, we need to recognize the tendency to slip easily back into using these terms in our own work. Naoki Sakai observes that despite challenges to its legitimacy, 'surprisingly enough, the pre-modern/modern opposition has managed to survive many challenges, and it would be optimistic indeed to believe it has finally been found ineffectual.'[116] Indeed, much contemporary scholarly work still frequently draws upon this powerful binary, describing the modern/global/secular and the traditional/local/religious as opposing forces working against each other. Shu-meh Shih has made related points about Eurocentrism:

> It appears that the critique of Eurocentrism in general has exhausted itself, that one only needs to show awareness of it because it is predictable. Instead of working through the problem, one gives recognition to it…Charges of

Press, 1998); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Afterword: Revisiting the Tradition/Modernity Binary," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkely & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Gaurav Desai, "The Invention of Invention," *Cultural Critique* 24 (1993). Arguably, all traditions are constructed or 'invented' at some stage in history and this quality does not necessarily make them less genuine, as noted by Margaret Jolly, "Specters of Inauthenticity.," *The Contemporary Pacific* 4, no. 1 (1992); Jocelyn Linnekin, "Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity," *American Anthropologist* 93, no. 2 (1991). For caveats and revisions to the theory by Ranger himself, see Terrence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited," in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*, ed. Terence Ranger, Olufemi Vaughan (London: Macmillan, 1993). On proposals for alternative phrasing to capture the complex dynamism of 'invention' processes see Stephen Prickett, *Modernity and the Reinvention of Tradition: Backing into the Future* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[116] Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," 449.

> repetition and yawns of familiarity, then, may be hazards one must anticipate in insisting on continuous dissections of Eurocentrism.[117]

However, Shih goes on to note that this 'ennui' does not change the fact that Eurocentrism 'still exists in old and new forms.' Chakrabarty too has argued that we must 'engage and reengage our ideas about modernity in a spirit of constant vigilance.'[118] Such an endeavour is especially important when dominant definitions of 'modernity' and 'development' and simplistic linear versions of the progress narrative continue to have very real effects on people's lives and identities, through invasive 'modernisation' or 'development' projects.

The concrete impacts of dominant scholarly stories of progress and 'modernity' are clearly evident when we turn to the field of 'development' as a political and economic theory and practice. As has been well-articulated in the many and varied critiques of 'development,' this theory and practice is intimately linked with 'modernisation theory,' a powerful story that emerged in the mid twentieth century, influenced by prevailing colonial ideologies and based on a singular linear model of progress in which the industrialised capitalist 'West' would lead 'underdeveloped' societies to an imagined 'modern' and productive future. Widely influential U.S. scholarly work, such as Walter Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* and Talcott Parsons' *The System of Modern Society,* propagated the notion that all societies were positioned along a predetermined linear trajectory towards an ideal Euro-American or 'Western' capitalist modernity.[119] Lawrence Grossberg has pointed out that the Cold War context was highly important in the emergence of development theory, which was 'largely propelled by the need to "develop" the "third world" in ways that brought them into the capitalist rather than communist camp.'[120] In the process, two-thirds of the world came to be labelled as 'underdeveloped,' with very real consequences for billions of people. Critical post-development scholars such as Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Esteva have mounted

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[117] Shu-mei Shih, "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition," *PMLA* 119, no. 1 (2004): 16.
[118] Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, xx.
[119] Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Walt W Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Melbourne: Cambrige University Press, 1991 [1960]).
[120] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 74.

compelling critiques of the 'underdevelopment' discourse, arguing that this narrative served to disenfranchise huge portions of the world's population, who 'ceased being what they were… and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality.'[121] For Escobar, international aid regimes became a form of neo-colonialism, classifying certain people as 'poor' and positioning them as dependants of the state, with no room for contestation or alternative stories: 'that the essential trait of the Third World was its poverty and that the solution was economic growth and development became self-evident, necessary, and universal truths.'[122] The field of critical development studies has sought to problematise such self-evident truths, and challenge dominant narratives of progress in the global development industry.

Although there have been compelling critiques from within development studies itself, variations of modernisation theory continue to influence contemporary political and economic policies worldwide. According to Celine Germond-Duret, the 'modernity thesis' continues to be 'considered a valid model in the development industry,' and that 'development' and 'modernity' are often used as synonyms, justifying potentially disastrous outside interventions into the lives of people across the globe.[123] The often negative impacts of top-down development projects have been well documented, as has the fact that such projects often ignore structural inequalities and the self-perpetuating role of development policy in creating the very 'development problems' that then require external solutions.[124] Furthermore, many scholars have observed how contemporary global development discourses are dominated by a neoliberal capitalist ethos, which can serve to further disempower and exploit the targeted populations.[125] Grossberg defines current formations of

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[121] Esteva, "Development," 7.
[122] Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 24. See also Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 74; Jonathan Crush, "Introduction: Imagining Development," in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995), 3-4; Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 589.
[123] Germond-Duret, "Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Binary Thinking, Indigenous Peoples and Normalisation," 1540-41.
[124] Munarriz, "Rhetoric and Reality: The World Bank Development Policies, Mining Corporations,and Indigenous Communities in Latin America."; Rajagopal, "The Violence of Development."; Young, *Third World in the First: Development and Indigenous Peoples*; Germond-Duret, "Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Binary Thinking, Indigenous Peoples and Normalisation."
[125] For instance, Harootunian argues that 'we must be especially cognizant of the stakes involved in the investiture of terms like 'modernity' and the 'West' for the reproduction of

neoliberalism as 'a series of compromise alliances' between 'new conservatives and libertarian (free-market, anti-regulatory) capitalists.'[126] Such alliances frequently contain internal contradictions between 'liberal' approaches favouring individualist self-help (which absolve governments of responsibility for addressing social inequalities), and the more 'authoritarian' paternalistic rhetoric of developmentalism (which characterises 'underdeveloped' communities as requiring external guidance and intervention). These apparently contradictory aspects of neoliberal developmentalism can serve to doubly marginalise the populations being 'developed.' On the one hand, paternalistic developmentalist rhetoric justifies exploitative capitalist interventions, while on the other hand, neoliberal individualist rhetoric places the responsibility for combatting social and economic inequalities solely with the individuals or communities under development. Despite deep internal contradictions, neoliberal development discourses have been highly influential in many different parts of the world. Aihwa Ong has traced how throughout Asia, neoliberalism 'encounters other ethical regimes in particular contexts,' and is selectively incorporated into existing political or religious structures.[127] Ong defines neoliberalism as a flexible technology of self-governance aimed at maximising productivity of people, that has spread across multiple global sites, abetted by both international agencies and local power structures.[128] Ong's work is highly useful in contesting the notion of a neoliberal North versus a South under siege, and demonstrating how neoliberal developmentalism is articulated differently in different contexts, including Indonesia. Yet despite operating in different ways in different contexts, development discourses often still prioritise a certain progress story, one which is linear, hierarchical, and not necessarily empowering for those being 'developed.' Again, as in the case of its related keyword 'modernity,' despite attempts at deconstruction and reconfiguration, it can

capitalist accumulation.' Harootunian, "'Modernity' and the Claims of Untimeliness," 367. See also Grossberg on the various temporalities or trajectories of modernity, which he identifies as colonialism, modernisation, and neoliberal developmentalism. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 72.

[126] *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 70.

[127] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 9.

[128] Ibid., 14.

be very difficult to shake free from the colonial heritage, capitalist implications, and unequal power relations within dominant discourses of 'development.'

Debate around how to achieve more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable development practices is a key focus of contemporary scholarly work in the field of development studies. While such debate often focuses on the economic and political aspects of such challenges, my study takes an alternative approach to deeply entrenched problems of developmentalism. By taking a cultural studies perspective, in which I analyse the way that stories of progress, modernity, and development circulate in popular culture, I intend to offer a complementary view of why and how certain versions of this narrative come to attain such strong dominance.[129] A more nuanced understanding of both the pervasiveness and internal contradictions of these stories of progress can help us, as scholars, to engage more effectively with the ongoing impacts of developmentalist rhetoric in postcolonial nations like Indonesia, particularly as understood and experienced in everyday life.

Histories of 'development' and 'modernity' in Indonesia

Indonesia has its own particular relationship with notions of 'development' and 'modernity.' Some aspects of this relationship overlap with experiences in other 'developing' nations, while other aspects are specific to the Indonesian context. As Jonathan Rigg, Anna Allot, Rachel Harrison and Ulrich Kratz have pointed out, although there is a powerful global development discourse, this discourse 'takes on local colour as it is selectively adopted and adapted at the local and national levels.'[130] Keywords from the global development industry were not imposed 'on some sort of developmental linguistic and mental vacuum,' and indeed many local

[129] Heryanto used a similar approach in his study of 'development language' during the New Order. See Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 3. For a comparable recent project from within the development studies discipline, which seeks to engage with popular cultural representations, see David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers, and Michael Woolcock, *Popular Representations of Development: Insights from Novels, Films, Television and Social Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).
[130] Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 600.

conceptions of progress and poverty can be traced back centuries.[131] For Rigg et al., it is vitally important to examine local contexts:

> There is no uniform canvas on to which ideas are inscribed. 'Development' and 'participation' do not mean the same things in different cultures and languages. They emerge within unique cultural and historical contexts, and reflect existing power relations and hegemonies that are local or national rather than global.[132]

These keywords can also acquire 'strong associative links with entrenched governments' and therefore 'hidden implications in terms of the architectures of power.'[133] This is certainly the case in Indonesia, where 'development' became a guiding ideology and key source of legitimacy for the authoritarian New Order regime. In the Indonesian language, words like *maju* ('progressive' or 'advanced'), *belakangan* ('backward'), *tertinggal* ('left behind'), *pembangunan* ('development'), *perkembangan* ('growth'), *moderen* (modern), *tradisional* (traditional), *baru* ('new'), and *lama* ('old'), all capture different aspects of development and progress.[134] Of all these terms, however, '*pembangunan*' has been the most influential in shaping dominant progress narratives within Indonesia.[135] *Pembangunan* (from the base-word 'rise' or 'build') implies a process, but one that requires external guidance and support. The external impetus inferred in the term *pembangunan* is highly analogous to current connotations of its English equivalent, 'development.' Indeed, from its emergence in the late colonial era *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Cultural Polemic) debates among nationalist intellectuals in the 1930s, through to its increasing centrality to New Order legitimacy during the 1970s and 1980s, Indonesian usage of the term '*pembangunan*' ebbed and flowed in tandem with wider global 'development' discourses. Definitions and usage of the related keyword 'modernity' have taken a

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[131] Ibid. See also Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Expansion and Crisis*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 267-325.
[132] Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 600.
[133] Ibid., 583.
[134] Notably, *moderen* and *tradisional* are loanwords from English.
[135] See Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*; Mark Hobart, ed. *The Growth of Ignorance: An Anthropological Critique of Development* (London: Routledge, 1993); Hans Antlöv, *Exemplary Centre, Administrative Periphery: Rural Leadership and the New Order in Java* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd, 1995); Lisa Klopfer, *Confronting Modernity in a Rice-Producing Community: Contemporary Values and Identity among the Highland Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994).

similar path. In what follows I offer some important background on how these keywords have functioned throughout recent Indonesian history.

The legacies of colonial experience under Dutch rule have been hugely influential in shaping contemporary Indonesian ideas around 'development' and 'modernity.' In the Dutch East Indies, which was later to become Indonesia, the colonial administration characterised the native population as in need of 'development' and 'civilising influence.' Particularly under the 'Ethical Policy' (1901-1942) colonial administrators systematically classified different regions of the archipelago according to '*adat*' (traditions and customs), and it is in this context that the dichotomy between an imagined 'modernity' and 'tradition' began to emerge.[136] These colonial classifications and frameworks remained influential long after independence. In his study *Language of Development and Development of Language,* Ariel Heryanto notes that colonial frameworks regarded the general population as 'ignorant, backward, traditional, irrational, and incapable of engaging in language activities unless an outsider with professional expertise came to Develop their competence.'[137] While Dutch authorities held this role of 'experts' during the colonial period, as a result of the Indonesian independence movement 'the schooled indigenous emerged to take over the same role with stronger legitimacy.'[138] With this change in authority, there was much debate among local intellectuals, and important shifts in meaning around keywords like 'modernity' and 'development,' yet at the same time many aspects of colonial development discourses continued to persist long after independence.

While much groundwork for later *pembangunan* ideology was laid under Dutch colonial control, the word itself did not gain prominence until quite late in the

[136] Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 43; Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 42.
[137] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 7.
[138] Ibid. The emerging local middle class had in many ways been groomed to take on this role, after having played a fundamental role in sustaining the colony for decades before then, as pointed out in Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011). For more detail on the transition from colonial to postcolonial rule, see also Henk Schulte Nordholt "Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, Modernity, and the Post-Colonial State," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 167, no. 4 (2011).

colonial period, when – in the context of growing nationalist sentiment – ideas around 'modernity,' 'tradition' and 'development' became increasingly hotly debated amongst local intellectuals. Dubbed the *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Cultural Polemics), these debates peaked in the 1930s and were primarily concerned with Indonesian postcolonial national identity, and to what extent the emerging Indonesian nation should be founded on 'traditional culture' or 'modern innovation.'[139] Key figures in the *Polemik Kebudayaan* included Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, Sanusi Pane, Sutomo, Purbatjaraka, Tjindarbumi, Adinegoro, M. Amir, and Ki Hajar Dewantara. Among them, some, like Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, advocated leaving behind what they dubbed 'feudalist traditions' of the culturally disparate archipelago and moving towards a united and forward-looking 'modern' nation. Others saw local 'traditional' culture as a strategic resource to be integrated into the 'modern' polity in selective ways. Sanusi Pane famously argued that 'the perfect direction would be to unify Faust with Arjuna, fusing materialism, intellectualism and individualism with spiritualism, feeling and collectivism.'[140] It was a leading intellectual from the former group, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, who first triggered the debates, and who most systematically used the word *pembangunan* to describe national development.[141] In 1945 he led the publication of a biweekly magazine, *Pembangoenan*, dedicated to such discussions.[142] In many ways, these emerging nationalist intellectuals used similar language to Dutch authorities and the ethical policy, but within their debates, phrases like 'nation-building' and 'modernisation' became 'vital' and 'empowering' terms for expressing 'new, liberating concepts…learned from the language of their oppressor,' and 'translated into the new national language.'[143] These debates continued following Indonesian independence in 1945, and acquired global dimensions as the new nation formed links and relationships with other recently independent nations also struggling with legacies of

[139] For a complete collection of these debates, see K Mihardja Achdiat, *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1977). For wider historical context, see also Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H T Liem, eds., *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 12; Taufik Abdullah, *Indonesia: Towards Democracy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009); Schulte Nordholt, "Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, Modernity, and the Post-Colonial State," 388-89.
[140] Cited in Achdiat, *Polemik Kebudayaan*, 17.
[141] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 12.
[142] Ibid., 14.
[143] Ibid., 12.

colonialism. During the 1955 Asia-Africa conference held in Bandung, important global discussions around national identity and progress revealed shared experiences and common anti-colonial struggles in which keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' were central.[144] The meanings and implications of these keywords, however, often remained highly contested.

During the Indonesian cultural polemics, *pembangunan* had not yet achieved hegemonic status in national stories of progress. There were other alternative words and understandings, most notably perhaps, the idea of '*perkembangan*,' which can also be translated as 'development' but with connotations of spontaneous and independent growth from within. This starkly contrasts with the connotations of planning, control, guidance, and external support that characterise *pembangunan*.[145] Heryanto has traced in detail the linguistic tensions between the independent noun *perkembangan* (implying natural 'development') and the noun of process, *pembangunan* (implying imposed 'development of' one subject by another).[146] He proposes that these contrasting versions of 'development' are analogous to different streams of the English term 'development' in colonial and Marxist thought.[147] Heinz Wolfgang Arndt, in his 'semantic history' of economic development, has closely examined these colonial-capitalist and Marxist-socialist streams of 'development,' as they unfolded in various global contexts during the twentieth century.[148] In Indonesia, as in many other nations around the world during the early years of the Cold War, debates over capitalist and socialist narratives of progress were frequent and heated. With the advent of Suharto's New Order regime, however, *perkembangan* and Marxist notions of development were largely extinguished. Following the anti-communist mass killings in the mid-1960s, these alternative meanings were subordinated to the new regime's version of *pembangunan*, a version that became increasingly strongly promulgated and increasingly tied to the regime's

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[144] James A Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005); Lindsay and Liem, *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965*.
[145] See Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 586; Hobart, *The Growth of Ignorance: An Anthropological Critique of Development*, 7.
[146] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 4.
[147] Ibid., 24.
[148] Heinz Wolfgang Arndt, "Economic Development: A Semantic History," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 29, no. 3 (1981).

legitimacy. Following fifteen years of left-leaning anti-imperialism under Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, the New Order regime's embrace of a 'Western-style' market capitalism and pursuit of economic development at all costs was one of many drastic ideological changes to take place following the violent events of 1965-1966. In the broader global context of Cold War tensions, New Order *pembangunan* had strong global support from the U.S. government and its allies, who actively encouraged ideologies of developmentalism and modernisation in many parts of the world. In Indonesia, these ideologies remained hegemonic in the climate of fear and intimidation that continued to characterise subsequent decades of New Order rule.

During the New Order, *pembangunan* ideology influenced almost all aspects of Indonesian social and political experience. Although Indonesia's official state ideology remained the 'Pancasila' (five principles), scholars writing towards the end of the New Order regime frequently cited *pembangunan* as the state's true guiding principle.[149] Lisa Klopfer argues that '*pembangunan* is the true ideology of the New Order,' as does Hans Antlov, who asserts that '*pembangunan* has become an end in itself and the word is now an empty mantra, invoked as a validation of economic polarization and cultural disruption.'[150] Rigg et al. point out that while Indonesia's first president, Sukarno was known as the 'Father of the Nation' (*Bapak Negara*), his successor President Suharto 'took the appellation *Bapak Pembangunan* or "Father of Development,"' and ultimately based his legitimacy on national economic growth.[151] In a similar vein, Heryanto dubs *pembangunan* one of the 'most salient keywords' in New Order Indonesia, and argues that 'the extent to which this word binds and legitimises certain modes of thought, as well as negating other forms of consciousness, is probably unique among the various Developing nations.'[152] And indeed, the official *pembangunan* discourse had huge and far reaching impact on

[149] The 'five principles' of Pancasila are 1. Belief in God, 2. Just and civilised humanity, 3. The unity of Indonesia, 4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom and consensus of representatives, and 5. Social justice for all the people of Indonesia. For analysis of Pancasila ideology during the New Order, see Michael Morfit, "Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology According to the New Order Government," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 8 (1981).
[150] Klopfer, *Confronting Modernity in a Rice-Producing Community: Contemporary Values and Identity among the Highland Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia*, 92-93; Antlöv, *Exemplary Centre, Administrative Periphery: Rural Leadership and the New Order in Java*, 43.
[151] Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 588.
[152] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 8.

Indonesian approaches to, and definitions of, nationalism, the arts, literature, humanities, and the role of intellectuals.[153] Through processes of both patronage and intimidation, the state succeeded in co-opting much of the output of Indonesian academia during this time, and therefore any serious critiques of development often came from the arts rather than in postcolonial scholarship.[154] Poets, playwrights, artists, and authors (including Rendra, Mangunwijaya, Ajidarma) questioned the benefits of 'development' for the Indonesian *rakyat* ('masses'), and pointed out the corruptions and inequalities of Indonesian 'development' programs. The New Order regime delivered economic growth, but Indonesian artists and activists began to ask, 'at what expense?'[155] Meanwhile, although discontent grew in many creative and intellectual circles, critical scholarship continued to remain comparatively weak in Indonesian universities. Throughout the 1970s-1980s, when postcolonial, postmodern, and post-structural critiques of 'modernity' and 'development' were flourishing elsewhere in the world, such discussions were relatively muted in Indonesian educational institutions.[156] This was due to an ongoing climate of fear, sporadic acts of state terrorism, anti-communist witch-hunts, and the frequently raised spectre of the mass killings and 'chaos' of the 1960s, all of which discouraged dissenting critical voices or alternatives to the state's master narrative of progress

[153] For instance, on nationalism see Rasmala 1986, on the humanities see Kartodirdjo 1987; Suweda 1984, on literature see Basuki 1986; Hutasuhut 1986; Hutomo 1980, on the role of the intelligentsia see Soedjatmoko 1985. All cited in ibid., 10. For more detail on the impacts of *pembangunan* ideologies on Indonesian literature, see Keith Foulcher, "The Construction of an Indonesian National Culture: Patterns of Hegemony and Resistance," in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, ed. Arief Budiman (Melbourne: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

[154] On the co-optation of Indonesian institutions, including universities, in the 1970s-1980s, see Edward Aspinall, "The Broadening Base of Political Opposition in Indonesia," in *Political Oppositions in Industrializing Asia*, ed. Garry Rodan (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[155] See Michael Bodden, "Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Fictional Resistance to an Authoritarian State in 1990s Indonesia," *Indonesia* 68 (1999); "Teater Koma's Suksesi and Indonesia's New Order," *Asian Theatre Journal* 14, no. 2 (1997); Marshall Clark, "Shadow Boxing: Indonesian Writers and the Ramayana in the New Order," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 72 (2001).

[156] Aspinall has pointed out that this is because urban middle classes and intellectuals were in fact an important part of the New Order coalition, and had provided 'crucial civilian legitimation for the military rise to power.' For more in this, see Aspinall, "The Broadening Base of Political Opposition in Indonesia," 216. On developmentalist ideology in universities, including in Indonesia, see James S Coleman, "The Idea of the Developmental University," *Minerva* 24, no. 4 (1986).

and ‘development.’ Ultimately, current ideas around progress and ‘development’ in Indonesia were irreversibly shaped by how *pembangunan* was used during this time.

‘Development’ was debated, defined, and implemented in different ways under different power-holders in Indonesia, but one distinct continuity has been the perceived role of literature, film, and popular culture in ‘developing’ and ‘modernising’ the nation. Henk Schulte Nordholt has drawn attention to the role of posters and advertisements during the late colonial era in encouraging the indigenous urban middle classes to identify as modern ‘cultural citizens’ of the colony.[157] Literary consumption habits were also targeted, with the colonial administration funding the Commissie voor de Volsklecture publishing house, later re-named Balai Pustaka, in order to deliver ‘appropriate’ and ideologically ‘favourable’ reading materials to the growing local intelligentsia.[158] Tod Jones has described how during the Japanese occupation period (1942-1945) wider mass culture industries, particularly film and radio, were expanded and developed, often with the explicit aim of spreading messages about pan-Asian progress.[159] Following independence in 1945, Sukarno’s government continued using the growing mass media industry to spread stories of progress and revolutionary anti-imperialist rhetoric.[160] State control of media and popular culture reached its height under the New Order, as has been extensively documented by many scholars writing on Indonesia during this period.[161] Former army general and influential Minister for Information during the New Order

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[157] Schulte Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis."
[158] Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 48. See also Andries Teeuw, Bob McArthur, and Elisabeth Stephens, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979); Paul Tickell, "The Writing of Indonesian Literary History," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 21, no. 1 (1987); Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*. For an account of how Balai Pustaka’s aesthetic standards continued to strongly influence Indonesian literary criticism in subsequent decades, see Keith Foulcher, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian 'Institute of People's Culture' 1950-1965* (Melbourne: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1986).
[159] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 69.
[160] See Lindsay and Liem, *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965*.
[161] See among others Kitley, "Fine Tuning Control: Commercial Television in Indonesia."; Laurie J Sears, ed. *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (London: Zed Press, 1994).

regime, Ali Murtopo, was a strong proponent of modernisation theory and the use of 'culture' as a civilising tool.[162] Throughout the New Order, the Directorate of Culture increasingly intervened in the lives of Indonesian people via cultural policy, teaching them how to be ideal 'modern' citizens of the new state.[163] Here, we can see continuities between the colonial period, Japanese occupation, and the Sukarno and Suharto governments, around the role of culture and media in shaping and guiding the population. As noted by Jones, 'authoritarian cultural policy,' which 'disregards the tastes and affiliations of groups and individuals using the excuse that those subjects do not have the capacity to maturely and rationally exercise their own judgement' held sway in Indonesia for much of the twentieth century.[164] This is an aspect of the progress narrative that I continue to return to throughout subsequent chapters of this thesis. Popular culture, including television, film, fiction, and new media have long been – and still remain – an important site in which narratives of progress are constructed and contested, and the remainder of this chapter examines such contestations in the post-reform Indonesian media, focusing in particular on changes and continuities across four key sites, seeking to trace both potentially oppositional challenges to, and resilient aspects of dominant progress stories in the contemporary context.

Stories of progress in post-reform Indonesian identity politics

Following the New Order regime's collapse in 1998, after thirty years of authoritarian military rule, both Indonesian and outside observers enthusiastically documented the diverse range of voices emerging in what became known as the reform era (*reformasi*), voices which sought to challenge previously dominant power relations and hegemonic ideologies. In both general and scholarly accounts, there was a groundswell of excitement around the possibilities of increased state tolerance towards public religious expression, less exploitative centre-periphery relations, reduced patriarchal attitudes, increasingly diverse gender roles, and a more critical

[162] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 120-22, 50.
[163] Ibid., 148, 241.
[164] Ibid., 271.

reassessment of national histories and past violences. And indeed, the early *reformasi* period was a time when previously hegemonic ideals of state secularism, Java-centrism, male dominance, and official histories were all challenged, as has been well documented in many scholarly accounts.[165] But while there was some delivery on the hopes and promises of *reformasi*, there have also been significant 'failures' and disappointments. Local commentators have lamented continued political corruption, violent inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts, and persistent social inequalities. Despite Suharto's record of corruption, collusion and state-sponsored violence, there is an increasing nostalgia amongst the Indonesian population for the pre-1998 era, and 'strong leadership' in Indonesia.[166] Political scientists voiced surprise and dismay over the narrow defeat of former army general Prabowo in the 2014 presidential election, who had run on a platform that strongly echoed New Order militarism and authoritarianism.[167] At the time of writing, Indonesia is witnessing growing hostility towards marginalised LGBT communities, and mass riots against the ethnic Chinese and Christian Jakarta governor, Ahok, with overt tones of racial and religious discrimination.[168] Disappointments with the 'reform' process, widely expressed by both Indonesians and outside observers, provide insights into expectations and assumptions around Indonesia's past, present, and future. Post-reform Indonesia is therefore a rich site for examining popular stories of progress. A large and diverse archipelago, with deep colonial legacies and

[165] Including, for example, Hill and Sen, *The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy*; Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*.
[166] In a poll conducted in May 2012 by the leading Indonesian broadsheet, *Kompas*, 54 percent of those surveyed felt that the state of the country's politics was as bad as or worse than before the events of 1998; 64 percent felt that issues of corruption and law enforcement had not been addressed; and as many as 69 percent felt that the state of the Indonesian economy was no better than before Suharto's downfall. For more detail, see Zakir Hussain, "Suharto's Gone, but Many in Indonesia Yearn for Him," *The Jakarta Globe*, 30 May 2012.
[167] See Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 50, no. 3 (2014).
[168] M Taufiqurrahman and Kornelius Purba, "Questioning Our Pride as a Democratic, Tolerant and Peaceful Nation," *The Jakarta Post*, 5 November 2016; Ian Douglas Wilson, "Making Enemies out of Friends," *New Mandala*, 3 November 2016; Margareth S Aritonang, "Police Hunt for Political Actors, Financiers of Anti-Ahok Rally," *The Jakarta Post*, 8 November 2016; Sharyn Graham Davies, "Indonesian 'Tolerance' under Strain as Anti-L.G.B.T. Furore Grows," *Asian Studies Association of Australia*, 21 March 2016; Sidney Jones, "Why Indonesian Extremists Are Gaining Ground," *The Lowy Interpreter*, 1 November 2016; Tom Boellstorff, "Against State Straightism: Five Principles for Including L.G.B.T. Indonesians," *E-International Relations*, 16 March 2016; Catriona Croft-Cusworth, "This Week in Jakarta: Terror, Corruption and Moral Panic," *The Lowy Interpreter*, February 26 2016.

high levels of media saturation, Indonesia is experiencing a particular post-authoritarian historical moment that Heryanto describes as 'full of promise', but also filled with 'threats, uncertainties, and nostalgia' for a selectively understood past: 'It is a moment of history with multiple centres of power, the trauma of post-authoritarianism and economic crisis, as well as seductive worldly pleasures in tension with strong and increasing belief in a divine solution.'[169] As evidenced by the perceived 'failures' and 'disappointments' of reform, many New Order ideological legacies have been difficult to successfully challenge, and I propose that this is partly because the regime's powerful stories of progress, and hegemonic definitions of 'modernity' and 'development' have remained highly resilient, despite the huge socio-political and structural changes of the past decade and a half.

In what follows, I trace how stories of progress feature across four important sites of identity politics in the post-New Order era: religion, region, gender, and history. These four areas have been hotly contested social topics during this time, and are arguably the sites to attract the highest levels of hopes, expectations, and disappointments amongst scholars both within and outside Indonesia. They are sites which I return to repeatedly throughout this thesis, so some background explanation is required. I review the socio-political histories of these four sites, and also zoom in to focus in particular on these sites as represented in popular culture and public debate in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. In examining how stories of progress operate here, I link back to some of the wider social science metatheory discussed in preceding sections, to assess to what extent dominant scholarly stories of progress and keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' are applicable in understanding complex and contested contemporary Indonesian realities.

Religion: Popular piety, moral censorship, and Islamic modernities

Religion, particularly Islam, is a central part of Indonesian life.[170] It has long been a contested site, and particularly so in the first decade of the twenty-first century, as

[169] Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*, 31.

[170] Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, with around eighty-eight percent of its more than 230 million people identifying Islam as their guiding religion. Politically,

various versions of Islam become more visible and vocal in the contemporary mediascape, and public debate is increasingly structured by struggles over defining the role of Islam – and religious morality more generally – in Indonesian national identity. Religion is characterised in both media and scholarly accounts sometimes as a 'modernising' force linked with upward mobility and at other times as an anti-modern dogma which sits at odds with 'developing' a 'modern' plural polity and full participation in global circuits of production and consumption. Commentators often position religious sentiment as a reaction against processes of 'modernity.' Islamic activist Hilaly Basya, for instance, writes that 'the resurgence of religion can be seen as a result of people's disappointment in modern science and secularism which cannot meet their fundamental and existential needs.'[171] Others propose that Islam is actually the best path to 'modernity.' Head of 'modern' Islamic boarding school Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ummahat, KH Abdul Muhaimin, describes how 'the true spirit of Islam is…modern, moderate and humane,' and Muhammad Wildan, a lecturer at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, points out that 'it is not necessary for Muslims to avoid modernization, but they can pick their own type of modernity that fits traditional and religious values.'[172] Within these discussions over the role of Islam in contemporary Indonesian life, we can see echoes of the broader scholarly narratives I outlined earlier, particularly around 'alternative modernities.' For this reason, it is important for us to examine in more detail the ways in which Indonesian Islamic modernities are constructed and contested, and how religion features in dominant stories of progress.

As a political force in the archipelago, Islam was historically marginalised and depoliticised by successive state rulers. The Dutch colonial administration, the newly independent Sukarno government, and the Suharto regime all curtailed the power and influence of Islam in different ways, usually as a means of diluting

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however, it is a secular state, and a strongly secular ideology dominated the public sphere for much of the twentieth century. However, towards the end of the century, Islam of various political leanings (fundamental, militant, liberal, moderate etc.) increasingly gained new and dominant authority in Indonesia. See Vincent J H Houben, "Southeast Asia and Islam," *Anals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (2003).

[171] M Hilaly Basya, "The Resurgence of Religion in Modern Era," *The Jakarta Post*, 12 February 2009.

[172] Simon Sudarman, "Kh Abdul Muhaimin: A 'Pesantren' Transcending the Limits," *The Jakarta Post*, 27 May 2013; Muhammad Wildan, "Education the Best Counter for Radicalism," *The Jakarta Post*, 30 July 2007.

possible alternatives to official state ideology.[173] In this context, the main Islamic organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nadlatul Ulama (NU), focused their attention not on the realm of politics but on education and social welfare, in order to strengthen the Indonesian Muslim community.[174] By the 1980s and 1990s, increased levels of prosperity and education resulted in a new and confident Indonesian middle-class, especially among Muslim graduates, but the state continued to channel political and economic opportunities to the elite political class, marginalising those emerging from Islamic education institutions.[175] Such policies were rooted in a concern that Islam could become a rallying cry for opposition to state policies and agendas. However, while the New Order succeeded in keeping religion out of party politics, everyday popular trends were more difficult to control. The increasing popularity of the *jilbab* (headscarf) among Indonesian women towards the end of the New Order has been characterised by many commentators and scholars as a political statement against the long marginalisation of Islam under the authoritarian and explicitly secular regime.[176]

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[173] On Dutch colonial concerns about Islam as a potential rallying point, see Tom Boellstorff, "Ethnolocality," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (2002). On the newly independent republic's choice of the more plural and secular '*Pancasila*' (five principles), over the 'Jakarta Charter' of 22 June 1945, see B J Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971). On the New Order regime's systematic disenfranchisement of political Islam, and violent crackdowns on radical Islamic elements, see Carmel Budiarjo, "Indonesia: Mass Extermination and the Consolidation of Authoritarian Power," in *Western State Terrorism*, ed. A George (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[174] Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[175] Moeflich Hasullah, "Cultural Representations of the Muslim Middle Class in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 7, no. 2 (2000); William R Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia: A Political Explanation," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (1996); John T Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[176] Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Suharto Indonesia."; Carla Jones, "Fashion and Faith in Urban Indonesia," *Fashion Theory* 11, no. 2/3 (2007); Alison Murray, "Kampung Culture and Radical Chic in Jakarta," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 25, no. 1 (1991). Broader global trends are also important in influencing these local fashion choices, for instance the global Islamic Reform Movement, originating from the 1979 Iranian revolution. For more on this in the Indonesian context see Suzanne Brenner, "Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and 'the Veil'," *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 4 (1996). In addition, rapid advancements in communication and travel technologies have resulted in increased contact with other Islamic influences from throughout the world, which has in turn inspired experiments with different Islamic ideas and aesthetics. For more detail, see Gary R Blunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (London: C Hurst & Co., 2009). For comparable examples from Egypt and India see Lila Abu-Lughod, "Egyptian Melodrama: Technology of the Modern Subject?," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. Faye D Ginsberg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian

During the turbulent events of 1997-1998, when Suharto was forced to step down, Muslim organisations and their constituents played a role in the process of political change, expressing outrage against the corruption and cronyism of Suharto and his political allies, and supporting the push for democracy.[177] The position of political Islam during the *reformasi* period was, however, compromised by various incidences of religious violence, the spectre of Islamic terrorism, and several corruption scandals within Islamic parties, all of which led Indonesians to question the role of religion in politics.[178] Yet while Islamic political parties have not achieved notable success in the polls, Islam as a symbolic commodity has become increasingly central in popular narratives of progress and 'development' in the post-reform context. With growing public expression of Islam among the emerging Indonesian Muslim middle class, religiosity has gradually emerged as a symbol of elitism, associated with the road to success.[179] Writing in 2009, Noorhaidi Hasan contends that 'over the last three decades, Islam has demonstrated its vitality as a system of symbolic and collective identity,' and 'has increasingly served as the most important frame of reference for many Indonesians to reflect upon the socio-political and cultural system they imagined capable of bringing about justice and attaining veritable development.'[180] Ultimately, despite some continued political marginalisation, Islamic discourse and practice is highly visible and public in the post-reform context, and, as indicated in Hasan's assessment, is often linked in markedly positive ways to dominant ideas about 'development' and 'modernity.'

Larkin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ananda Mitra, *Television and Popular Culture in India: A Study of the Mahabharata* (New Dehli: Sage, 1993).

[177] Azyumardi Azra, "Globalization of Indonesian Muslim Discourses: Contemporary Religio- Intellectual Connections between Indonesia and the Middle East," in *Islam in an Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes Towards Modernity and Identity*, ed. John Meuleman (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[178] E Soenarto, "Making Sense of the Past & Present: Islamic Comic Books in Indonesia, 1965-2007" (NUS, available online at <scholarbank.nus.edu>, accessed 05/12/11, 2009); Greg Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2004); Sunny Tanuwidjaja, "Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2010).

[179] Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008); Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*.

[180] Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3 (2009).

Nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of popular culture. Media deregulation and relaxing of state ideologies throughout the first decade of the twentieth century opened new spaces for Indonesians to express religious piety in fun and creative ways. A pronounced trend in Indonesia during the 2000s was the increasing visibility of Islamic symbols and content in popular culture. While Islam had not previously been a huge presence in the public sphere, suddenly pop songs, melodrama series, movies, talk shows, and magazines began to display Islamic themes and aesthetics, celebrities started wearing the *jilbab*, and politicians increasingly used Islamic words and dress to bolster their legitimacy.[181] An 'Islamic economy' has emerged in Indonesia, ranging from banking, insurance, share trading and pawn-broking to medical treatments, mobile phone services, tourism, multi-level marketing, pilgrimages, self-development courses, and celebrity televangelists.[182] During Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month, urban spaces are dominated by huge banners for nightly 'breaking the fast' concerts in big cities, with music and fireworks, sponsored by mobile-phone companies, pharmaceuticals, and other large organisations. In addition, shopping malls are transformed into Islamic consumer paradises.[183] This is a very different 'rise of Islam' from the images that dominate the Western media; this is an Islam linked with fun, fashion and urban lifestyles.[184] Such representations serve to counteract post-9/11 global stereotypes of the 'Islamic Terrorist,' to show positive, non-radical faces of Islam, and to create a modern urban notion of being a Muslim in the contemporary world; a notion to which the vast majority of Indonesian consumers can easily relate.

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[181] Subijanto, "The Visibility of a Pious Public." A notable exception of Islamic elements in popular culture during earlier eras is the music of Rhoma Irama. See William H Frederick, "Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style: Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Popular Culture," *Indonesia*, no. 34 (1982).

[182] Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia."; James B Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym," ibid.; Julia Day Howell, "Modulations of Active Piety: Professors and Televangelists as Promoters of Indonesian 'Sufisme'," ibid. (Singapore).

[183] Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."

[184] Popular Islam is of course not without controversy in Indonesia; many Muslims are concerned over the growing commodification of religion, as noted in Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere."; Said Ramadhan, "Ideologi Pasar Dalam Tayangan Ramadhan?," *Kompas*, 27 October 2003.

On the other hand, as in many classic narratives of progress, there is a flip-side to increasingly free expressions of religion in Indonesian popular culture. Censorship processes are another important site of interaction between religion and media, and throughout the reform and post-reform context, media production and consumption patterns appear to be increasingly dictated by ostensibly 'Islamic' moral parameters. One key example is the public debate, from 2006-2008, surrounding new anti-pornography legislation (RUU-APP) that proposed to extend control of pornography beyond the media into the realm of public behaviour, through the category of '*pornoaksi*' (pornoaction).[185] The RUU-APP legislation was drawn up and submitted by the MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama) Islamic leaders, and this reflects how the increasing public influence of Islam in Indonesia has allowed for what some scholars have called 'the intrusion of religion into the conceptualization of pornography and regulation.'[186] Local cultural and political commentators have pointed to a post-authoritarian power vacuum, arguing that since the end of the New Order, the Indonesian nation has never been defined in unequivocal terms, and that 'within the context of an ambiguous definition of an Indonesian nation-state, pressure groups continuously want to move the pendulum toward a nation based on religious dogma.'[187] Many young participants in my own research also note that in a more uncertain and democratic context, people are increasingly turning to religious frameworks to provide a sense of certainty, unity and stability. Other scholars characterise new moral and religious censorships as a backlash against apparently unbridled media freedom. Put simply, the period of creative and artistic experimentation following the fall of the Suharto regime – as well as rapid

[185] Pornoaction covers live performances, and also the public behaviour of everyday people. The most interesting element of this debate is that pornography has been perceived not simply as a media issue, but as a wider issue of public morality, with the impulse to regulate this proscriptively *as though* it were media. See Lindsay, "Media and Morality: Pornography Post Suharto."

[186] Ibid., 188. See also Allen, "Women, Gendered Activism and Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill.". There are plenty of other examples beyond the realm of media. The introduction of regional autonomy in Indonesia in 2001, for instance, has added the new element of *sharia*-related bylaws (*peraturan daerah* or *perda*), including anti-vice regulations (*perda maksiat*) to regulate prostitution, gambling, the sale of alcohol and pornography. According to Robin Bush, almost half the regional regulations in force in Indonesia in 2007 fell into this category of 'morality' regulations Robin Bush, "Regional Sharia Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom?," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008).

[187] Muhamad Ali, "Power Struggle Being Waged over Public Morality," *The Jakarta Post*, 1 April 2006, 129-30.

developments in media technology that defy existing media controls – has ultimately fuelled anxiety and calls for regulation. According to Jennifer Lindsay, this has resulted in 'a new public authoritarianism of moral policing at a community level, spearheaded by right-wing political Islam and facilitated by post-New Order political structures of regional autonomy.'[188] In these accounts of new moral censorships, there are clear tensions over whether Indonesia is progressing or 'developing' in the right direction. Those who support increased censorship see religious intervention in the media as an important step to ensure Indonesia progresses towards appropriate moral goals, while those who oppose censorship measures characterise religion as impeding progress towards media freedom.

Despite ongoing concerns over growing moral censorship, in the post-reform period scholars have frequently focused on the more positive 'popular piety' side of the equation outlined above. The notion of Islamic modernity, for example, has gained much attention. In his detailed ethnographic study of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Ronald Lukens-Bull proposes that *pesantren* are excellent sites in which to examine 'discursive relationships between Islam, modernity, globalisation, and identity.'[189] In his account, *pesantren* members are 'not just translating "modernity" to Indonesia, they are first imagining a modernity that needs to be reworked and then they are (re)inventing an Indonesian Islamic modernity.' He argues that the 'imagining of modernity and tradition is the first step in the (re)invention of both' and he characterises this imagining and (re)invention of tradition and imagining and (re)invention of modernity as 'two sides of the same coin.'[190] He explains how *pesantren* leaders see the negative aspects of modernity as:

> [E]ssentially the Western, if not American, trimmings on the house of modernity. As part of their appropriation of the materials of modernity and their subsequent reinvention of modernity, these leaders have created an

[188] Lindsay, "Media and Morality: Pornography Post Suharto."
[189] Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
[190] Lukens-Bull, "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Modernity and Tradition in Islamic Education in Indonesia."

> educational system to address both the educational needs of a modernizing society as well as guard it against perceived moral decay.[191]

In another rich and detailed study of 'Islamic modernities,' Leonie Schmidt writes that 'in Indonesia today, media and visual culture present perfect tools to publicly fantasize and experiment with Islamic modernities. They reflect on the question whether or not the archipelago is on the 'right path' toward the 'right kind' of modernity.'[192] Schmidt concludes that her case studies construct:

> [A] highly ambivalent discourse about modernity and about an Islamic modern future. On the one hand, the case studies display a positive attitude towards modernity. On the other hand, the case studies also articulate a negative attitude towards modernity, and express a fear and scepticism over the condition of the present.[193]

Studies like Schmidt's and Lukens-Bull's are concrete examples of the 'alternative modernity' theories outlined earlier in this chapter, being applied in the context of contemporary Indonesia. Indeed, religion is a particularly useful site for thinking past classic scholarly narratives of 'modernity.' As pointed out by Lukens-Bull, 'in much of contemporary Western scholarship, modernization is seen as being particularly problematic for Muslims.'[194] Outsider perspectives often equate the 'modern' with the Western and the 'traditional' with the Islamic, but realities are usually far more complex than this. Popular piety culture and hip urban Islam disrupt such assumptions, for Indonesian understandings of 'modernity' are not always associated with the Western, the secular, and the liberal. The 'modern Muslim' and 'modern Islam' are commonly recognised concepts as well. Scholarly stories told around 'Islamic modernity' in Indonesia echo the 'alternative modernities' trope common to scholarly stories of, and debates around, progress. Yet while theories of alternative modernities are useful in describing and interpreting

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[191] Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java,* 8. This echoes Latour's urge to 'change the common dwelling' of modernity. See Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* 145.
[192] Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture," 4.
[193] Ibid., 46.
[194] Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java,* 119-20. See also Azim, who similarly argues that 'the construction of an Islamic public space is often seen as inimical to the construction of a modern secular polity.' Firdous Azim, "Editorial Introduction: Islam, Culture and Women," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 174.

religion in contemporary Indonesia, there are some limits to the applicability of these ideas. Within the alternative modernities framework, Islam remains either a strategic resource, or a constraint, on a linear journey of progress. With this in mind, in Chapter 3 I will critically engage with the popular trope of 'Islamic modernity,' arguing that excessive focus on this apparently 'novel' pairing is often the result of overly simplistic understanding of both terms. I point instead to broader pan-religious public moralities and how these public moralities serve to challenge and/or reinforce different aspects of broader progress narratives.

Region: Traversing local traditions and national development

Unity in diversity (*bhinneka tunggal ika*) is an important national motto in Indonesia, as an archipelago comprised of over 17,000 islands and more than 300 different ethnic languages. However, not all regions are equal, and these unequal relationships between centre and periphery in Indonesia are often framed in public discussions using the language of 'development' and progress. Central governments have long subordinated the voices and interests of Indonesia's diverse regions in support of the project of 'national development.' These regions are simultaneously the subjects of 'development' (backwards, rural, uneducated people) and the source of 'development' (through local mineral and forestry wealth). In this context, local regional 'traditions' are represented in the Indonesian mediascape sometimes as a source of strength and authenticity and at other times a heavy constraint on progress. 'Modernity' is similarly characterised either as opportunity or destructive force, and in the popular urban imagination, rural communities must be guided and taught how to choose the 'right' aspects of 'modern life.' During my fieldwork in Banjarmasin, Citra, a first-year student in the literature department, told me how in her home village 'there are lots of problems, like illicit drugs and other negative impacts… they are not yet able to differentiate between the negative and positive sides of modernisation.'[195] These comments are familiar ones in Indonesia, and this section traces the ways in which this narrative, about the challenges of regional progress, ties

[195] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13.

strongly into dominant definitions of 'modernity,' 'tradition,' and 'development' as outlined in the first half of this chapter.

Local 'traditional' identities, while a real and important source of strength and subjectivity for many people, have been regularly classified and manipulated by different powerholders throughout the construction of what is now known as Indonesia. Indeed, Dutch colonial concepts of regional ethnic identity and *adat* (local customs) have remained hugely influential in shaping relations between Indonesia's centre and periphery. The notion of *adat* itself was created in the context of colonialism and is deeply tied to Dutch colonial desire for knowledge and power over the native population.[196] Tom Boellstorff points out that the Dutch administration needed an organising principle that was larger than the village and smaller than the categories of 'native' and 'Islam,' in order to effectively manage and 'develop' the colony without providing possible identity-based rallying points around which people could group and challenge colonial rule.[197] Colonial-era conceptions of local regional categories as peaceful parts of a harmonious whole, managed by an enlightened centre, were kept alive by subsequent state rulers in independent Indonesia, who have invariably placed the needs of the (urban) centre above that of the (rural) periphery. During the independence struggle and under the nationalist rhetoric of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, local regional identities were subordinated to the larger cause of the Indonesian republic.[198] After 1965, the highly centralised New Order government, with its underlying developmentalist ideology, went on to implement what was in effect internal colonisation of Indonesia, carried out in complex, often collaborative ways.[199] Part of this process involved the classification of certain villages or areas as 'underdeveloped,' with all the disempowering political implications that this entails. In 1993, the government's

[196] Patricia Spyer, "Diversity with a Difference: Adat and the New Order in Aru (Eastern Indonesia)," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (1996): 28; Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in Indonesia 1900-1942*, 43.
[197] Boellstorff, "Ethnolocality."
[198] And even at this point in the new nation, separatist tendencies were evident, particularly in Aceh, Sulawesi, and the Moluccas. See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia in Asean: Foreign Policy and Regionalism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994), 19.
[199] See Rebecca Elmhirst, "Space, Identity Politics and Resource Control in Indonesia's Transmigration Programme," *Political Geography* 18, no. 7 (1999); Tiffany Tsao, "Postcolonial Life and Death: A Process-Based Comparison of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and Ayu Utami's Saman," *Comparative Literature* 66, no. 1 (2014).

National Development Planning Board set up a three-year 'Presidential Instruction Programme for Less Developed Villages,' or *Inpres Desa Tertinggal*, which identified 20,633 *desa tertinggal* or 'villages that have been left behind,' with a combined 'poor population' of 27 million people.[200] This echoes the ways in which global developmentalist discourses classified huge segments of the world as 'underdeveloped' in order to justify increased international interventions into lives in the global South.[201] In Indonesia, officials and military personnel were sent out from Jakarta to manage the different provinces, and oversee a range of economic projects including plantations and mining. 'Transmigration' projects, where the state resettled Javanese and Madurese farmers throughout the less densely populated islands, were also common. While such policies fuelled local discontent (and separatist movements in Aceh, Papua, and East Timor), the New Order state was remarkably effective in maintaining control, through a combination of military threat and cultural policies.

Cultural policy during the New Order sought to depoliticise regional identity and local 'traditions,' as has been well documented by Keith Foulcher, who argues that the state bureaucracy incorporated 'region' into national culture through the 'museumifaction' of local visual and decorative traditions.[202] The 1983 Broad Guidelines of the State (*Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara*) specified that regional languages and arts were to be respected, 'but *only in so far as* they enrich the *national* language, arts, culture, and identities.'[203] By confining regional identity and *adat* (local customs) to the realms of art, dance, and costume, the government succeeded in placing notions of pluralism and diversity firmly outside the 'political' field, resulting in what Tod Jones calls the New Order's 'sanitised plurality,' where local identities were stripped of political content and any possibility of political mobilisation against the central state.[204] Jones has described the highly didactic role

[200] See Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 589.
[201] Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*; Esteva, "Development."
[202] Foulcher, "The Construction of an Indonesian National Culture: Patterns of Hegemony and Resistance."
[203] Cited in Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 38. Heryanto's emphasis.
[204] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 222.

of museums and cultural parks during this period, as spaces to 'display the unique traditions of each region, but always link them back to being part of a whole nation.'[205] In doing so, 'cultural difference…becomes a local variation of a shared national activity.'[206] Paired in many cases with threats of (and actual) violence, these ideological strategies allowed the state to achieve hegemonic central control over a vast archipelago, all justified by a dominant narrative of national progress and development.

The first decade of the twenty-first century, however, has seen 'outer' (usually rural or non-Java) regions of Indonesia gaining increased visibility and autonomy, both in the political sphere and also in media representations. The widespread processes of political decentralisation and local cultural revival that have taken place during this period starkly contrast with the way that the New Order state had managed and represented Indonesia's diverse regions for the three preceding decades. This has led in many cases to what has been labelled a 'revival of tradition' in Indonesian politics.[207] Increased regional representation is not limited to politics and economics: there have also been shifts in the volume and type of representation of these regions in popular culture. Inspiring and positive films and novels set in various remote parts of Indonesia have promoted awareness of regional inequalities, boosted domestic tourism, and inspired many young urban Indonesians to join voluntary teaching programs in isolated areas.[208] As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, contemporary trends in fictional representations of 'marginalised' regions of post-reform Indonesia are in some ways empowering, but in other ways continue to

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[205] Ibid., 167. On the role of '*taman budaya*' in constructing, standardising, and sanitising local 'traditions', see also Philip Yampolsky, "Forces for Change in the Regional Performing Arts of Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde* 151, no. 4 (1995): 712. Amrih Widodo, "The Stages of the State: Arts of the People and Rites of Hegemonization," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 29, no. 1 (1995): 9. For links between region and ethnic identity, see Spyer, "Diversity with a Difference: Adat and the New Order in Aru (Eastern Indonesia)." Boellstorff, "Ethnolocality." The formative period for ethnolocalities was of course the colonial era, as described in Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in Indonesia 1900-1942*; Daniel S Lev, "Colonial Law and the Genesis of the Indonesian State," *Indonesia* (1985).

[206] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 257.

[207] David Henley and Jamie S Davidson, "In the Name of Adat: Regional Perspectives on Reform, Tradition, and Democracy in Indonesia," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 4 (2008).

[208] For instance, the *Indonesia mengajar* ('Teach for Indonesia') program as described in Paul K Gellert, "Optimism and Education: The New Ideology of Development in Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, no. 3 (2015). For more detail see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

reproduce existing stereotypes of 'underdevelopment.' Such representations showcase the complex tensions within the dominant narrative of progress and development, where a push to revive local 'traditions,' and a simultaneous desire to participate in the grand narrative of global 'modernisation,' interact and compete in intricate and multifaceted ways.

This complexity can be difficult to capture and most scholarly accounts tend to describe local regional 'tradition' as either empowering or disempowering, with limited acknowledgment of overlap between these two possibilities. In terms of cultural policy, Jones has argued that decentralisation has allowed previously exploited regions, indigenous groups, and customary landholders to draw on the framework and language of 'traditional' regional knowledge and customs to contest decisions usually made by the political 'elite.' The result has been that 'in most localities, there is a trend towards more opportunities in cultural policy for tradition and locality to contest nation and modernity, from conservative and progressive positions.'[209] The implication here is that local regions, identities, cultures and 'traditions' are in a far less marginalised position than in previous years. However, the reality is more complicated, with local elites continuing to collaborate with central government in ways that do not necessarily benefit local communities.[210] Ambivalence around the imagined resources of 'modernity' and 'tradition' in processes of regional empowerment is also articulated in competing scholarly accounts of trends in literature and popular culture. In her study of '*warna lokal*' (regional flavour) in contemporary Indonesian literature, for instance, Pam Allen casts regional 'traditions' in a positive light, explaining that:

> [P]ost-Soeharto, *warna lokal* can be understood as a manifestation of an intensifying regionalism, which can be read as an expression of resistance to the 'official nationalism' that developed during the Soeharto years, resistance that has been strengthened by the process of decentralization.[211]

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[209] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 200-02.
[210] For nuanced and detailed accounts of such processes, see Schulte Nordholt, "Decentralisation in Indonesia: Less State, More Democracy?."; Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken, *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*.
[211] Pam Allen, "Menggarami Burung Terbang: Local Understandings of National History," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 167, no. 1 (2011): 3.

Allen traces Indonesian commentators' arguments 'that globalization has not delivered to Indonesia the benefits of highly evolved civilization, but rather has destroyed traditional values,' and that in this context '*warna lokal*' allows readers access into 'local ways of thinking and interpreting the world.'[212] In contrast, Brent Luvaas' study on the 'deterritorialised' global sounds of Indonesian pop music characterises 'local tradition' as in many ways redundant.[213] He argues that although there has been a tendency in anthropology, ethnomusicology, and related disciplines to read the local as a 'heroic act of refusal' and 'as if it were a kind of default mode of resistance against the hegemonic forces of global capitalism,' this is not always how localisation is experienced on the ground.[214] In the Indonesian case, Luvaas argues, in contrast to the more positive take offered by Allen, ethnic traditions have become 'a stale, hollow version of themselves, museumified, standardized, and frozen in time.' It is no wonder, then, contends Luvaas, that:

> [Y]oung Indonesians find few resources for creative expression in such local identification. The 'local' they have known has become almost irredeemably tainted, first by colonial authority, and later by the nationalist project.[215]

Again, these competing light and dark visions of local 'traditions' as either empowering or constraining forces closely echo the contradictions found in centuries of global debates around such keywords, as described in the opening sections of this chapter.

Scholarly accounts of regional 'traditions' in Indonesia often fall into the same genre as the 'invention of tradition' theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. That is, tradition conceptualised as 'a resource, strategically employed (or not employed) by certain (but not all) of a community's members in pursuit of individual or collective goals.'[216] This conceptualisation captures the potential of local 'tradition' to either

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[212] Ibid., 4.
[213] Brent Luvaas, "Dislocating Sounds: The Deterritorialization of Indonesian Indie Pop," *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 2 (2009): 248.
[214] Indeed, it is often suggested that by maintaining traditions despite pressures to 'modernise' (Adams 1998; Kingston 1991; Tsing 1993), or hybridizing imported cultural forms with indigenous genres (Appadurai 1996; Condry 2001; Diehl 2002; Kulick and Willson 2002; Miller 1992), marginalised ethnic groups are using regional identities as a source of empowerment against transnational global forces. All cited in ibid.
[215] Ibid., 623.
[216] Robert Tonkinson, ""Tradition' in Oceania, and Its Relevance in a Fourth World Context (Australia)," *FOLK: Journal of the Danish Ethnographic Society* 42 (2000). See also a

bring benefits to the community or be co-opted for elite purposes. However, there are limitations to this story, for it often reproduces a linear narrative of progress, in which regional 'tradition' and identity are either restraining or empowering in developing local communities. I seek to explore the potential for further nuances and contradictions within this narrative, and to this end in Chapter 3 I examine tensions between powerful 'developmentalist' discourses and neoliberal ideologies of 'self-help,' which permeate discussions around regional identity and progress the Indonesian mediascape. Later, in Chapter 5, I return to these issues when I explore how fictional representations of regional 'tradition' in Indonesian literature intersect with representations of gender and history, in ways which sometimes challenge, and at other times reinforce dominant linear narratives of progress.

Gender: The 'modern' family as a microcosm of nation

As in the case of religion and region, gender representations in Indonesia are linked in complex and contradictory ways to dominant ideas around 'modernity,' 'tradition,' 'development,' and national identity. The productive nuclear family, as a building block of 'national development,' implies certain gender roles and hierarchies, and deviation from such roles can cause anxieties. Debates around gender and sexuality, as highly charged subjects of both public moral panics and personal everyday desires, are therefore a revealing site for examining internal contradictions in dominant progress narratives. As I have indicated, the keyword 'modernity' is multiple in its meanings and organisations, and this is especially so in the case of gender.[217] In this section, I outline key historical trajectories of gender representations in Indonesia, and then turn to shifting ideal gender types in the post-

number of other theorists who have shown that tradition and how it is imagined and (re)invented are inherently political processes Briggs, "The Politics of Discursive Authority in Research in the Invention of Tradition."; Schulz, "Praise without Enchantment: Griots, Broadcast Media, and the Politics of Tradition in Mali."; Singh, "Tradition, U.M.N.O. And Political Succession the Malaysia."

[217] For insightful analysis of the complex interactions between ideas of modernity and gender in various parts of the world, see Aihwa Ong and Michael G Peletz, eds., *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Saba Mahmood, "Politics of Piety: The Feminist Subject and the Islamic Revival," (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

reform Indonesian mediascape, focusing particularly on how gender and sexuality feature in stories around progress.

In Indonesian public debate and scholarship, contemporary Indonesian gender roles and sexualities are generally perceived as having been shaped by a complex combination of pre-existing local 'traditional' gender norms, Dutch colonial ideologies, Islamic religious worldviews, nationalist struggles, authoritarian and patriarchal New Order government policies, and images from the global mediascape.[218] While gender roles have always been multiple and contested, and no regime has ever held unchallenged hegemony over gender representation and practice, it is possible to draw some broad-brush descriptions of 'ideal gender types' promoted by various powerholders throughout Indonesian history. Most studies of pre-colonial gender roles in the archipelago describe the role of women as active and public, as in other regions throughout Southeast Asia, playing a prominent role in both family and business matters.[219] Gender and sexuality have also been considered fluid in many parts of the region, with transgender individuals holding important positions in traditional ceremonies and power structures throughout the archipelago.[220] Yet in contrast to the scholarly accounts that stress flexibility and syncretism, other studies point to more restrictive local gender roles, often linked to class distinctions.[221] As part of colonisation processes, Dutch colonial influence

[218] See Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*; Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell, *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development*, vol. 8 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002); Boellstorff, "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian 'Gay' and 'Lesbi' Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World."; Murtagh, "Gay, Lesbi and Waria Audiences in Indonesia."; Evelyn Blackwood, "Transnational Sexualities in One Place: Indonesian Readings," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 2 (2005); "Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 4 (2005).

[219] Suzanne Brenner, *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves* (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Nancy J Smith-Hefner, "Women and Politeness: The Javanese Example," *Language in Society* 17, no. 4 (1988).

[220] Blackwood, "Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia."

[221] The case of upper-class Javanese '*priyayi*' shows how class-based demands of family honour resulted in seclusion and early marriage for girls, as described in Nancy J Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Suharto Indonesia." A particularly famous account of these restrictions can be found in the published letters of Kartini, a young *priyayi* woman who has since been immortalised as a national heroine for her activism on behalf female education and emancipation. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Kartini's letters are part of complex interaction between upper-class Javanese and colonial gender expectations taking place during this period, as examined in Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*.

introduced puritan European gender norms idealising strong breadwinning men and chaste, domestic, motherly women, which resonated in some ways with emerging Islamic gender ideals that were gaining traction throughout Indonesia.[222] As has been demonstrated in many contexts, the colonial experience itself heavily impacts upon local gender identities, with colonised men impelled to assert their masculinity through increased control over women, as a response to their disempowerment under colonial regimes.[223] Colonial legacies and sensitivities remain powerful in contemporary contexts, and the case of gender roles is no exception.

Following Indonesian independence, under Sukarno's 'guided democracy,' the growing political influence of socialist and communist parties promoted ideologies of gender equality, labour reform, and universal education. The Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, known as Gerwani), which eventually became affiliated with the steadily growing Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI), campaigned for rural Indonesian women's labour rights, and political involvement, alongside more everyday needs like child-care facilities, small-scale credit cooperatives and healthcare.[224] Such campaigns were, however, relatively short-lived. Following the violent anti-communist mass killings

[222] It is important to note that although Dutch policies and emerging religious norms did indeed restrict gender roles in Indonesia, these restrictions were not simply received by a passive population, but resulted in a range of both compromises and resistances throughout the archipelago, as explained in Blackwood, "Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia."; Laurie J Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996). For a detailed study of discourses around 'modernising' women in Bali in the 1920s and 1930s, see Lyn Parker, "Domestic Science and the Modern Balinese Woman," in *Love, Sex and Power: Women in Southeast Asia*, ed. Susan Blackburn (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2001).

[223] Several scholars have traced in detail the impacts of this in the Indonesian context. According to Wieringa, 'the processes of colonization, with its attendant phenomena of the feminization and eroticization of the colonized have left deep scars, resulting in particular sensitivities.' See Saskia E Wieringa, "The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 1 (2003): 72. These sensitivities persist long after the end of formal colonisation, as noted by Hatley, who describes how in Indonesia 'the spectre of the West as a source of threat to male power looms large, and contributes significantly to ideological attempts at control and containment' of women's bodies. See Barbara Hatley, "Postcoloniality and the Feminine in Modern Indonesian Literature," in *Clearing a Space: Postcolonial Readings of Modern Indonesian Literature*, ed. K Foulcher and T Day (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 147. See also Clark, who observes that in Indonesia 'the rhetorical castigation of feminism in the 1980s and 90s was very similar to the widespread fear associated with the threat of the Western-influenced 'modern woman' in the 1920s and 30s.' Clark, "Indonesian Cinema: Exploring Cultures of Masculinity, Censorship and Violence," 42.

[224] Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*.

of 1965-1966, Suharto's new military regime enacted perhaps one of the most striking shifts in gender representation in Indonesian history. Saskia Wieringa offers a particularly eloquent account of how Gerwani as an organisation, as well as more general notions of militarised revolutionary women and active female sexuality, were heavily demonised at this time.[225] The new government fabricated and circulated graphic stories about how members of Gerwani danced partially naked around the mutilated bodies of military generals, brandishing knives and severed penises; these stories were later to be immortalised in propaganda films and national history museums as a kind of warning about what can happen when women stray from their appropriate role as demure housewife and mother.[226] For men, meanwhile, hyper-masculine militarism and strong patriarchal order were valorised as the gender ideal. In official government representations, this extreme gender division (and its heterosexual implications) was to continue for most of the next thirty years.

New Order gender ideology was deeply linked to the broader state ideology of *pembangunan* (development). Rigg et al. point out that this ideology was highly patriarchal, embedding 'modern Indonesian women firmly within the domestic sphere, identifying their role in the modernization effort clearly as mother and wife,' and Patrick Guinness notes how national groups like the Family Welfare Association (PKK or *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*) prescribed specific roles for the 'modern' Indonesian housewife: 'faithful companion, household manager, producer of children (preferably two), mother and educator, and good citizen.'[227] Reinforced by consistent use of terms like *kekeluargaan* (family values) in reference to modern

[225] Saskia E Wieringa, "Sexual Metaphors in the Change from Soekarno's Old Order to Soeharto's New Order in Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (1998); "Sexual Slander and the 1965/66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41, no. 4 (2011).
[226] Blackburn describes how at the Lubang Buaya Memorial Park and Museum's Pancasila monument, 'the freize on the monument shows women 'before' and 'after' the New Order regime. 'Before' is clearly meant to depict the stereotype of Gerwani women: they are indeed militant, shouting, gesticulating and generally in revolt. 'Afterwards' shows women in what the army presumably considered their rightful orderly role, standing quietly in the background and nursing babies.' See Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, 157.
[227] Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 586; Patrick Guinness, "Local Society and Culture," in *Indonesia's New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Transformation*, ed. Hal Hill (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 283. See also Klopfer, *Confronting Modernity in a Rice-Producing Community: Contemporary Values and Identity among the Highland Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia*, 92-93.

Indonesian identity, and *Bapak pembangunan* (father of development), in reference to Suharto himself, the New Order state idealised productive, heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear families as microcosms of the nation and important building blocks of national development.[228] Official government ideologies, which relied heavily on gendered constructions of the ideal citizen and family, had concrete impacts on media and popular cultural representations in New Order Indonesia, through a range of censorship and self-censorship mechanisms.[229] Of course ideal representations did not always match reality and practice, yet at the same time, popular cultural representations like cinema undoubtedly served to produce and reproduce dominant myths about gender.[230] Several important analyses of gender representations in New Order Indonesian cinema focus on the idealised role of women as wife and mother, in contrast to the sexually compromised 'fallen woman,' who (even if she is simply an innocent victim of circumstance) is inevitably punished by the logic of New Order narratives, often with death.[231] The gendered narrative logic of New Order cinema, and to a certain extent, literature as well, was far-reaching and powerful, maintaining an image of 'natural' (heterosexual) binary gender that orients (submissive) women to subordinate, supportive roles tasks and (military) men to leadership positions in both public and private domains.

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[228] See Heryanto, *Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia*, 25.

[229] See, amongst others, Julia Suryakusuma, "State Ibuism: The Social Construction of Womanhood in the Indonesian New Order" (MA Thesis, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1987); Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*; Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens, *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[230] In analysing gaps between reality and ideal representation, class is very important, as amongst lower classes, working outside the home was required for women to survive and explicit female sexuality was usually seen as more acceptable (especially in performing arts like *dangdut*). See Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Suharto Indonesia."; Michele Ford and Lyn Parker, *Women and Work in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Heryanto has added that during the New Order, 'sexual pleasure in what came to be called "traditional" cultures was tolerated.' Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*. Significantly, however, these examples were never framed as the 'ideal type' of modern Indonesian citizen. For the important role of cinema in reproducing gender mythologies, see Anneke Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 7.

[231] Karl G Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Krishna Sen, "Repression and Resistance: Interpretations of the Feminine in New Order Cinema," in *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, ed. Virginia Matheson Hooker (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Amidst the euphoria as Suharto stepped down in 1998, there was a sense that everything was now open to question, including these gender ideologies. In terms of media representation, many more female novelists and filmmakers emerged; this shift in who does the work of representation was significant, and reflected structural changes with regard to gender within the creative industries.[232] In the increasingly diverse reform-era mediascape, in the work of both male and female storytellers, the kinds of ideal gender types fractured and proliferated, with no seemingly dominant or hegemonic ideal for several years. Within the growing literary genres of 'teen-lit,' 'chick-lit' and 'Islamic-lit,' and their regular film adaptations, a wide range of gender types were accorded legitimacy by publishers, producers and audiences.[233] Tomboy teenagers, Islamic feminists, sensitive, pious and peace-loving men, highly mobile sexually active women, and gay, bisexual, and transgendered characters featured on national pages and screens in an unprecedented manner.[234] In examining the post-reform Indonesian mediascape, however, it is important to take into account how the dizzying diversity of the reform period has resulted in a significant amount of backlash against certain representations of gender and sexuality, particularly non-

[232] For details on some of these structural changes, and their implications for women, see Hapsari Dwiningtyas Susistyani, 'The construction of women in contemporary Indonesian women's cinema' in Sen and Hill, *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*. See also Thomas Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry" (MA Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2011), 110-11. Also, for the diversification of gender representations in more traditional performance art during the reform era, see Hatley, "Hearing Women's Voices, Contesting Women's Bodies in Post New Order Indonesia."

[233] In literature, the so-called '*sastra wangi*' (literally, 'fragrant literature') trend catapulted female authors discussing sex and sexuality to centre stage of the national literary scene. See the special issue of *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, volume 41, no. 2 (2007) for an extended discussion of the *sastra wangi* phenomenon. The debates around Ayu Utami's first novel, *Saman* (1998), widely credited as starting the trend, are highly illustrative of the different ways in which representations of female sexuality in literature are interpreted. Compare, for example, "New Directions in Indonesian Women's Writing? The Novel Saman," *Asian Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (1999). Katrin Bandel, "Heteronormalitas Dan Falosentrisme Ayu Utami," *Kompas* 2005. The term '*sastra wangi*' has now disappeared, replaced by more varied ideas of female authorship, which has since expanded to include a wide range of writers from young teenage girls through to Islamic feminists. See Maya Sutedja-Liem, "Idealising the Tomboy: Representations of the Ideal Teenage Girl in Indonesian 'Teenlit'," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 41, no. 2 (2007); Tineke Hellwig, "Abidah El Khalieqy's Novels: Challenging Patriarchal Islam," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 167, no. 1 (2011).

[234] Some of these characters have existed in Indonesian popular culture for many decades (especially in regional languages), but were never so mainstream in national popular culture before this period.

normative sexualities and LGBT communities.[235] I propose that one reason for this is that the links between national progress and heterosexual nuclear families run deep in the popular imagination.

Relationships between gender and the nation-state are well studied in a range of global contexts, and feminist scholars point out that women in particular are often seen as the embodiment of national or community identity. Therefore, as noted by Nira Yuval-Davis and Valentine Moghadam, in times of social upheaval, women's bodies and behaviour often become a focus of attention, and generate tensions and debates around women's 'proper' role in society.[236] This has certainly been the case in Indonesia, with debates around topics like pornography and sexuality claiming a central position in media and scholarly accounts. Local and foreign observers debate over whether explicit sexual content is empowering or demeaning, whether feminism and Islam can be successfully combined, whether or not tolerance of non-normative sexualities is a necessary hallmark of 'modern' society. Some of these questions appear to have self-evident answers in 'Western' scholarship, but often the answers are not so clear-cut within Indonesia. Moreover, when outside observers decry contemporary intolerances around sexuality or gender in Indonesia, it is important to acknowledge a certain level of global complicity in the narratives of progress and developmentalism that underpinned New Order patriarchal heterosexual *pembangunan* ideologies during the Cold War, and deeper histories of colonial moralist civilising discourses. In this thesis I seek to trace some of these histories, and their implications for gender-based identity politics in Indonesia. Chapter 5, in

[235] At the time of writing in 2016 there was serious and widespread public backlash against the legitimacy of Indonesian LGBT identities, as has been most eloquently summarised in Boellstorff, "Against State Straightism: Five Principles for Including L.G.B.T. Indonesians."
[236] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," *Ethnic and racial studies* 16, no. 4 (1993); Valentine M Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994). For other important feminist theory on gender and nation, see also Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (London: Pandora Press, 1989); Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Sexuality, Nationalism and Race in Singapore," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. A Parker, et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* (1993). For an Indonesia specific discussion, see Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Moral Visions: Globalization and Gender Controversies in Indonesia." Also Brenner, who argues that women often bear the burden as indicators of modernity, and demonstrates that in Indonesia 'images of women more than men have been used to signify the transition from tradition to modernity.' Suzanne Brenner, "On the Public Intimacy of the New Order: Images of Women in the Popular Indonesian Print Media," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 67 (1999): 16.

particular, closely examines shifting fictional representations of ideal gender roles, and how such representations in some ways challenge but in other ways reproduce dominant stereotypes and narratives of progress.

History: Linear trajectories of development and erasure of state violence

Official national historiographies tend to construct linear journeys of national progress, while at the same time seeking to erase potentially unsavoury or violent incidents. In Indonesia, histories of political violence are often deeply submerged, as official government and military narratives have long sought to delegitimise alternative accounts of state violence.[237] The story of the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings is a foundational example of this. Then little-known army general Suharto came to power on the pretext of crushing an alleged coup in which six army generals were kidnapped and killed. Though details of this event remain unclear, the coup was attributed to a group within the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, or PKI). In the months that followed, the Sukarno government was overthrown and more than a million Indonesians with supposed links to the PKI or leftist political agendas were killed, tortured, and incarcerated, leaving the nation profoundly traumatised.[238] Subsequent government versions of this history, including the famous propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (‘*The Treachery of the PKI’s 30 September Movement*’), give a detailed account of the alleged coup, portraying the Indonesian communist party as evil and bloodthirsty, and the military as saviours preventing the country descending into chaos.[239] The massacres are completely absent from this New Order retelling of events. The government’s ‘master narrative’ of 1965 and the ominous silence surrounding the mass killings became a key strategy of the New Order’s authoritarianism, where fear was kept

[237] This practice has very deep histories stretching back to the colonial era and beyond, as examined in Freek Colombijn and J Thomas Lindblad, eds., *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).
[238] See Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*; Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto’s Coup D’etat in Indonesia*; Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965-68*.
[239] Arifin C Noer, "Pengkhianatan G30s/P.K.I.," (Indonesia: Perum Produksi Film Negara, 1984). For a good account of the various ways in which official versions of this event have been constructed and propagated, see McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia’s Past*.

alive through periodic anti-communist witch-hunts.[240] Notions of 'modernity' and 'development' are central to this narrative. In official state representations, 'communists' are portrayed as anti-modern and anti-progress in their rejection of 'the West,' while at the same time 'too modern' in their apparent amoral atheism and supposedly liberal sexual attitudes. In such stories the mass violence can be dismissed as an unfortunate but necessary step along the way to creating an ideal 'modern Indonesia,' by excluding 'undesirable' elements. This master narrative remains highly influential even in the post-reform era, where many people complicit in the massacres remain in positions of power.

Despite the ongoing influence of official histories in Indonesia, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw an undercurrent of alternative memories and voices appear in a range of discursive spaces.[241] Victims have explored new spaces to openly discuss their traumatic experiences, and 'new' local, ethnic, auto-biographical and social accounts have emerged to challenge the military version of history.[242] In addition, artists, film-makers, and authors who grew up with the New Order version of history have attempted to reimagine and reconstruct past events.[243] This has resulted in the official, militarised, epic historical narratives promoted by the New Order regime becoming increasingly supplanted by more fragmented, plural, personal narratives of traumatic historical experience. However, these alternative histories have often been highly contentious, and attempts by victims' descendants to excavate mass graves, re-bury loved ones, and even to simply participate in

[240] Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*. These witch-hunts have continued well beyond the New Order. For instance, his decree legalising communism led to President Abduraman Wahid's removal from office, as recounted in David Bourchier, "Conservative Political Ideology in Indonesia: A Fourth Wave?," in *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History*, ed. Grayson Lloyd and Shannon Smith (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).
[241] van Klinken, "The Battle for History after Suharto: Order, Development, and Pressure for Change."
[242] Putu Oka Sukanta, ed. *Breaking the Silence: Survivors Speak About 1965-66 Violence in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2014); Baskara T Wardaya, ed. *Truth Will Out: Indonesian Accounts of the 1965 Mass Violence* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2013); Mery Kolimon, Liliya Wetangterah, and Karen Campbell-Nelson, eds., *Forbidden Memories: Women's Experiences of 1965 in Eastern Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2015).
[243] For example, Eka Kurniawan, *Cantik Itu Luka* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004); Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*; Chudori, *Pulang*; Pamuntjak, *Amba*.

discussion panels on the topic, have been met with official backlash.[244] Furthermore, a close reading of many 'new' accounts of history can also reveal some of the limits of exploring alternative histories in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. I propose that this is due to the effectiveness of dominant stories of progress and 'development' in shaping assumptions around Indonesian history. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, in many of the contemporary Indonesian novels that critically reimagine history, focus and sympathy lies with 'innocent victims' (non-communists) targeted in the killings; little attention is paid to re-assessing whether 'real' communists deserved their fate. Moreover, such accounts frequently give a sense that the violence was the result not of a concerted military campaign, but the result of the mass chaos that occurs when 'traditional' people embrace 'modern' ideologies in the 'wrong' way. This ties back to *pembangunan* developmentalist ideology, in which 'the justification for greater state intervention and control remained the state's characterization of Indonesian society as backward and immature.'[245] Such a characterisation served to justify violent state intrusion into the course of Indonesian history. Ultimately, because of the ongoing resilience of this *pembangunan* ideology, it can be difficult to fully challenge master narratives of history even within seemingly critical reappraisals.

Keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' function in complex ways in scholarly accounts of history, violence, and nation. Ashis Nandy has argued in the South Asian context that the violence of partition genocide is often understood as 'part of an epic journey towards a modern nation-state' which is used to 'explain away instances of enormous, unnecessary human suffering as necessary sacrifices for a larger cause.'[246] Similar understandings of history as an inevitable linear journey of progress frame many mainstream accounts of violence within Indonesia. Meanwhile, foreign observers often construct a narrative of 'failed modernity' around histories of violence. For instance, Geoffrey Robinson's 1995 account of violence in Bali

[244] For an account of the controversy surrounding mass grave excavation, see Katharine McGregor, "Sensitive Truths," *Inside Indonesia* 99, no. Jan-Mar (2010). For police cancellations of 1965 discussion panels, see Adrian Vickers and Ariel Heryanto, "Ubud Festival Affair Reflects New Order Mindset," *Asian Studies Association of Australia*, 8 November 2015.
[245] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 152.
[246] Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.

attributes the 1965-1966 killings to the combined legacies of ancient warrior kingdoms and colonial experiences coming in contact with forces of 'modernity.'[247] Such accounts echo the dominant meta-narratives of progress, 'development,' and 'modernity' that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. As noted by Harry Harootunian:

> History, when not serving the nation from which it is usually indistinguishable, has provided the narrative template for those societies which had not yet achieved the status of modernity… [and do not] conform to the normative social and historical time of a capitalist modern present.[248]

Indonesian history and its 'experiment with national modernity,' like that of many countries in the so-called developing world, is described in some scholarly accounts with a tone of disappointment, as a history of lack, of failure that continues into the present with the perceived failures of democracy and national reform.[249] Such accounts serve to obscure complex histories and erase global complicities in Indonesian state violence. In this thesis, I follow more complex and nuanced historical approaches, such as those taken by scholars like Freek Colombijn, Henk Schulte Nordholt, Katherine McGregor, Douglas Kammen, and John Roosa.[250] One of the ways in which I attempt to add further nuance to these scholarly understandings of history and violence is by closely examining intersections across all four sites of contestation I have discussed in this section. For instance, narratives of historical violence are often deeply linked with questions of gender, region and religion, and I propose that by examining in particular how powerful stories of

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[247] Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995). See also Elson, who places much of the blame for the violence on nationalist politicians for their 'lack of a clear sense of purpose,' for the nation. Robert Elson, *The Idea of Indonesia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 160.

[248] Harootunian, "'Modernity' and the Claims of Untimeliness," 367.

[249] I take the description 'Indonesia's experiment with national modernity' from Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Although her work does not deal explicitly with histories of violence in Indonesia, it is a highly illustrative turn of phrase in this case.

[250] See Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup D'etat in Indonesia*; Kammen and McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965-68*; McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past*; Schulte Nordholt, "A Genealogy of Violence."; Freek Colombijn, "Explaining the Violent Solution in Indonesia," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2002).

progress have operated in similar ways across these four sites, we can better understand the complex social and political realities of the present.

This section has traced how local and global progress narratives, and their central keywords 'modernity' and 'development' structure Indonesian public discourse around four key sites of identity politics: religion, region, gender and history. I have pointed to the ways in which scholarly accounts draw on these convenient yet deceptively complicated keywords in analysing these sites. A brief review of the titles of scholarly works across a variety of disciplines during the first decade of the twenty-first century further illustrates this point. In studies of gender and sexuality, we can read about 'Women, wealth, and modernity in Java,' 'Female sexuality in Indonesian girls' magazines: Modern appearance, traditional attitude,' 'Indonesian tales of the phone and modernity,' 'Women in Asia: Tradition, modernity, and globalisation.'[251] In studies focused on religion, central themes include 'Negotiating identity and modernity in Muslim Java,' 'Nahdlatul Ulama, traditional Islam and modernity in Indonesia,' 'Disasters and the representations of tradition and modernity,' 'Muslim attitudes towards modernity and identity,' 'Women, Islam and Modernity.'[252] Turning to the politics of region and political decentralisation, we encounter 'Modernity, history and ethnicity: Indonesian and Acehnese nationalism in conflict,' and 'Minorities, modernity and the emerging nation.'[253] Even studies that do not explicitly use this term often implicitly describe narratives associated with dominant ideas around modernity and progress. While these authors acknowledge in

[251] Brenner, *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java*; Suzie Handajani, "Female Sexuality in Indonesian Girl's Magazine: Modern Appearance, Traditional Attitude," *Antropologi Indonesia* 30, no. 1 (2006); Barendregt, "Sex, Cannibals, and the Language of Cool: Indonesian Tales of the Phone and Modernity."; Louise P Edwards and Mina Roces, *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity, and Globalisation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[252] Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*; Greg Fealy and Greg Barton, *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1996); Judith Schlehe, "Anthropology of Religion: Disasters and the Representations of Tradition and Modernity," *Religion* 40, no. 2 (2010); Meuleman, *Islam in an Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes Towards Modernity and Identity*; Linda Rae Bennett, *Women, Islam and Modernity: Single Women, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Contemporary Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005).

[253] Edward Aspinall, "Modernity, History and Ethnicity: Indonesian and Acehnese Nationalism in Conflict," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2002); Gerry van Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation: Christians in Indonesia, a Biographical Approach* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003).

passing the complexity and internal contradictions of terms like 'modernity,' I propose that this is not sufficient, for the continued use of these keywords can reinforce dominant global narratives of progress, limit analytical interpretations, oversimplify complex realities, and strengthen hierarchies. Often debates around religion, region, gender, or history are more about elite power relations and defence of the status quo than they are about abstract forces of 'modernity.' For instance, the political elites and *preman* gangsters who are behind many public protests in Indonesia are less concerned with the image of Islam, or women's sex lives, or people searching for the remains of loved ones killed in 1965, than they are with maintaining power and political legitimacy by defending a certain narrative version of historical progress. In post-reform Indonesia, diverse and multiple authorities and representations are solidifying and converging, which makes this thesis a timely examination. Within this multiplicity of authorities, media representations and identity markers, keywords like 'modernity' frequently feature, but there are also so many examples of ambiguity and complexity that can complicate dominant linear narratives of progress. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to show how a more nuanced understanding of both the pervasiveness and internal contradictions of progress narratives can help us, as scholars, to engage more effectively with contemporary identity politics.

Concluding remarks

Stories and language matter, and examining powerful keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' is an important strategy in addressing representational inequalities in contemporary scholarship. Examining how and why certain definitions of these terms have attained dominance can reveal power relations and hierarchies within scholarly knowledge production. Despite convincing critiques, the progress narrative, and its central keywords 'modernity' and 'development,' remains strong and resilient. These kinds of keywords are indeed an important tool for understanding complex realities. They can reduce complex realities into more manageable and digestible stories. Dilip Gaonkar has described 'modernity' as having 'an almost iridescent quality; its contours shift depending on the angle of interrogation,' and I suggest that it is precisely this quality that allows the term to be

used to describe a whole range of complex processes.[254] This is why words like 'modernity' and 'tradition' are used in such a wide variety of ways, sometimes contradictory and sometimes unexpected ones. This is also why we see such analytical confusion when trying to contest or grapple with them. In Roger Keesing's work on invented traditions (*kastom*) in Oceania, it is clear that the power of the *kastom* discourse lies in its potential to disguise and mediate contradictions. They key symbol, '*kastom*,' is vague and vacuous and therefore it facilitates the establishment of a superficial consensus, which disguises underlying differences:

> The diversity of meanings Melanesians attribute to kastom underlines the way such symbols do not carry meanings: they evoke them. Their very abstractness and lack of precise content allow a consensus that would otherwise be impossible, among people whose material circumstance, class interest, and ethnic affiliations are different and often deeply divided.[255]

Naoki Sakai's description of the 'immoderately overdetermined' nature of 'the West,' also resonates here:

> [I]t is impossible to verify that the West is either a geographic territory with an affiliated population, or a unified cultural and social formation. Its indexing function changes according to the contingent conditions of its particular use in each instance it is applied. One may expect to find some substance underlying the many uses of this appellation, but quickly one realizes how hard it is to establish any coherence among the varied instances in which the West is called forth. The West can easily mean a different thing each time. It is excessively overdetermined.[256]

Another strikingly similar characterisation is Lawrence Grossberg's anti-definition of 'capitalism':

> there is no such thing as Capitalism, singular… Not only is capitalism also plural and heterogeneous, there are only specific capitalisms, the forms of which are always overdetermined. That is, capitalism itself has no identity, no essence, and no inside that defines it, once and for all, as being exactly what it is. Instead, it is radically empty… overdetermined by its outside,

[254] Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, 15.
[255] Tonkinson and Keesing, "Reinventing Traditional Culture: The Politics of Kastom in Island Melanesia," 299.
[256] Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*," 542.

> nothing but an effect of the articulation of a variety of economic processes, practices, and relations.[257]

Such descriptions could equally apply to the use of 'modernity' discourse in the humanities and social sciences. Like 'kastom,' 'The West,' and 'capitalism,' what we mean by 'modernity' can be ambiguous and incongruous; however, therein often lies the power of the term. 'Modernity' has become a preferred metaphor for 'encoding and decoding' (in the words of Stuart Hall) a wide range of social changes and historical processes.[258] In Hall's assessment of the persistent 'tradition/modernity' dichotomy, the most important question is not how to escape or deny this binary, but rather, 'you have to keep asking why the binaries appear.'[259] In the spirit of Hall's approach, my purpose in this chapter has been to examine how and why keywords like 'modernity,' 'tradition,' and 'development' have become such powerful tools for describing complex social realities.

All too often, these kind of words contain hierarchical dualisms, ideological implications and disempowering legacies. The narratives of progress that they legitimise prioritise certain linear trajectories, and erase deep global complicities in poverty and inequality. As Germond-Duret has noted, the dualisms implied in narratives around 'tradition' and 'modernity' can deny other possibilities outside such binary thinking.[260] Many scholars, including poststructuralist theorists have made similar points.[261] Dualisms and binaries allow for 'positive self-representation and negative other representation' and imply classification 'placing human beings into the categories in which they "naturally" belong.'[262] Binary oppositions are

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[257] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 125.
[258] Hall, "Coding and Encoding in the Television Discourse." On linguistic theories of metaphor, see Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
[259] Stuart Hall et al., eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 61.
[260] Germond-Duret, "Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Binary Thinking, Indigenous Peoples and Normalisation," 1544.
[261] For instance, poststructuralist thinkers such as Jakobson highlight the sense of 'markedness' and 'unmarkedness' that underpin dualisms, and for Derrida, one of the primary aims of his work is to deconstruct binary couples. See Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985), 85; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); *Positions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[262] On self and other, see Teun A Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary C.D.A: A Place for Diversity," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 103. On classification and hierarchisation, see Roxane

essentialising, as they imply the unity of each group, and in doing so create 'a sense of otherness and exclusion.'[263] Moreover, the stories of progress in which these dualisms feature are deeply entwined with powerful colonial ideologies and neoliberal modernisation theories that still underpin so much contemporary thought. Colonial systems of language, capital, patronage, immigration, trade, education and cultural influence are still intact throughout the globe, and even in some respects getting stronger.[264] Postcolonial theory has made some inroads in challenging ongoing colonial ideologies, but has not completely succeeded in shifting powerful ideas about progress and backwardness, which can have serious negative impacts, as has been well studied in critiques of development. Developmentalism is an important example of how underlying exploitations and structural inequalities can be rendered invisible by powerful narratives of progress.

I am wary that it can be 'all too easily cathartic' to attack the deep links between ideas around 'development' and 'modernity' and processes of colonialism and inequality, and that projects of deconstruction often end up giving a privileged position back to the concept being deconstructed. As Margaret Hillenbrand has pointed out with regard to 'bashing' the injudicious application of Western theory in non-Western contexts, 'people have been doing this for years now, and the pious glow it generates can easily distract attention from the graver problem at hand.'[265] However, I believe that continued critical engagement with dominant stories of progress remains a highly important and worthwhile endeavour. For although its central keywords like 'modernity' are 'just words' they can shape worldviews, reinforce inequalities and injustices, and obscure complexities and alternative possibilities. Ann Stoler has argued that the 'power of categories rests in their capacity to impose the realities they ostensibly only describe,' and therefore classification is often 'not a benign cultural act but a potent political one.[266] Such classification can over-simplify complex realities around local histories and contexts,

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Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 10.

[263] Patrick Fitzsimons and Graham Smith, "Philosophy and Indigenous Cultural Transformation," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 32, no. 1 (2000): 32.

[264] Gillen and Ghosh, *Colonialism & Modernity*, 5.

[265] Margaret Hillenbrand, "Communitarianism, or, How to Build East Asian Theory " *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 324.

[266] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 8.

as I have demonstrated in my review of different sites of contestation and identity politics in post-reform Indonesia. By drawing on the work of Raymond Williams and using a keywords approach to terms like 'modernity,' I have sought here to provide an 'extra edge of awareness' in understanding and addressing social and representational inequalities within classic narratives of progress in the social sciences.[267] I hope that this cultural studies approach to the idea of progress and its central keywords 'modernity' and 'development' can function as a complementary analysis to critiques within development studies more broadly.

This chapter has explored various scholarly stories told around 'modernity' and 'development' in the contemporary academic context. I have focused in particular on postcolonial efforts to broaden or reframe classic narratives of progress from 'Western' social sciences, and also critical development studies research on the concrete negative impacts such narratives can have on real populations of people globally. I also examined the specific ways that ideas of progress and 'development' have operated in Indonesia, from colonial, nationalist and authoritarian legacies through to contemporary debates around religion, region, gender, and history. As a type of storytelling, academic scholarship is a highly complex, self-referential and often reflexive genre. We can sometimes see a cyclical pattern of certain narratives that emerge from academic scholarship impacting media reportage and everyday conversations, and then being analysed and reproduced in scholarly work once more. Importantly, my own thesis forms part of this scholarly canon, and in the final chapter, I will return to this issue, and reflect further on my own position within the politics of knowledge production. Throughout the rest of this thesis, I closely examine examples of progress narratives in contemporary Indonesian film and fiction, audience attitudes, and public debates, focusing especially on how different versions of such stories can either challenge or reinforce inequalities and exclusions across the important sites of identity politics I outlined earlier. Chapter 3 will move more closely into the contemporary Indonesian mediascape, exploring the transformative power attributed to popular narratives by audiences and public figures, and heated debates in contemporary Indonesia around prescribing or proscribing certain kinds of entertainment media and certain types of stories.

[267] Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 24.

Chapter 3

Stories in the Mediascape: Self-help, Censorship, and the Power of Popular Narratives

The next genre of storytelling I focus on is public debate. In this chapter, I closely examine the social context of popular cultural consumption in contemporary Indonesia and the intimate links between popular texts, self-development narratives, and public moralities. Popular texts, including films and novels, sit at a site of both anxiety and hope around correct and incorrect adoption of 'modernity' and around competing ideas of progress and development. Within contemporary Indonesian public debate, popular culture is widely viewed as having the potential to significantly impact society in either positive or negative ways. This chapter explores two important, interrelated responses to this assumption: censorship (the banning of certain stories as dangerous) and self-help (the promotion of certain stories as motivational). Both find their rationale in the notion that popular narratives are powerful, and both draw heavily on ideas of progress and 'modernity' in their rejection or embrace of these narratives. This chapter intervenes critically in dominant accounts of censorship and self-help trends in post-reform Indonesia by examining the role of powerful local and global stories of development and progress in shaping these processes. In doing so, I suggest ways in which this particular Indonesian case holds broader lessons for practicing media and cultural studies in Southeast Asian contexts.

I begin the chapter by describing film and literature consumption habits among young urban Indonesians, and providing examples of how particular stories can take on a life of their own beyond the cinema screen or pages of a book. Consumers regularly reference (or even re-enact) their favourite stories, and I offer three specific case studies of how popular novel-to-film adaptations have entered everyday interactions and become emblematic of larger socio-political issues around nationalism, morality, and 'development.' These three texts are *5cm* (2005 novel/2013 film), *Laskar Pelangi* (*'The Rainbow Troops',* 2005 novel/2008 film),

and *Negeri 5 Menara* (‘*Nation of 5 Towers*,’ 2009 novel/2011 film).[268] All three stories offer appealing tales of success and progress, themes which have strongly resonated with Indonesian audiences. Such stories are seen as a valuable source of inspiration and motivation in achieving both personal goals and national progress.

Having established the significance of popular texts in young Indonesian consumers’ lives, I turn to wider debates in the Indonesian media, where censorship battles and public protests against more ‘dangerous’ or ‘controversial’ texts are a frequently covered topic. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Indonesian mediascape has been characterised by a rise in apparently ‘grassroots’ censorship, and the increased lobbying power of militant Islamic groups to determine what products are fit for popular cultural consumption. I asses this trend critically, and argue that there are more complex processes than ‘religious extremism’ are at work here. Given some of the deeply entrenched political interests and connections between the state and militant groups, protests with an apparent religious basis are often deeply entangled with more banal and secular political aims than their moralistic rhetoric suggests. I examine several cases, including controversial anti-pornography legislation, to address this issue and also to demonstrate the unstable and contradictory ways in which keywords like ‘modernity’ are used in public debates around censorship.

The flip-side of proscriptive censorship impulses is the prescription of certain narratives through self-development trends. The self-help genre, with its focus on motivation and personal development, is popular in many parts of the world. The kind of ‘self’ being promoted, however, often varies in different contexts. The Indonesian ‘self-development’ (*pengembangan diri*) trend has received limited academic attention, yet these kinds of normative prescriptions for achieving an ideal ‘self’ offer a rich entry point into understanding societal aspirations and everyday identity politics in contemporary Indonesia. With this in mind, I compare Indonesian self-help genres with their global counterparts and demonstrate the ways in which ‘inspirational’ stories intersect with broader socio-political discourses of nationalism, moralism and developmentalism. I highlight different markers of ‘success’ (whether

[268] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*; Mantovani, "5cm."; Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*; Riza, "Laskar Pelangi."; Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*; Rachman, "Negeri 5 Menara."

spiritual, romantic or material) emerging in self-development stories. Such markers ultimately reflect the hopes and fears of young Indonesians as they construct and define their identities as Indonesians, as pious religious individuals, as global citizens. Taken together, these popular motivational narratives construct an idealised figure of the modern, cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial Indonesian Muslim subject, as an identity to which consumers should aspire.

The notion of 'Islamic modernity' is frequently portrayed as an unexpected and incongruous match in much general and academic discourse. This apparently 'novel' pairing has attracted scholarly attention across a range of disciplines, yet many of these studies remain constrained by deeply entrenched assumptions about both 'Islam' and 'modernity.' In the closing sections of this chapter, I critically assess these key framing concepts of 'Islam' and 'modernity' as they appear in accounts of both self-help and censorship trends, and in doing so offer reflections on some of the analytical challenges facing cultural studies more broadly.[269] Of particular relevance here is the question of how to engage with questions of religion and faith in a scholarly tradition that has typically foregrounded more secular concerns. Despite contemporary global discourses which, in the context of the U.S.-led 'war on terror,' continue to position Islam as 'other' and 'particular', it is clear in the Indonesian context that for hundreds of millions of people – not just Muslims, but also Christians, Hindus, and others – religion is a hugely important lens through which to interpret contemporary realities, and engage with popular cultural products. My approach takes questions of religion and morality seriously, while also aiming to move beyond an Islam-centric approach towards broader notions of pan-religious public moralities in Indonesia. I also question the analytical usefulness of nebulous keywords like 'modernity', and seek instead to examine what kinds of assumptions and power relations are at work within and around such slippery terms.

Within public Indonesian debates around the prescription and proscription of certain popular narratives, there are clearly moral and religious elements at work; but

[269] An earlier version of this material and argument can be found in Meghan Downes, "Who Wants to Be a (Muslim) Millionaire? Motivation, Modernity and the Power of Positive Narratives in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Contemporary Culture and Media in Asia*, ed. Daniel Black, Olivia Khoo, and Koichi Iwabuchi (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

perhaps a more illuminating element to examine is how underlying narratives of progress shape ongoing contestation over the role of morality in national development. This examination is the central purpose of this chapter, which ultimately reveals the various ways in which media analysis, public debates, and scholarly accounts are all influenced by legacies of dominant progress narratives.

Narrative consumption contexts and forms

Understanding consumption practices provides a vital basis for scholarly engagement with popular cultural texts such as films or novels. This section uses observations based on my time living in student boarding houses during 2013-2014, to describe the context in which young urban Indonesians consume popular narratives, and the varying connotations associated with different narrative forms, such as books, cinemas, or illegal downloads. Amongst the demographic I was working with, watching films and reading novels are relatively popular pastimes. In terms of frequency, films are consumed far more regularly than novels, with the average respondent watching several per week. While most respondents prefer foreign films (primarily from Hollywood or Korea), they regularly view Indonesian films also, despite somewhat contradictory claims to the contrary. For example, in Makassar, Nita explains that she does not watch Indonesian films very often, 'just once a week,' while Eva from Jakarta says she 'rarely' watches them, 'only twice per week: on my laptop, sometimes on VCD and sometimes via download.'[270] Although this level of consumption is labelled by respondents as 'rare' or 'not often', I suggest this is still quite significant engagement with local cinema offerings. Of course, television far surpasses both films and novels in terms of time and audience share.[271] Yet television involves less conscious choice and is more often experienced as an inevitable background flicker; hence my focus on the more self-consciously selected entertainment forms.

[270] Audience quotes are taken from my 2013-2014 field notes. Translations are my own. All respondents' names have been changed and replaced with pseudonyms.
[271] See Merlyna Lim, *@Crossroads: Democratization and Corporatization of Media in Indonesia* (Ford Foundation (Jakarta) and Particapatory Media Lab (Arizona State University), 2011).

As indicated above, respondents generally express a preference for foreign films, particularly when determining where and when they watch the film. 'If you go to the cinema, you don't want to just throw your money away, especially if you've had to queue… [it is best to] just watch a Hollywood film,' explains Mia from Yogyakarta. Rizal, in Banjarmasin, agrees: 'At the cinema? We usually watch foreign films. They're guaranteed to be good,' he laughs. His classmate Elfi elaborates, explaining that 'at the cinema I don't want to waste my money… Usually the cinema is for foreign films; it's more [about] entertainment and enjoying advanced technology.' This notion of cinematic quality frequently surfaces: '[I watch] Indonesian films on laptop and Western films at the cinema, because of [the difference in] image quality and music quality' (Witan, Makassar). This distinction is nothing new in Indonesia. Bettina David, writing on the Indonesian cinema scene from the 1950s-1980s, explains that domestic film products were 'berated by the upper classes as imitative and escapist' and shown only in 'second- and third-class theaters, while the A-grade exhibition spaces were reserved for American and Western cinema.'[272] In the first decades of the new century, it seems that consumers themselves are reproducing this spatial differentiation of where to enjoy local and foreign films. In Manado, Billy tells me about where and with whom he watches certain films, highlighting also the social aspects of cinema-going:

> If I have a girlfriend absolutely [I'll take her to the cinema], but otherwise I'll go with friends. In my boarding house I watch films on my own. For the cinema, I'll only see films with a high rating, mainly Hollywood; while for ordinary films I just watch them at the boarding house.

All respondents make a clear distinction between cinema attendance and everyday film viewing, a distinction which is understandable given the often prohibitive expense of cinema tickets and snacks. Tia in Banjarmasin says that she watches downloaded films on her laptop at least once a week, often with her university friends or housemates, compared with only once a year in the cinema, 'usually with a boyfriend.' In Yogyakarta, Ari explains that most people share films via flash-disk, because 'the cinema is far too expensive'. Yet while by far the most common way to watch films in Indonesia is on laptop, via VCD, download, or flash-disk, cinema-

[272] David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia," 182.

going still holds a powerful place in the popular imagination, as a 'special occasion' for young Indonesian audiences. Even respondents in rural areas tell me that '*ikut bioskop*' (going to the cinema) is a big part of a trip to the city. 'Yeah, every time we go to Palangka or Banjar [Palangkaraya or Banjarmasin], we'll definitely see a film,' explained one young respondent living in Central Kalimantan. Ultimately, films – both foreign and local, both at the cinema and at home – constitute a key site of popular cultural engagement for young Indonesians. Film-viewing is characterised as social and relaxed, while cheap access to films through VCDs or flash-disks ensures a wide reach and broad audience for these stories. As I will demonstrate later in the chapter, this ease of access and far-reaching influence makes films (compared with novels) much more frequently the target of anxieties and censorship impulses.

While almost all respondents cite film-watching as a regular activity, books are far less commonly consumed. Respondents characterise reading novels as a solitary endeavour that requires much higher investment of money, time and energy, compared with films. Avid readers express concern with the cost of buying books, and the vast majority of them borrow books from libraries or, more often, from friends. In Manado, Christa tells me she reads around one book per month, 'but my reading frequency is not certain… if there's a good book I'll read it! I often read in Gramedia [a large chain book-store] because you can finish a whole book in there without having to buy it. Sometimes I'll borrow from friends. If I have the money and it's a great book, I'll buy it.' Citra, a self-confessed '*kutu buku*' (bookworm) from Banjarmasin, reads most books online, 'because books are really expensive these days.' Afdal, in Makassar, jokes that he has no choice but to 'steal from the library' because he cannot afford to buy books from Gramedia. Besides the cost factor, respondents explain that reading also demands a large investment of time and energy, and their opportunities to read really 'depends on university study commitments' (*tergantung kuliah*). Many of these students tell me how they used to love reading during high school, but now they simply do not have the time. But overall, outside of the small portion of respondents who enjoy reading, there is in fact very little interest in books amongst the Indonesian students I spoke with. Less than one in ten of the people involved in my in-depth interviews would identify themselves as book lovers. In Makassar, Zulis complains that reading 'takes too

long', while Rani in Jakarta says she 'much prefers directly watching a film'. There is an element of self-deprecation running through some of these conversations, as respondents sheepishly pronounce themselves 'too lazy' (*malas*) to persevere with a novel. More generally, many young Indonesians explain that Indonesia simply does not have a 'reading culture' ('*gak ada budaya baca di sini'*). This is an important statement, for the connotations of different communication forms are never neutral, and therefore these everyday conversations about reading and film-viewing practices can reveal significant value judgements attached to these entertainment styles in contemporary Indonesia.

Film-viewing and novel-reading can be roughly equated to orality and literacy in terms of consumption style, and it is worthwhile unpacking the often hierarchical distinction between these two entertainment forms a little further. Ariel Heryanto raises the notion of 'reading culture' in his characterisation of Indonesia as an 'orality-oriented society' which gives a 'high priority to fluid, instantaneous and highly collective participatory mode of communication' over the 'individual act of silent writing and reading a fixed, uniform string of texts.'[273] This interpretation is supported by respondents' preference for film-watching over reading. However, actual consumption preferences can often stand in stark contrast to public discourses about ideal consumption, and Julian Millie's work on the characterisation of Islamic oratory subjects in West Java is useful as a comparison here. Millie traces how in much Indonesian public and intellectual discourse, orality as a form of mediation is consistently devalued in favour of more 'modern' communicative forms such as reading and writing. Islamic intellectuals who situate themselves as 'modernist' and 'progressive,' such as those from Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah, for example, express disdain for the Islamic oratory practiced in 'traditionalist' Nahdlatul Ulama circles, and this critique is widely upheld and rarely contested, even amongst proponents of oratory within Nahdlatul Ulama.[274] Despite oral preaching being widely practiced and enjoyed throughout Indonesia, in most public discussions reading and writing subjects are consistently positioned as more empowered and progressive than listening subjects, who are characterised as backward and in danger

[273] Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, 191.
[274] Julian Millie, "The Situated Listener as Problem: 'Modern' and 'Traditional' Subjects in Muslim Indonesia," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013): 272.

of being left behind by contemporary Indonesia's Islamic 'narrative of modernity.'[275] In this way, Millie argues, we can observe the construction of:

> [A] hierarchy of media users, in which a reading public is more efficacious than a listening audience: according to modernists, the development of a democratic culture in Indonesia will not be furthered by its preaching audiences, but by its writing and reading publics… The conventions of Indonesian Islamic oratory register on the wrong side of a range of dichotomies that enable forms of mediation and communication to be distinguished as contemporary or anachronistic: orality/literacy, passivity/agency, dependence/autonomy, bounded/free, emotional/rational and ephemeral/enduring.[276]

These kind of value judgements and varying levels of prestige associated with different forms of communication and mediation are certainly not unique to Islamic oratory, or indeed to the Indonesian context. The 'high culture' versus 'low culture' distinction is a case in point, and one that emerges in a whole range of contexts, spaces and historical moments.[277] This thesis is most interested in how these kinds of distinctions emerge in everyday conversations, as a way for young urban consumers to construct and define their 'modern' Indonesian identities. As Millie points out, 'many Indonesians enjoy the richness and sociality of oratorical discourse, but very few express respect for it.'[278] This description could apply equally to the way that my respondents discuss the (sometimes guilty) enjoyment of film-watching as

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[275] Ibid., 271-72. Millie draws this idea of a religious 'narrative of modernity' from the work of Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (California: University of California Press, 2006).
[276] Millie, "The Situated Listener as Problem: 'Modern' and 'Traditional' Subjects in Muslim Indonesia," 275-76.
[277] Scholars from across many disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, communication studies, and literary studies. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. G Taymond and M Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Derrida, *Writing and Difference*; Richard Bauman and Charles L Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978); Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect'," in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. J Curran J, M Gurevitch, and J Woollacott (London: Edward Arnold/Open University Press, 1977); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Post-Coloniality and the Artifice of History," *Representations* 37 (1992); Mikhail M Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. C Emerson and M Holquist, vol. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public culture* 14, no. 1 (2002).
[278] Millie, "The Situated Listener as Problem: 'Modern' and 'Traditional' Subjects in Muslim Indonesia," 276.

opposed to the more difficult yet apparently more 'worthy' pastime of reading.[279] There is a kind of social capital to be gained by reading, or at least with knowing what books are popular. In Padang, Dessy confesses that she 'does not like to read' but will read certain novels anyway, 'because I do not want to be left out if people are talking about what happened in that novel.' The slang term '*kudet*' (a shortening of '*kurang update'*, which mixes Indonesian and English to describe the feeling of being 'not up to date' or 'left behind') frequently arises in these conversations, echoing the 'progressive' forward-looking connotations of literacy outlined by Millie. During the course of my research, it also became apparent that novel-to-film adaptations can give audiences a chance to cash in on 'reading capital' without having to read the book itself. The most popular Indonesian films of the past decade have been adapted from novels, so even when respondents have not read the book, they will still reference it: 'Lots of my friends loved that book', 'apparently the book is better though', 'all the best Indonesian films are based on novels.' Such comments reveal varying levels of legitimacy attached to the different communication forms, value judgements around reading versus audiencing, and the creative ways in which consumers link their film consumption practices to 'reading culture.'

As has been well-established by cultural studies scholars, analysing the production and content of popular texts can only get us so far. It is vital to also examine what the audience does with these texts: what influence, power, effects or meaning they take on; how they are used to construct social identities; and how they fit into what Lawrence Grossberg calls our 'mattering maps.'[280] Popular Indonesian novels and films exist in broader social contexts beyond their bounded textual form. This is clearly demonstrated in the preceding discussion around the social distinctions between local and foreign films, between cinemas and laptops, between watching and reading. In addition to the connotations of form and place, there are also connotations of different themes and genres, and often, when audiences describe their own consumption tastes, they are also constructing a certain representation of

[279] See also Chapter 4 of this thesis for an examination of the very specific guilty pleasure of Indonesian horror films.
[280] Lawrence Grossberg, "Is There a Fan in the House? The Affective Sensibility of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992). See also Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," 79.

self.[281] Plots and tropes from popular texts can be used for framing and interpreting people's own experience. As the next section demonstrates, once the storyline or themes of a popular film or novel permeate into everyday public discourse, such texts are no longer simply a 'movie' or a 'book', but become signifiers representing broader issues of importance to young Indonesian audiences. It is this particular characteristic quality of 'popular' narratives, to transcend their original textual context and pervade people's everyday lives, which makes them so often key sites of struggle and such a rich source of cultural studies analysis.

Beyond the pages, beyond the screen

By examining more closely the life of popular narratives beyond the pages of a book or the cinema screen, we can better understand broader issues that young Indonesians are concerned with, as well as dominant discourses that position the consumption of popular narratives as a powerful transformative process. Below, I offer three illustrative examples of how popular stories can take on a life of their own beyond the cinema screen or the pages of a novel. Firstly, I describe how the novel-to-film adaptation *5cm* has provided a huge boost for the adventure gear and mountain climbing industries. Then, I examine the formative role that the story *Laskar Pelangi* ('*The Rainbow Troops'*) has had in the life choices of one particular young respondent, who has become a teacher in a rural area far from home. Finally, I explore the popularisation and proliferation of the Arabic phrase '*man jadda wajada*' ('whoever applies themselves earnestly will succeed') following the release of *Negeri 5 Menara* ('*Nation of 5 Towers'*). These case studies all reveal how the stories become meaningful for audiences and also emblematic of a range of broader public issues and debates. Guided by the common preoccupations of audiences and media commentators, I focus specifically on how the stories become entangled with dominant discourses around progress and development: development of self, of nation, of marginalised communities, in both material and moral terms. Ultimately,

[281] See Meghan Downes, "Critical Pleasures: Reflections on the Indonesian Horror Genre and Its Anti-Fans," *Plaridel* 12, no. 2 (2015).

the life of these three texts beyond the pages and the screen points to the centrality of the keyword development in the Indonesian mediascape.

Donny Dhirgantoro's bestselling 2005 novel *5cm* (released as a film in 2013, dir. Rizal Mantovani) tells the story of six friends from Jakarta who decide to journey across Java to Mount Semeru, with the goal of raising the Indonesian flag at the peak on 17 August, Indonesian Independence Day. The story's themes of friendship, nationalism and adventure struck a chord with many young Indonesians. In fact, the romanticised portrayal of the six friends' hike to the tallest peak in Java was so appealing that many readers and viewers have been inspired to follow their example. One result is that, particularly following the *5cm* film release, the mountain-climbing industry has exploded, with increased demand for boots, packs, tents and other adventure gear. 'The adventure industry has indeed been growing during the past couple of years. There are people inspired by films like this to go off on adventures of their own,' explains Tiara, a sales assistant at Rei Outdoor Gear store in Yogyakarta.[282] In Malang, a city close to Mount Semeru in East Java, local students tell me that every year more and more groups have been coming through on their way to climb the mountain, drawn by 'curiosity' roused by the scenery in the film and sometimes simply a desire to 'jump on the bandwagon.'[283] While films set in remote areas of Indonesia are often applauded for increasing local tourism revenue, the management of Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (TNBTS) are concerned that the craze for conquering Semeru has gone too far.[284] In March 2013, the national park's management body introduced new regulations limiting the number of hikers allowed in the area per day, and banning activities like cross-country running competitions, the use of vehicles, and 'mass climbing' (groups of 50 or more), in an effort to protect the area from the flood of visitors. Seasoned mountain-climbers lament that 'most of the hikers who have been lured by the film 5cm' do not have enough 'knowledge' or 'awareness' of proper mountain climbing techniques.[285] For

[282] Personal interview, Yogyakarta, 10/08/2013.
[283] Personal interview, Malang, 18/03/13.
[284] For a positive spin on films promoting tourist revenue see Adhia Azkapradhani, "Film & Iklan Produk Dongkrak Popularitas Tempat Wisata," *Okezone*, 19 March 2013. The negative case can be found in Bocah-Petualangan, "Peraturan Baru Pendakian Gunung Semeru," URL: http://bocahpetualang.com/peraturan-baru-pendakian-gunung-semeru.html, accessed 13/05/2013 2013.
[285] Bocah-Petualangan, "Peraturan Baru Pendakian Gunung Semeru."

the amateur hikers, however, re-enacting this popular narrative is an important way to symbolise the strength of their friendships and deepen their 'love of Indonesia.' None of my respondents from outside Java have had the opportunity to climb Semeru, yet when reflecting on what the *5cm* story means to them, many highlight similar points to the hikers. Ade in Banjarmasin says that the film's messages are 'relevant for my own life, [and push me] to remain enthusiastic and focused [on my goals].'[286] During a focus group in Makassar, respondents unanimously praise the film for its portrayal of 'friendship', 'motivation' and 'nationalism'. 'We must be proud of our country,' says Witan, as he explains how he felt when viewing the beautiful scenery in the film.[287] During my interviews, I was given the distinct impression that the *5cm* story is no longer simply a book or a film, but a symbol of inspiration, achievement, friendship, and nationalist awakening.

The nationalism constructed here is worth examining in more detail, for the story of *5cm* becomes shorthand for a certain kind of young urban Indonesian nationalism, a nationalism characterised as a personal journey of self-discovery. This nationalist discourse contrasts markedly with both the collectivist nationalism of newly independent Indonesia and the familial nationalism of the New Order period. After 1945, newly independent Indonesia was characterised by a revolutionary, collectivist nationalism, centred on a shared struggle against colonial oppression. In contrast, following the bloody anti-communist purges that marked the rise the New Order regime, the state promoted a nationalist model based on order, militarism, development, and ultimately the nuclear family as a microcosm of the nation. As noted by Suzanne Brenner, affairs of the family were defined as public rather than private or intimate matters, making the family the ground upon which ideological contests over the nation's future were waged.[288] New Order era ideology around order, development and family values continues to shape contemporary public discourses in Indonesia; however, it is clear that the kind of nationalism portrayed in stories like *5cm* is far more individualist than previous incarnations. While the notion of 'individualist nationalism' may seem like a contradiction, it is the best way to describe the *5cm* narrative, where the young protagonists' growing patriotic

[286] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/09/13.
[287] Personal interview, Makassar, 20/06/2013.
[288] Brenner, "On the Public Intimacy of the New Order: Images of Women in the Popular Indonesian Print Media," 16.

sentiment is framed as a kind of self-enrichment. They, as individuals, spiritually benefit from the journey, and they return to their lives in Jakarta feeling 'inspired to pursue their goals.' Here, their discovery of 'Indonesia' is represented as a personal journey of self-discovery, and it is the self rather than the family that becomes a microcosm of the nation. The implication is that by pursuing their personal goals, and striving to be 'better people,' they are contributing, individually, to national progress. Widespread attempts to recreate the *5cm* adventure reveal the extent to which this new sense of nationalism has resonated with consumers. For many young urban Indonesians, references to the *5cm* story or the act of climbing Semeru become shorthand for expressing their nationalist sentiment. This nationalist sentiment is deeply entwined with discourses of self-development, in which individuals hold the ultimate key to personal and national progress.

The *5cm* story is far from unique in its focus on self-development. The highest grossing Indonesian film released to date has been *Laskar Pelangi ('The Rainbow Troops'*, 2008, dir. Riri Riza), based on Andrea Hirata's semi-autobiographical 2005 novel.[289] *Laskar Pelangi* is also the most frequently-mentioned film in any of my focus group discussions on Indonesian cinema, with respondents unanimously praising the film as a huge highlight of recent Indonesian cinema. The story follows the struggle of ten disadvantaged children from Bangka Belitung, an island off the coast of Sumatra, as they attempt to pursue a good education despite limited facilities. Ikal, the main character, like Hirata himself, eventually goes on to study abroad in Paris. *Laskar Pelangi* triggered a whole genre of films like this: local tales of upward mobility, involving poor village children with big dreams.[290] The film has also personally affected many of its viewers. Putri, a 21-year-old Accounting graduate from Bandung, who now works for an extra-curricular education institution in Kuala Kapuas, Central Kalimantan, tells me why *Laskar Pelangi* is her favourite Indonesian film:

> The story is so touching, about those village kids who want to study. Their teachers have such big hearts although their wages are small. Their facilities

[289] Approximate film viewer figures accessed via http://filmindonesia.or.id on 02/09/2016.
[290] This kind of story has resurfaced again and again, in films like *Sang Pemimpi* (2009), *Garuda di Dadaku* (2009), *Semesta Mendukung* (2011), *Serdadu Kumbang* (2011) and so on. Settings vary, from the small island of Belitong, off the coast of Sumatra, to Wakatobi in Central Sulawesi, as well as villages in West Kalimantan, and West Nusa Tenggara.

> were really limited, but they remained enthusiastic (*semangat*). It was so different from my own experience, I feel much more fortunate. That film was such an inspiration in my own life that I have now become a teacher in [Kuala] Kapuas.[291]

This is an example of major life choices and career pathways being framed with reference to a popular text. Here, the *Laskar Pelangi* story comes to represent inspiration and upward mobility, and also a kind of nationalist 'civilising mission' for teachers such as Putri. Notably, for Putri, as a devout Christian, this civilising mission has religious aspects. She sees her work in Kuala Kapuas as part of her religious responsibility to help those less fortunate than herself. Putri's story is echoed by other young Indonesians who are undertaking similar work. For instance, many of those involved in the *Gerakan Indonesia Mengajar* (Indonesia Teaching Movement) program, a non-government initiative which sends highly educated young urban teachers on work placements in remote areas to 'inspire' and 'advance' local students, also cite films like *Laskar Pelangi* and its sequels as a major inspiration.[292] Overall, where *5cm*'s 'individualist nationalism' inspires consumers to 'develop' *themselves* for the sake of national progress, *Laskar Pelangi* inspires people to help 'develop' *others*.

As the case of Putri and her *Laskar Pelangi*-inspired civilising mission suggests, stories of progress and 'development' in contemporary Indonesian popular culture frequently display religious elements. *Negeri 5 Menara* ('*Nation of 5 Towers*', 2009), a popular semi-autobiographical novel by journalist and entrepreneur Ahmad Fuadi, draws on tropes of self-development, civilisation, and religious morality throughout its narrative arc. Adapted into a film in 2011 (dir. Affandi Abdul Rachman), *Negeri 5 Menara* tells the story of Alif Fikri, a boy from Lake Maninjau in rural West Sumatra who is pressured by his mother to attend a religious boarding school (*pesantren*). Alif chooses a 'modern *pesantren*' in East Java (the fictional 'Pondok Madani,' modelled after the real 'Pondok Modern Gontor') as he believes it will provide greater opportunities for his global ambitions. The young protagonist harbours a seemingly impossible dream of studying in the U.S. and becoming an international reporter. The Arabic phrase '*man jadda wajada*' ('whoever applies

[291] Personal interview, Kuala Kapuas, 29/09/2013.
[292] For a critical account of the *Indonesia Mengajar* program, see Gellert, "Optimism and Education: The New Ideology of Development in Indonesia."

themselves earnestly will succeed'), is repeated regularly throughout the story and is a key lesson that Alif and his friends take away from their time at Pondok Madani. This lesson is brought to them by their beloved teacher Ustad Salman, who presents in his classes a compelling fusion of Islamic spiritual development and neoliberal individualist ideologies. 'What makes a successful person different to an ordinary person?' Ustad Salman asks his class, before explaining that the secret is '*going the extra miles.*'[293] He urges them to go above and beyond the efforts of 'ordinary' people, and not to allow others to interfere with their pursuit of success. Ultimately Alif and his friends do achieve their goals, and Alif narrates the entire story looking back from a highly successful future life in which he is working as an international journalist, flying from Washington to London, owning all the latest gadgets, and participating in what he sees as a decidedly global 'modern' lifestyle, while still maintaining links with the Islamic community, and contributing to 'development projects' back in Indonesia.

The phrase '*man jadda wajada'* has subsequently gained popularity as an inspirational mantra. For one of my respondents, Nita, in Makassar, the *Negeri 5 Menara* story is popular because it is offers 'motivation' and teaches you 'how to survive in your life'. 'You can take lessons directly from the story. [For example] we must apply ourselves to our studies and we have to [be] fighting for our studies. *Man jadda wajada*, that's the message.'[294] I regularly observed these words on advertising materials in a range of public contexts. While at Lambung Mangkurat University in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan in September 2013, I saw *man jadda wajada* plastered across a banner for 'Motivational Training.' This banner displayed a mix of imagery – Islamic dress, fancy sports-car, words in Arabic, English and Indonesian – to construct an appealing fusion of different markers of 'success'. A similar mixing of imagery features heavily in the *Negeri 5 Menara* film (with teachers sporting Islamic *peci* caps with Western suits and ties), and the novel (with pop culture references from both the U.S. and Indonesia, as well as historical references to both Western European and Islamic explorers). As I noted in Chapter 2, the Indonesian mediascape is increasingly dominated by these kinds of fusions between the secular and the religious, the local and the global, as young urban

[293] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*, 106. Note: italics indicate English in the original.
[294] Personal interview, Makassar, 10/06/13.

Muslim consumers seek products that resonate with their own identities and preferences.[295] In this context, *Negeri 5 Menara* and the phrase *man jadda wajada* become emblematic of a successful 'modern' Islamic identity, tapping into both the demand for inspirational tales of upward mobility and the increased popularity of public piety in contemporary Indonesia. Like *5cm* and *Laskar Pelangi, Negeri 5 Menara* offers a story of progress and 'development,' but in this case one that is very explicitly linked to religion.

While offering inspiring and relatable role models, there is also a darker side to some of these stories, which can reproduce potentially disempowering versions of the progress narrative. In many ways, texts like *5cm, Laskar Pelangi* and *Negeri 5 Menara* function as part of dominant ideologies of development, where hope for the future rests solely on the individualist efforts of young ('modern Muslim') Indonesians like Ikal and Alif to achieve global success and then use such success to inspire and advance those who have been 'left behind.' And while this kind of story may be inspirational, it can also suppress analysis of real structural inequalities in contemporary Indonesia, as many and varied critiques of developmentalist discourse and practice have made clear.[296] Similarly, while the growth in films set in remote areas of Indonesia has been welcomed as a sign of increased national interest in marginalised regions, the portrayal of such regions as 'backward' and in need of 'development' perpetuates powerful stories of progress rooted in the New Order regime's *pembangunan* ideology and broader global development discourses.[297] As discussed in Chapter 2, this kind of logic – where poverty and inequality are not the

[295] For extended analysis of 'popular piety' amongst young Indonesian consumers, see Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture."

[296] For more on this, specifically in relation to the Islamic self-help industry, see Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture." See also Munro's work on inspirational discourses around education in Papua, where she contends that the 'inflated possibilities of education may be considered a form of violence,' especially when associated with heavily racialized and developmentalist discourses. Jenny Munro, "The Violence of Inflated Possibilities: Education, Transformation, and Diminishment in Wamena, Papua," *Indonesia* 95, no. 1 (2013). For a more general discussion of the links between self-help discourses and exclusionary developmentalism, see Rigg et al., "Understanding Languages of Modernization: A Southeast Asian View," 596.

[297] For extended Indonesian-language critiques of developmentalist discourses in *Laskar Pelangi*, see Katrin Bandel, *Sastra Nasionalisme Pascakolonialitas* (Yogyakarta: Pustaha Hariara, 2013); Nurhady Sirimorok, *Laskar Pemimpi: Andrea Hirata, Pembacanya, Dan Modernisasi Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Insist Press, 2008).

responsibility of the state but natural facts resulting from insufficient 'modernisation' or integration into global capitalist circuits of production – is a legacy of colonial assumptions around progress, and came to be a key cornerstone of the New Order regime's thirty-year developmentalist agenda. The apparently contradictory tension between the paternalistic, interventionist aspects of this developmentalist logic (which justifies state control and resource exploitation), and its neoliberal self-help ethos (which absolves the state of social welfare responsibilities) can serve to doubly marginalise poor populations. In popular novels and films like *5cm, Laskar Pelangi,* and *Negeri 5 Menara,* the apolitical representation of poverty as a random misfortune that can easily be overcome through individual effort diverts attention away from very serious inequalities, such as corporate corruption and widening income gaps between rich and poor, and points instead towards vague notions of 'the power of positive thought.' This diversion can serve to supress discussion of relevant political and social action that might lead to material changes in these conditions. In the majority of inspirational success stories that circulate in contemporary Indonesia, poverty and inequality are lamentable, but can ultimately be overcome if one is sufficiently 'motivated.' Failure, therefore, often lies solely at the feet of the individual. In the context of deeply entrenched structural inequalities, this is not necessarily a positive and empowering narrative.

The way these stories are consumed is also telling: while sympathising with the poor and marginalised characters, the majority of research respondents are more focused on how the 'inspiration' offered in a story like *Laskar Pelangi* functions as a powerful force to be harnessed by audiences themselves. For most consumers, *Laskar Pelangi* is viewed as a motivational text that can offer significant benefit to its audiences. Many of my respondents, like Putri, describe reading the book or watching the film as a formative experience, one that has made them 'more aware' of how lucky they are to have so many opportunities, 'more appreciative' of their families, and given them 'inspiration' to chase their dreams. As in the case with the nationalism portrayed in *5cm,* individual self-development remains the primary theme. Ultimately, from observing how stories about *5cm, Laskar Pelangi,* and *Negeri 5 Menara* are circulated and consumed, two key points stand out. Firstly, the central moral of these stories is the importance of 'development' and progress for

advancing both self and nation, and secondly, that the act of consuming, discussing, and even re-enacting these stories is an important strategy to achieve such progress.

The notion that consumption of popular narratives can have a significant impact upon audiences is not a new one. In the Indonesian context the perceived transformative power of being an audience member arguably has deep roots in the '*rasa*' (feeling) performative tradition with influences from Indian and Malay performance practices.[298] Similar ideas about the social and emotional impacts of art can be found in many contexts. More broadly, in Western thought following the Enlightenment, artistic practices came to be understood as instruments which could be utilised to improve specific mental or behavioural attributes of the general population. This assumption is a key aspect of many classical narratives of progress and 'modernity,' as discussed in Chapter 2. As technological developments and mass communication expanded throughout the twentieth century, the potential impacts on audiences of 'mass culture' products like film and television attracted much attention, anxiety, hope and debate amongst media critics and social commentators.[299] Some scholars and critics were concerned with negative, atomising impacts that so-called mass culture could have on consumers, while others saw mass culture as liberating and democratising.[300] Both outlooks, however, characterise audiences as malleable 'masses' able to be shaped in either welcome or undesirable ways by those who control mass media. While most early theories of mass communication have been dismissed as overly simplistic by more contemporary scholarly work emphasising audience agency, the idea that media products such as film can have direct positive or negative effects on their viewers remains a powerful 'common sense' notion in everyday discourses throughout the world.[301] This

[298] In a study of local theatre in colonial-era Indonesia, Cohen explains that 'plays (*lakon*) are praised for the effects they elicit in spectators, informed by the *rasa* aesthetic… in which performer and spectator ideally co-emote.' Matthew Cohen, "Hybridity in Komedi Stambul," in *Chewing over the West*, ed. D Jedamski (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 286-87.
[299] See for example Macdonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture."
[300] A key scholarly debate here is the Frankfurt school versus Chicago School approaches to media theory.
[301] In his reflections on cultural studies audience research, Peters observes that seemingly opposing outlooks such as 'the threat of the big bad media' and 'the hope of big good media,' in fact agree that 'media have major effects; both are in thrall to visions of mass society.' John Durham Peters, "Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* as Research Method," in *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*, ed. Mimi White and James Schwoch (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 57. For some very early work on the topic of passive versus active audiences, see Elihu Katz and F Lazarsfeld Paul, *Personal Influence: The Part*

includes Indonesia, where these Western Enlightenment ideals have mingled, via colonialism, with local notions such as *rasa*, in the context of specific histories, experiences, and preoccupations, to form powerful narratives of progress. Debates in the Indonesian media, as well as everyday conversations amongst the young Indonesian consumers involved in my research, point to the central role of popular film and fiction in helping or hindering such progress.

The remainder of this chapter examines pertinent battles over the legitimacy of different popular texts and stories in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. Certain types of films or novels are frequently proscribed (through moral panics and censorship impulses) or prescribed (through self-improvement and motivational discourses) in a variety of ways, and debates around these processes usually draw on keywords like 'modernity' and 'development.' Given the centrality of religion in contemporary public debate, trends in censorship and self-help are often interpreted (in the Indonesian media and in scholarly accounts) with reference to Islam. In what follows, I offer an alternative approach, looking at censorship and self-improvement discourses as part of the broader 'progress narratives' that continue to dominate so many aspects of contemporary Indonesian and global discourses.

Dangerous tales and deregulated censorships

While the popular narratives I have discussed so far in this chapter are generally perceived as having a positive impact on audiences, some stories are more ambivalently received. To illustrate this, I will briefly discuss four films directed by popular Indonesian filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo between 2009- 2013, and the different kinds of backlash and censorship impulses they each created. Hanung Bramantyo is a well-established and prolific Indonesian filmmaker who was highly active in Indonesia's reform-era cinematic revival and has directed films in a range of genres including comedies, dramas, horror films and romances. Below, I outline

Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955). For a more recent critical account of some of the drawbacks of active audience theory, see David Morley, "Unanswered Questions in Audience Research," *The Communication Review* 9, no. 2 (2006). See also, for a specific look at the Indonesian context, Jurriëns, "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited."

four different but related incidents of controversy surrounding his films *Perempuan berkalung sorban* (‘*Woman with a turban*’, 2009), *Tanda tanya* (‘*Question mark*’, 2011), *Cinta tapi beda* (‘*Love but different*’, 2012), and *Soekarno* (2013). These cases serve to illustrate the kinds of public debate taking place around popular texts during the time of my research. As indicated earlier, because of its wider reach and higher consumption figures compared with written literature, film is regularly the subject of debate and calls for censorship. After introducing these four film cases in point, I broaden my discussion to the notion of censorship in general, tracing some of the trajectories from the New Order era through to the contemporary mediascape, looking in particular at changes and continuities in how and why certain kinds of discourses are promoted while others are restricted. Throughout, I focus on how keywords like ‘modernity,’ ‘tradition’ and ‘development’ are used in competing and contradictory ways in censorship debates.

Based on a 2001 book by Islamic feminist novelist Abidah El Khalieqy, the film *Perempuan berkalung sorban* (2009) tells the story of Nisa, a young woman struggling to forge a meaningful existence in a highly conservative and patriarchal rural *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in East Java. Unlike some of Hanung Bramantyo’s more widely acclaimed and long-screening films, *Perempuan berkalung sorban* faced public protests by the ‘militant Islamist’ group FPI (‘*Front Pembela Islam*,’ or Islamic Defenders’ Front), accused of presenting a false and negative picture of Islamic institutions. Mainstream Islamic organisations tacitly supported the protest, with a senior management figure of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Ali Mustafa Yaqub, explaining that ‘in order to avoid widespread community protest and unrest, I recommend the screenings be stopped immediately.’[302] The production company subsequently withdrew the film from cinemas within a fortnight of its release, in order to avoid any potential for social conflict or violent protests. The zealous and polarised reactions to this film, especially in comparison to Hanung Bramantyo’s less controversial films with female protagonists, such as *Perahu Kertas* (‘*Paper Boat*,’ 2013), demonstrate that critical portrayals of Islam, particularly with regard to gender roles, is a divisive cinematic theme.

[302] BBC-Indonesia, "Film Timbulkan Kontroversi," *BBC Indonesia Online*, 6 February 2009.

The film *Tanda tanya* (2011), which dramatises the ongoing struggle between intolerance and religious pluralism in Indonesia was met with similarly polarised reactions. Again, Hanung Bramantyo was accused by the FPI and other Islamic groups of fostering 'negative' sentiments, this time by representing instances of inter-religious conflict in contemporary Indonesia. Of particular concern to these groups (although most had not seen the film), were scenes involving Muslim youths attacking a Chinese restaurant and planting a bomb at a Christian church during a Christmas service. *Tanda tanya* also features several positive examples of religious pluralism: the central protagonists are open-minded and tolerant, and in the end it is a devout Muslim character who saves the Christian church-goers from the bombing. However, according to opponents of the film, its representations of inter-religious conflict contravene one of the longstanding censorship principles of the New Order regime, known as 'SARA' (an abbreviation of *Suku* (ethnic groups), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race), and *Antar-golongan* (class)).[303] According to SARA regulations, the mass media, from news to entertainment, were not permitted to cover these subjects in a critical, negative, or controversial way, for fear of 'destabilizing the nation.' While the official view of there being 'no place in Indonesia for conflicting interests either within society or between society and state,' was put forward by the government, this view also had broad-based public support throughout much of the New Order regime, due in part to widespread fear of a return to the social and political 'chaos' of the 1960s.[304] This uneasy attitude towards critical filmmaking has proved resilient, for the guiding principle of SARA has persisted well into the post-reform era, and is often referred to by protesters as justification for their actions.

Also related to SARA, in 2012 Hanung Bramantyo was reported to the police by a local Padang-based youth group (*Ikatan Pemuda Pemudi Minang Indonesia*, IPPMI) on the grounds of maligning a particular ethnic group, following the release of his film *Cinta tapi beda* ('*Love but different*', 2012).[305] The film presents an inter-religious romance between a Muslim boy from Yogyakarta, Central Java, and a

[303] For more detail, see Katinka van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past" (PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 2009), 119.
[304] Aspinall, "The Broadening Base of Political Opposition in Indonesia," 217.
[305] The legal basis for this was *Pasal 156 KUHP Jo Pasal 4 dan 16 UU.N0.40/2008 tentang Penghapusan Diskriminasi Ras dan Etnis*.

Catholic girl from Padang, West Sumatra, who meet and fall in love in Jakarta. Remarkably, it was not the inter-religious romance *per se* that provoked concern, but rather the fact that Diana, the protagonist from Padang, was Catholic. Vocal representatives of the Minangkabau ethnic group who make up the majority of the West Sumatran population staged protests claiming that being from Padang is synonymous with being ethnically Minangkabau, which is in turn synonymous with being Muslim, and therefore the portrayal was offensive to the people of Padang. A prominent trade minister, Muhammad Rafik, came out in support of the protests, claiming that 'if a Minangkabau person changes religion, they are no longer Minangkabau.'[306] Hanung Bramantyo pointed out that the film did not imply that Diana was Minangkabau, but simply that her mother lived in Padang. However, as in previous cases, he and the production team decided to discontinue screenings 'rather than have this controversy get any larger.'[307] Again, informal pressure and oblique threats, rather than official government bans, is the primary cause of the film being withdrawn from circulation.

The fourth and final example I offer here is the historical biopic, *Soekarno* (2013), based on the life of Indonesia's first president. Again Hanung Bramantyo was threatened with legal action, this time in the form of a personal defamation case by Sukarno's daughter Rachmawati, who claimed the film gave a negative and inaccurate portrayal of her father's character. This concern was also shared by many other viewers, and, as in all four cases, key words like 'negative' and 'critical' arose frequently in the discourse of anxious audiences and film critics. I will examine this preoccupation with 'positive' rather than 'negative' representations of Indonesian realities in more detail when I analyse self-help trends later in this chapter, and again in Chapter 4 when discussing ideologies of national cinema.

While not all the examples outlined above involve purely religion-based critiques, this range of controversies illustrates how 'militant Islamist' groups like the FPI ('Islamic Defenders' Front,' an activist group campaigning in Indonesia since 1998) appear to have increasingly shaped and influenced what forms of public discourse

[306] Tri Wahono, "Diprotes, Hanung Tarik Film 'Cinta Tapi Beda'," *Kompas*, 6 January 2013.
[307] Ibid.

are seen as legitimate and socially acceptable in contemporary Indonesia.[308] As has become clear from the preceding discussion, films are frequently subject to moral and religious scrutiny, and so too are many other forms of pop culture. Indeed, high profile cases of public intolerance and populist censorship in Indonesia in the post-reform era have triggered rising concern amongst many commentators in Indonesia, as well as outside observers, over the future of free speech and pluralism. Often, these types of incidents are triggered by militant groups such as the aforementioned FPI, who threaten violent demonstrations or blockades against performances, film screenings, art exhibitions or public lectures of which they disapprove.[309] The FPI's actions are often characterised in the Indonesian media as a kind of 'grassroots' censorship activism, or censorship from the street, which is subsequently fuelled by sensationalist media coverage, and the seeming acquiescence of government bodies to the campaigners' demands. Although to a certain extent this kind of informal, populist regulation has been around for decades, it has become far more common in an increasingly deregulated Indonesian mediascape.

The messy, diffuse and inconsistent nature of 'censorship from the street' in the first decade of the twenty-first century at first appears to be fundamentally different to the top-down, state-defined censorship agenda of the New Order regime. Under the New Order, most public and private media industries and networks were owned by the Suharto family or their business associates, and state policies and normative discourses on film and television were largely motivated by attempts to secure New Order political and business interests.[310] Films which presented counterviews to official state versions of history or development would not achieve censorship clearance. Of course, in addition to official top-down censorship processes during the New Order period, there were still incidents of religious campaigns against

[308] See Chapters 2 and 3 in Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*.
[309] The FPI was formed in August 1998 and now claims branches in 22 provinces. Based in Jakarta, FPI is led by Habib Muhammad Riziek Syihab, a religious teacher who was educated in Saudi Arabia. The FPI's paramilitary wing is well known for organizing raids on bars, massage parlours and gaming halls, justifying such raids by claiming that the police are unable to uphold the laws on gambling and prostitution. For more detail, see Wilson, "As Long as It's Halal: Islamic Preman in Jakarta."
[310] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past."; Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*.

particular films.[311] Both the New Order and reform eras saw films being banned, withdrawn from circulation, or even never made, in anticipation of protests by religious organizations; the difference, however, was the wider socio-political and media context that these protests occurred in. The weakening of state control over the media industry, the rise in digital technologies allowing more independent productions, and increased freedom of expression during the late New Order and early reform period, means that grassroots protest has become one of the more significant sources of media regulation in Indonesia.[312] In this context, religious protests have been expressed increasingly loudly, and have been achieving far greater exposure in the Indonesian media.

There are a range of examples of this kind of moral-panic-driven censorship from the street in Indonesia since the early reform era. In 2003, *dangdut* singer dancer Inul Daratista was condemned for her overly erotic hip gyrations; in 2004 the teen film *Buruan Cium Gue!* (‘*Kiss me quick!’,* dir. Findo Purwono) was withdrawn from cinemas following protests by famous celebrity preacher Abdullah Gymnastiar (more commonly known as Aa Gym) and his followers, who believed the film’s title encouraged premarital sex among young Indonesians; in 2005 the FPI filed a series of police reports, firstly accusing popular band ‘Dewa 19’ of blasphemy for using the Arabic calligraphic symbol for Allah on their album cover, and then accusing artists at the CP Biennale art exhibition in Jakarta of pornography for their depiction of a nude Adam and Eve.[313] Foreign popular culture has not been exempt: American performer Lady Gaga cancelled her Jakarta concert in 2012 following a series of threats by Islamic organisations, most prominently the FPI. This particular incident

[311] The withdrawal of films in response to religious protests is not a new phenomenon. Because SARA was such a guiding principle of censorship during the New Order, campaigns by religious organizations were taken seriously. Muslim, Christian and Hindu groups were all involved in these kinds of protests, and were usually successful in gaining the support of government censorship bodies. Some prominent films banned for religious reasons during the New Order included international films such as *True Lies* (James Cameron, 1994) and *Schindler’s List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), as well as local offerings like *Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan* (*Revenge of the queen of the southern sea*, Tjut Djalil, 1988). For more detail, see van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past," 119-20.

[312] For a good overview of these changes, see Sen and Hill, *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*.

[313] For more detail on each of these incidents, see Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*; van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past."

came shortly after Canadian liberal Muslim writer Irshad Manji's promotional tour and book launches were attacked by the same collection of militant groups.[314] Discussions of Manji's book *Allah, Liberty and Love* in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, even those held on university campuses, were forcibly shut down by the FPI with the help of the police; indeed, the acquiescence of authorities is a key part of this new dynamic of deregulated censorship.

Subsequent public debates reveal important insights into the contemporary Indonesian media climate, and the kinds of progress stories that circulate around censorship. Groups of journalists, intellectuals, filmmakers, writers, artists and other public figures protested against these religiously-motivated bans and blockades, fearing the emergence of new forms of censorship based on moral grounds. Following the ban on *Buruan Cium Gue!*, some cultural critics expressed concern that censorship on the basis of religion was the first step on a 'backwards' path to political repression, and reminded the public that Indonesian media had already experienced such restrictions under New Order rule.[315] On the other hand, other local commentators interpreted Islamist activist censorship as an understandable reaction to the trashy and sensationalist tone of much contemporary Indonesian mass media, a symptom of liberalisation gone too far.[316] Following the Lady Gaga case, local commentators and intellectuals lamented the government's powerlessness in the face of 'small groups of firebrands that imposed their views on the broader society.'[317] According to chief editor of *The Jakarta Post*, Endy Bayuni, such incidents mark 'the beginning of the end for Indonesia's civil liberties as radical groups continue unabated in their assault on the nation's freedoms,' and argues that 'it certainly marks the return of censorship on artistic expression, not by the state as in the past,

[314] Many commentators have noted that both these women are defenders of LGBT rights; in the debates surrounding the FPI attacks, both artists have been labelled as 'promoting homosexuality,' which is perhaps what has led the majority of moderate Muslims in Indonesia to remain silent on the matter.
[315] Zoso, "[…]S Me Quick, Please, for I'm Indecent," *The Jakarta Post* 22 August 2004.
[316] For a good account of these anxieties over media liberalisation, see Bart Barendregt, "Between M-Governance and Mobile Anarchies: Pornoaksi and the Fear of New Media in Present Day Indonesia" (paper presented at the EASA Media Anthropology Network e-Seminar, 2006).
[317] Jakarta-based Driyarkara School of Philosophy sociologist, B Herry Priyono, cited in "Extremists Win the Lady Gaga Saga," *The Jakarta Post*, 28 May 2012.

but by the use of raw mob power.'[318] Bayuni also goes on to note that radical groups' apparent victories (achieved through acquiescence of police, government and media) will have 'emboldened' such groups to plan new attacks on media, popular culture, and indeed on social groups, citing the example of increasingly violent campaigns against religious minorities, such as Shi'ite and Ahmadiyah.[319] Fear of violence and intimidation is a frequently cited concern amongst media analysts working in Indonesia. In her extensive study of democratisation and corporatisation of media in Indonesia, Merlyna Lim notes that while official censorship has become exceptional, 'criminal defamation codes continue to raise concerns about freedom of the media and freedom of expression in general,' and that practices such as 'bribery,' 'self-censorship,' and 'violence and intimidation against journalists and media,' continue to persist.[320] What is most notable, however, is the apparent arbitrariness of violent protests. As was also the case during the New Order, religious protests about films have been sporadic, sometimes covering films that do not seem particularly controversial, while at other times ignoring potentially subversive content; for example, a kissing scene in the hugely popular teen romantic comedy *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* ('*What's up with Love'*, dir. Rudi Soedjarwo 2002), and a kiss by a gay couple in *Arisan!* ('*Gathering!'*, dir. Nia Dinata 2003) were screened with barely any public debate. According to Katinka van Heeren, this has a lot to do with celebrity and star power; that is, if a prominent figure such as celebrity preacher Aa Gym decides to take issue with a particular film, a media storm would ensue, and the government censorship board quickly relents 'in order to avoid social unrest,' while other – potentially more risqué – films can quietly pass through cinemas with little notice.[321] I would observe, however, that examples of films slipping through the

[318] Endy Bayuni, "Is This the Beginning of the End for Our Civil Liberties?," *The Jakarta Post*, 30 May. At the time of writing in 2016, local commentators were voicing similar concerns over violent mass protests against Jakarta's incumbent governor, Ahok, which have drawn on anti-Chinese and anti-Christian rhetoric. See M Taufiqurrahman and Kornelius Purba, "Questioning Our Pride as a Democratic, Tolerant and Peaceful Nation," *The Jakarta Post*, 5 November 2016.

[319] Bayuni writes, 'just look at the current state of freedom of religion. The silence of the "silent majority" has allowed the FPI to harass, torment and even kill followers of religious minorities. The attacks became increasingly violent and the targets widened because no one, or only very few, spoke up in defence of the religious freedom of the minorities.' Endy Bayuni, "Is This the Beginning of the End for Our Civil Liberties?"

[320] Lim, *@Crossroads: Democratization and Corporatization of Media in Indonesia*, 24.

[321] The main explanation given for the state censor institute's decisions was fear of social unrest, which meant it was highly receptive to protests from religious groups, bureaucrats,

informal moral censorship filters have become more scarce in the post-reform period, as organisations like the FPI become more confident in their ability to influence outcomes.

At the heart of this rise in deregulated 'censorship from the street' is a power struggle over how to define contemporary Indonesian realities, and the role of media and popular culture in influencing and developing the nation. By examining and comparing censorship impulses at different historical moments, we can learn much about dominant social and political preoccupations. In the early days of the new Republic of Indonesia under the leadership of Sukarno, censorship was primarily aimed at protection of revolutionary spirit and national identity against foreign influence; under Suharto's New Order, such impulses were couched in terms of national unity, 'development' and public order; while since the reform era, morality and religion have taken centre stage.[322] Katinka Van Heeren observes that during the early years of the reform period, 'just as various groups and film-makers were experimenting with testing the boundaries of new post-authoritarian freedom of expression, some Islamic groups were gauging the extent to which they could have their say in the restriction of these liberties.'[323] The growth in Islamist protests against films, music, performances, and works of art in post reform Indonesia is deeply connected to debates over the relationship of Islam to the state, an issue that has plagued Indonesia since pre-independence days, as I outlined in Chapter 2. The spirit of change and reform during the first decade of the new century in Indonesia has reopened debates about to what extent Islamic principles should guide the nation; and although the general sentiment has been that Islam should not be given more prominence in national law, new regulations on regional autonomy since 2001 have permitted the application of *shar'ia*-based laws in certain provinces, which, combined also with the passing of a controversial national anti-pornography law in 2006, demonstrates that religious doctrine is becoming a significant political force in

and people in powerful positions. See Hera Diani, "L.S.F. Facing Criticism for Film Poster Ban," *The Jakarta Post*, 23 December 2005.

[322] For more detail on how anti-pornography discourse has shifted throughout Indonesia's history, see Lindsay, "Media and Morality: Pornography Post Suharto," 179.

[323] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past," 121.

defining public discourse and moralities in contemporary Indonesia.[324] Popular piety culture and proliferation of Islamic images in the media are also an important part of ongoing power struggles over defining the role of religion and morality in the post-New-Order mediascape.

Yet, despite the significance of religiously-motivated censorship activism as described above, it is wise to be cautious when making blanket statements about 'Islamist influence' on Indonesian public life. As noted by Ariel Heryanto, post-reform era trends in contemporary Indonesian politics and society suggest a focus on personal piety and ethics, rather than any attempt to build a rigid Islamic polity.[325] Drawing on Asef Bayat's work in the Iranian context, Ariel Heryanto uses the term 'post-Islamist piety' to describe this Islamic identity that goes hand in hand with individual freedom, fun and 'modernity.'[326] This is the kind of Islam that is a daily reality for the vast majority of Indonesian Muslims. Furthermore, while radical groups like the FPI draw heavily on Islamist language about vice and morality, many members of such groups are the same *'preman*' (gangsters, thugs) who were active in non-religiously affiliated gangs in previous eras. With the changing political situation and power relations, former thugs – along with unemployed youth – have sought new patronage in Islamist organisations.[327] 'Islamist' identity is therefore often an identity of convenience, deeply entangled with other socio-political realities and personal interests. Perhaps this is why there are frequently far more complex contestations going on behind the scenes in many of the aforementioned protests than simply Islamic doctrines. Being Muslim is indeed an everyday reality for the majority of Indonesians, but is also simply one of many layers of identity in contemporary Indonesia. There are a great variety of 'Islams' practiced in Indonesia,

[324] Between 2001 and 2005 the regional governments in Aceh, Tangerang, Cianjur, Padang, and South Sulawesi all implemented regulations based on Islamic law. For more detail, see Bush, "Regional Sharia Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom?." For details on the anti-pornography debates, see Lindsay, "Media and Morality: Pornography Post Suharto."; Allen, "Women, Gendered Activism and Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill."
[325] See Chapter 2, Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*.
[326] See Asef Bayat, "What Is Post-Islamism?," *IsIM Review* 16 (2005); *Islam and Democracy: What Is the Real Question?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).
[327] Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, 129-30. See also Ryter, "Reformasi Gangsters."; "Their Moment in the Sun: The New Indonesian Parliamentarians from the Old O.K.P."; Wilson, "As Long as It's Halal: Islamic Preman in Jakarta."; "Continuity and Change: The Changing Contours of Organized Violence in Post–New Order Indonesia."

not just on a scale of 'liberal' through to 'conservative,' but also encompassing Islams with aspects of Sufism and syncretic fusions with pre-existing local beliefs, as has been well-documented in several important scholarly accounts.[328] The very terms 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in the Indonesian context are not fixed, and are often deeply entwined with other aspects of social identity. In addition, it is important to recognise that censorship campaigns are not always about morality and religion, but can involve history and political violence, as in the many cases of censorship targeted at material commemorating or revisiting the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings.[329] In this case, the drive to censor is related to the compromised nature of Indonesian political elites whose power was predicated on the killings, as well as the deep guilt and fear that remains throughout society at large as a legacy of 1965 and New Order state terrorism. Censorship impulses are ultimately more related to existing structures of power and the status quo, than they are to any particular religion. And while it is indeed militant Islamist groups who appear to be taking a leading role in restricting the boundaries of media representations, the terms of the debates are often drawn not from Islamic doctrines but from a more general discourse of social conservatism and pan-religious public morality.

To demonstrate in more detail the kind of language used in morality debates in Indonesia, I turn to the 2008 anti-pornography law. In the public debate around this law (2005-2008), both supporters and opponents used relatively abstract notions of morality and plurality, rather than religious arguments *per se*. Brought forward in parliament by Islamic parties in 2005, and widely known by its acronym RUU-APP (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaski*), the law proposed banning pornography both in the sense of sexually explicit visual and written media, and also what it labelled *pornoaksi*, or public behaviour by individuals deemed to be

[328] See, amongst others, Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971). For more recent work, see Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*; Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*; Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*.

[329] For instance, protests about the excavation of mass graves and re-burial of victims, as described in McGregor, "Sensitive Truths." Also, the cancellation of several panels related to the 1965-1966 violence at the 2015 Ubud Writers' Festival, as described in Vickers and Heryanto, "Ubud Festival Affair Reflects New Order Mindset."

erotic.[330] Given the central concerns of this thesis, it is of particular note to examine how both sides of the debate drew on keywords like 'tradition' and 'modernity' in supporting or opposing the bill. Pam Allen notes that the rhetoric of much Islamic support of the Bill 'has been couched in highly charged warnings about the dangers of anarchy, hedonism, free sex, obscenity, globalisation and the degenerate West, from which the Indonesian nation must be protected.'[331] If we look closer at some of this rhetoric, we can see the familiar spectres of 'bad modernity' (disintegration of traditional values, global cultural influence eroding national identity and morality) and also 'good modernity,' in the form of this enlightened new law that can identify and revamp 'outdated' traditional practices. One prominent cleric dismissed the concerns of opponents – who suggest that the law may criminalise the traditional costumes of some Indonesian ethnic groups – by arguing traditional clothing that exposes the *aurat* (private parts) should be 'stored in a museum, and not preserved, because it does not accord with the values of the nation.'[332] Throughout the ongoing debate, supporters of the bill continued to advocate the protection of 'good tradition' (national identity, morality) from 'bad modernity' (immoral global influences), while advocating the replacement of 'bad tradition' (backward, outdated clothing and practices) with 'good modernity' (enlightened modernist Islam). Here, these keywords are used to craft a certain linear story of progress, in which the 'West' has taken the wrong path forward and that strict moral regulation offers a path towards a more enlightened future.

A very different story of progress was apparent amongst opponents of the bill. They couched their protests firmly in terms of the importance of preserving local traditions, traditional arts, and traditional ethnic identities. Artistic communities pointed out that most traditional dance in Indonesia contains sensual movements and tight-fitting costumes, while fertility and physical beauty are important themes of

[330] For more detail of the behaviours classified in the bill as *pornoaksi* and the punishments proposed for offenders see Pam Allen, "Challenging Diversity?: Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill," *Asian Studies Review* 31, no. 2 (2007). Ultimately, the version of the law that was eventually passed in 2008 significantly diluted the language and sanctions around the controversial '*pornoaksi*' category.
[331] According to MMI official Fauzan al-Anshari, pornographic and indecent acts are 'okay for Western countries but not here.' Vice-President Yusuf Kalla objected to the publication of Playboy, because 'this is not America,' while President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono similarly warned Indonesians against blindly imitating foreign cultures. Cited in ibid., 104.
[332] Cited in ibid., 110.

much traditional visual art. In support of the artists' position, legal experts argued that 'Indonesia has no tradition of covering all of the body; it's a tradition of the Middle East,' again foregrounding a clear dichotomy between (good) 'local traditions' and (bad) 'imported traditions.'[333] Protests against the bill were especially heated amongst ethnic groups like the Balinese and Papuans, where 'traditional attire includes bare breasts, penis gourds and grass skirts, dress that would violate the pornoaction articles of the Bill.'[334] As ethnic minorities rallied together with artists, women's groups, and NGOs, protesters increasingly characterised the new law as conservative, repressive, and ultimately a threat to the 'modern,' diverse Indonesian nation, and the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ('Unity in Diversity').[335] Again, we see public discourse drawing heavily on the imagined threats and opportunities posed by good and bad 'traditions' and 'modernities'. In this version of the progress narrative, strict religious censorship is a step backwards in the wrong direction along a linear path towards a more tolerant future.

Overall, both sides of the debate relied heavily on flexible keywords like 'modernity' and 'tradition' in crafting their competing stories of progress; this kind of language characterises not just the pornography law debate, but many public discussions in contemporary Indonesia. Indeed, it is competing definitions of progress that lie at the heart of many of the public protests and censorship trends I have recounted in this section. A key concern around Hanung Bramantyo's films, for example, was their 'negative' and 'critical' portrayal of contemporary Indonesian realities. By critiquing the status quo, and questioning dominant master narratives around gender, religion, region, and history, these films challenge established hierarchies of power, and the dominant stories of progress promoted within such hierarchies. Many members of so-called 'radical Islamist' groups like the FPI have deep links with established political elites, and a strong interest in upholding the ideologies, hierarchies, and social order of the previous regime.[336] These interests are arguably a

[333] University of Indonesia law professor Harkristuti Harkrisnowo, cited in Karima Anjani and Arjit Ghosh, "Miniskirts Clash with Islam as Indonesia Drafts Pornography Law," *Bloomberg*, 20 February 2006.
[334] Allen, "Challenging Diversity?: Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Bill," 109.
[335] See description of the 'Say No to Zero Culture' campaign's colourful *Pawai Budaya Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity Cultural Parade) in Jakarta on 22 April 2006 outlined in ibid., 110.
[336] For instance, many were complicit in and/or directly benefitted from New Order state violence, and therefore would naturally be opposed to critical re-investigation of such

more important factor than Islam in debates around censorship. Furthermore, the perceived power of popular narratives in influencing their mass audience is again important here: protesters imply that 'negative' or 'critical' films will automatically foster negative attitudes towards nation and religion, which is why audiences must be 'protected' through censorship measures.

Motivation, 'modernity,' and the power of positive narratives

The flip side of proscribing certain popular narratives through censorship is the way that other types of stories are 'prescribed' as a way of improving oneself and society in general. One of the striking similarities that emerged across all my interviews and focus groups was an overwhelming preoccupation with the 'motivational' (*motivasi*) potential of popular narratives. This finding was in many ways unsurprising, given the proliferation of inspirational self-help products in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. Such proliferation is a trend which warrants further examination, for what it can tell us about hopes, aspirations, and anxieties of Indonesia's contemporary urban population. Again, as in the case of censorship impulses, at the heart of self-development discourses is a core belief in the power of popular culture to deeply affect and even transform its audience. And once more, keywords like 'modernity' are prominent, most notably in the ideal kind of self being promoted here: a 'modern,' entrepreneurial, cosmopolitan Indonesian Muslim, who appears to be idealised by everyone from politicians, to cultural critics, to everyday consumers. In this final section of the chapter, after examining the specificities of the contemporary Indonesian self-help phenomenon, I will conclude by engaging critically with this 'modern Muslim' figure, suggesting that to understand the popularity of this figure we should move away from an Islam-centric approach, towards broader notions of pan-religious public moralities in Indonesia. I also propose moving beyond ill-defined container concepts like 'the modern', to examine

violence. On continuities between members of New Order para-military organisations and current radical religious groups see Wilson, "Continuity and Change: The Changing Contours of Organized Violence in Post–New Order Indonesia."; "As Long as It's Halal: Islamic Preman in Jakarta." See also Ryter, "Their Moment in the Sun: The New Indonesian Parliamentarians from the Old O.K.P."; "Reformasi Gangsters."

the assumptions and power relations at work behind such terms, and the specific progress narratives from which they emerge.

In most Indonesian book stores, large and prominent spaces are devoted to self-help literature. This section grew steadily during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and now offers guides on a wide range of topics, from the benefits of 'positive thought' to how to become a 'Muslim Millionaire' by 'Mastering Love and Wealth in 365 Days.' Ranging from local to translated material, it seems there is a voracious market for all things 'motivational'. Alongside this written material, the Indonesian mediascape has also witnessed a huge boom in motivational seminars (both live and broadcast on television) focusing on self-development and often combined with religious elements. During the course of my fieldwork, I experienced the role of a (secular) motivational speaker first-hand. In several of the universities where I conducted research, the faculty head would request that I deliver an informal lecture, sharing some of my experiences learning Indonesian, studying abroad and obtaining scholarships. 'This is very beneficial for our students; it builds up their enthusiasm (*semangat*) and gives them inspiration,' explained the head of the Education Department at Lambung Mangkurat University in Banjarmasin.[337] Such requests point to the widespread sense that individuals can obtain significant benefit from reading, watching or listening to positive material.

Many studies on trends in contemporary Indonesian Islam highlight the centrality of concepts such as self-help and personal development. Key examples include James Hoesterey's study on the appeal of popular celebrity preachers, Greg Fealy's work on 'aspirational piety' and self-development among urban middle-class Muslims, and Akh Muzakki's exploration of Islam as a 'symbolic commodity' linked with ideals of upward class mobility.[338] In Indonesia's businesses world, professional development programs have grown exponentially, as illustrated in Daromir Rudnyckyj's investigation into the 'ESQ' (Emotional and Spiritual Quotient Training) program,

[337] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13.
[338] Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia."; James B Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym," ibid.; "Prophetic Cosmopolitanism: Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Virtue in Indonesia."; Akh Muzakki, "Islam as a Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia," in *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, ed. P Kitiarsa (London: Routledge, 2007).

which draws on a mix of business leadership training, Islamic teachings and popular psychology in an attempt to create 'a more disciplined, less corrupt company employee'.[339] Rudnyckyj characterises this 'assemblage of Islamic and capitalist ethics', this mix of 'Islam and neoliberalism,' as a kind of 'spiritual economy', where devout Islamic practice is viewed as conducive to worldly success.[340] In a similar vein, Leonie Schmidt's detailed analysis of Islamic self-help books describes how these texts promote the modern Muslim as a 'self-enterprising citizen subject,' able to optimise both spiritual and material wealth.[341] Taken together, these studies combine to produce a compelling picture of how motivational, self-help, and personal development discourses have become deeply entangled with popular representations of Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

Yet while often imbued with Islamic characteristics, the underlying messages of self-help are not always purely religious in nature. I have observed that motivational material in Indonesia is highly varied, and also comes in Christian, Catholic, Buddhist or Hindu packaging, as well as secular versions. Common to the majority of this material is a neo-liberal, individualist ideology, encouraging self-reliance and the pursuit of personal wealth. As I explained in preceding chapters, the underlying aim of many global manifestations of neo-liberal developmentalism is the optimal productivity of people and resources with minimal effort from state apparatuses.[342] In this respect, these Indonesian examples resonate strongly with self-help genres elsewhere in the world. There have been several influential scholarly inquiries into self-help literature in the U.S. context, and much of this academic work describes how self-help books promote individualism and self-concern in a way that ultimately undermines citizenship and collective social relations.[343] To a certain extent, the Indonesian self-help genre is ideologically comparable to many of its global

[339] Daromir Rudnyckyj, "Spiritual Economies: Islam and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (2009): 105.
[340] Ibid., 105, 30.
[341] See Chapter 4 of Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."
[342] See Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*.
[343] See for example Cowlishaw, "Subjects Are from Mars, Objects Are from Venus: Construction of the Self in Self-Help."; Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*; Rimke, "Governing Citizens through Self-Help Literature."

counterparts, including these U.S. examples.[344] But Indonesian self-help also displays some important local specificities, most notably around the topics of nationalism, social responsibility, and public morality. Self-development is by definition decidedly self-centric, offering individual rather than collective benefits, yet in the Indonesian context, this sentiment is often packaged within broader tropes of nationalism or religious community. That is, while the underlying messages are about personal success, much Indonesian motivational material is delivered in an overtly nationalistic or moralistic tone. Tensions between the individualism of self-help and the collectivism of nationalist sentiment are clearly evident in the inspirational fictional texts I discussed earlier in the chapter (*5cm, Laskar Pelangi* and *Negeri 5 Menara*), and the kind of 'individualist nationalism' they portray. While the self being promoted here is not as 'hyper-individualistic' as in comparable examples from the U.S., it is clear that an increasingly individualist ideology does indeed underpin most Indonesian self-improvement material.[345] This increased focus on self is partly a by-product of capitalist consolidation in Indonesia, and the rapidly expanding consumer base of the urban Indonesian middle classes. With a few notable hitches such as the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, the Indonesian economy has been steadily growing since the resources boom of the 1980s, with the result that more sections of society have disposable income to spend on themselves, and are actively encouraged to do so.[346] Increased individualist sentiment can also be linked to perceived failures of state institutions. Ultimately, self-help offers a progress narrative where 'development' and 'modernity' come from within individuals. The increasing popularity of motivational self-help material in contemporary Indonesia arguably reflects widespread disappointments with previously dominant stories of progress: official state *pembangunan* has been called into question, leaving *pembangunan diri* (self-development) as a more viable alternative.

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[344] For more detail on similarities between Indonesian self-help and the global self-help industry, see Chapter 4 of Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."

[345] For a discussion of hyper-individualism in US self-help contexts, see Rimke, "Governing Citizens through Self-Help Literature," 61. For a detailed comparison with Indonesian self-help literature, see chapter 4 of Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."

[346] For detailed discussion of this rising capitalist sentiment and growing consumer classes, see Ariel Heryanto, "The Years of Living Luxuriously," in *Culture and Priviledge in Capitalist Asia*, ed. M Pinches (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

The widespread sense that people *need* improving can in many ways be linked to the shadow of the authoritarian New Order regime, and questions of what went wrong, and how to do better in the future. Indonesia's jubilant celebrations as Suharto stepped down in 1998 have slowly been replaced by uncertainties and concerns over the perceived failures of the reform era. Despite many and varied attempts to dismantle old power structures, major problems of corruption and nepotism continue to persist in Indonesia today, leading to widespread political pessimism. Global economic uncertainty also plays a role in shaping the self-help phenomenon in Indonesia. Many of my respondents see inspirational stories as a tool against negativity in the face of both local and global challenges. 'Film is not just for entertainment, but can give positive messages. It can change people,' explains Ira, a 25-year-old political science graduate from Malang.[347] The inspirational and transformative capacity of popular entertainment is cited as an antidote to pessimism about contemporary socio-political problems, as Dewi explains:

> Every day in the news we hear stories about corruption, about violence. In this context it's really important that film and literature offer a positive picture, one which is more idealistic, so we ourselves can always think positively and become motivated to improve society.[348]

In Banjarmasin, 19 year-old Ade agrees that 'yeah, films are very powerful, because the words and scenes can touch our hearts and inspire us.'[349] In many cases the popularity of 'inspiration' amongst my respondents also appears to be linked with feelings of uncertainty about their own future, particularly for students who have already obtained their higher education but have not yet found stable work in their field. Many of the older respondents (23-26 years) have started their own small-scale businesses (*wiraswasta*) in catering, fashion (*distro*), or working in food stalls (*warung*) because of limited employment opportunities for university graduates. Similarly, younger respondents (18-22 years), who are still studying, often express concern over their future and the challenges of finding rewarding work. Such sentiments relate to the unstable nature of being middle class in Indonesia. Brent Luvaas, writing about a similar demographic, notes that 'their middle-class status, however, made possible by recent changes in the Indonesian economy, is often

[347] Personal interview, Malang, 17/03/13.
[348] Personal interview, Yogyakarta, 23/05/13.
[349] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/09/13.

unstable and uncertain, newly attained and easily lost.'[350] This insecurity was clearly evident in public debate in late 2014 around the Indonesian government's decision to end a national fuel subsidy program. The decision led to widespread panic across many sectors of society that education, health and lifestyle costs would become prohibitive. These kinds of debates highlight the perceived precariousness of financial position amongst middle-class Indonesians. In this context, against a background of growing consumerist sentiment, coupled with ongoing corruption and economic uncertainty, respondents have a strong personal investment in discourses about the role of film, and popular narratives in general, to 'transform outlooks,' 'create enthusiasm,' and encourage people to 'chase their dreams.'

Media and consumer preoccupation with positive and inspirational narratives is one reason why protests against more negative and critical films (like the Hanung Bramantyo examples discussed earlier) are so successful. It is also why the three examples I opened this chapter with (*5cm, Laskar Pelangi, Negeri 5 Menara*) have been so popular. In *5cm,* mountain climbing as a metaphor perfectly encapsulates the self-help industry's preoccupation with overcoming challenges. Similarly, *Negeri 5 Menara* and *Laskar Pelangi* are both 'success stories' about disadvantaged individuals exceeding their community's expectations and entering the world of global education. We can learn more about the hopes, anxieties, and aspirations of young urban Indonesian audiences, by looking at the different markers of success represented within these texts. In these 'inspirational' tales, we see characters achieving success in material (wealth, mobility), spiritual (education, religion, nationalism) and romantic (true love, monogamy) terms. These markers of success are complexly intertwined and frequently overlapping, and they combine to create broadly appealing progress narratives.

A central theme running through all these stories is the way that characters successfully balance the best aspects of 'modernity' and 'tradition.' These are complex and shifting keywords, encompassing a range of both religious and secular concerns. Positive portrayals of balancing the imagined resources of 'modernity' and 'tradition' are very appealing to Indonesian audiences and media commentators.

[350] Luvaas, "Dislocating Sounds: The Deterritorialization of Indonesian Indie Pop." For a detailed account of the various hopes and anxieties of this demographic, see also Parker and Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*.

In Banjarmasin, Indah explains that *Laskar Pelangi* 'offers cultural values, introduces us to Belitung… they have their Malay culture but can still participate in the world of global education. Her classmate Citra relates this to the situation in her own hometown: 'In my home village there are lots of problems, like illicit drugs and other negative impacts… they are not yet able to differentiate between the negative and positive sides of modernisation.'[351] She hopes that stories like *Laskar Pelangi* can help the next generation to achieve this longed-for balance. In Makassar, Witan describes the story of *Negeri 5 Menara* as a 'marriage between tradition and modernity… between Islamic boarding school life and Fuadi's influences from America.'[352] His classmate Umi explains that 'tradition and modernity have positive and negative aspects. We must shrewdly choose the positive sides from both.'[353] These stories closely echo many of the scholarly stories around 'modernity' that I described in Chapter 2, about the contrasting light and dark sides of the 'modern' and the 'traditional.' In the contemporary Indonesian mediascape, stories that showcase negative aspects, or a violent 'clash' between 'modernity' and 'tradition' are subject to controversy, while those that explore this process in a positive and inspiring way are incredibly successful, reflecting the hopes and anxieties of young Indonesians as they construct and define their identities as Indonesians, as consumers, as pious religious subjects, as global citizens.

Ultimately, stories such as *5cm*, *Negeri 5 Menara*, and *Laskar Pelagi* – along with other popular narratives like the wildly popular Islamic romance *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* – construct and valorise an idealised central figure: the 'modern,' cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial Indonesian Muslim (male) subject.[354] Fahri, the protagonist of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2004 book/2008 film), a young Indonesian studying abroad in Egypt, was a real prototype of this character, and his particular version of 'modern' Muslim masculinity has garnered extensive scholarly interest and analysis.[355] He (like Alif,

[351] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13. Such concerns are closely related to postcolonial anxieties around 'bastard modernity' as described in David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia," 183-84.
[352] Personal interview, Makassar, 20/06/13.
[353] Personal interview, Makassar 10/06/13.
[354] I will examine the gendered aspects of this topic in more detail in Chapter 5.
[355] For insightful discussions about the idealised modern Muslim man, with close reference to *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*'s central character Fahri, see Hoesterey and Clark, "Film Islami: Gender,

Ikal, and many of the characters in *5cm*) is worldly, well-educated, middle class, pious, open-minded, tolerant, trendy, tech-savvy, sensitive, family-oriented, and ambitious. As noted in preceding chapters, there is a complex tangle of reasons why this figure is so appealing to contemporary Indonesian youth, ranging from the desire see positive non-radical portrayals of Muslim characters in the context of negative global tropes about Islamic terrorism, through to more banal everyday factors such as fashion, consumption and popular piety, as well as national debates around the role of religion in nationalism and reform. This figure of the 'modern' urban Muslim is undeniably a powerful and important one in Indonesia, and one which is gaining increased scholarly attention. However, I propose that our analysis should not stop at the notion of how a 'modern Islamic identity' is being crafted as an ideal to strive towards in contemporary Indonesia, but rather we should move beyond this to explore the complexity lurking behind keywords like 'Islam' and 'modernity,' and their role in both local and global narratives of progress.

Beyond tropes of 'Islamic modernity'

In both the case of censorship (radical Islamic pressure groups) and self-help (idealised modern Muslims), Islam is a key theme in public debate and media coverage, and indeed is often put forward as the primary explanatory factor in these processes. Scholarly accounts both within and about Indonesia also focus primarily on the Islamic aspects. Particularly in the Western social sciences, scholars have examined with great interest the way that 'Islam' and 'modernity' interact in Indonesia. Many existing studies covering cultural trends in post-authoritarian Indonesia have described a fairly diametric opposition between modern-liberal-secular-global forces and traditional-conservative-religious forces operating against each other. This kind of approach has a long history. Clifford Geertz, writing in the 1960s about Islamic boarding schools in Java, predicted that the role of these institutions would decline in the face of 'modernity,' with religious education no

Piety and Pop Culture in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia."; Heryanto, "Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture."

longer able to meet the needs of a rapidly modernising nation.[356] Half a century later, however, some *pesantren* are famously providing some of the most diverse and innovative education curriculums on offer in contemporary Indonesia.[357] Yet the assumed dichotomy between backward-looking religious tradition and forward-looking secular modernity persists in scholarly accounts. For example, when describing a 2006 dispute between the 'liberal' MFI (*Masyarakat Film Indonesia*, Indonesian Film Society) versus the 'conservative' LSF (*Lembaga Sensor Film*, Film Censor Institute) and FPI (Islamic Defenders' Front), Katinka van Heeren writes:

> In claims of what was part of Indonesian culture and society and what was not, both groups put forward and defended different filmic representations. These representations encompassed cosmopolitan secular and global consumerist lifestyles and cultures, juxtaposing the realities of religious and so-called 'Eastern' values, lifestyles and cultures.[358]

It should be clear from my earlier discussion of the idealised modern urban cosmopolitan Muslim figure, that these dichotomies are far too simplistic to capture the nuances of what is going on in Indonesian popular culture. The 'global', the 'modern' and the 'cosmopolitan' are linked with the 'religious' in increasingly complex ways. Even when scholarly work acknowledges this complexity, such acknowledgment is often accompanied by a sense of surprise. In a 2007 study of dress practices amongst young Muslim women, for example, Nancy Smith-Hefner points out the 'paradox' that:

> [Increased] veiling has spread not on the heels of social immobility or traditionalization but in the wake of far-reaching changes conventionally associated in Western social theory with economic development and cultural "modernity" […] Rather than an icon of Islamic traditionalism or

[356] Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960).
[357] For example, schools like Pondok Modern Gontor and Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ummahat are widely hailed as progressive and innovative educational institutions. For an excellent introduction to Islamic education in Indonesia, see Elisabeth Jackson and Lyn Parker, "'Enriched with Knowledge': Modernisation, Islamisation and the Future of Islamic Education in Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 42, no. 1 (2008).
[358] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past," 140.

> antimodernization, for most middle-class Muslims, veiling is a symbol of engagement in a modern, albeit deeply Islamic, world.[359]

Several other studies of 'modern Muslim' subjectivities echo this sense of novelty.[360] These are highly valuable studies; yet their conclusions often reflect, more than anything, underlying assumptions about what the terms 'Islam' and 'modernity' represent.

'Islam' and 'modernity' are an unexpected match in classic narratives of Western social science, which is why the topic attracts attention. In vernacular understandings, the 'modern' world is characterised by doubt, uncertainty and rapid change, and according to Pertti Alasuutari, the fact that in advanced contemporary societies some people 'still unquestionably observe certain sacred principles' is often taken as proof of 'backwardness.'[361] This is the way in which religious groups are commonly characterised; for example Anthony Giddens describes religious fundamentalism as an 'assertion of formulaic truth,' and argues that it can be seen as a reaction to the difficulties of living in a world of radical doubt.[362] In the early 1990s, Fredric Jameson famously asserted that that 'capitalist modernity' has succeeded in killing religion; yet we only need to take the briefest look at the contemporary Indonesian mediascape to see that both are alive and well.[363] Alasuutari's work on the sacred principles of modernity is useful here, as he points out that 'the seeming contradiction in terms between modernity and sacredness resides in a biased conception of both terms,' particularly the myths of modernisation, which 'lead us to believe that sacredness is disappearing in a secularizing process in which we will eventually base our entire worldview on

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[359] Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Suharto Indonesia," 391-95.
[360] See amongst others Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*; Handajani, "Female Sexuality in Indonesian Girl's Magazine: Modern Appearance, Traditional Attitude."; Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."; Meuleman, *Islam in an Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes Towards Modernity and Identity*.
[361] Pertti Alasuutari, "Is Globalization Undermining the Sacred Principles of Modernity?," in *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*, ed. Mimi White and James Schwoch (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 223.
[362] Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," 100.
[363] Fredric Jameson, "Totality as Conspiracy," in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 67.

rationality and science.'[364] In fact, hidden within vernacular understandings of 'modernity' are a whole host of sacred principles ('the nation', 'development'), suggesting that the ideal of 'modernity' is not as 'secular' as it appears on the surface.

Similarly, religion in general is not as antithetical to 'modern' outlooks as is commonly assumed in dominant Western narratives of progress. Indonesia is a useful case in point, demonstrating that religion and faith can and do continue to flourish alongside, within and around imaginings of 'modernity'. In the contemporary Indonesian mediascape, where religion manifests in fashion, pop songs, and celebrity culture, religious piety can in fact signal a hip, modern and trendy outlook. This is very different to the assumptions about religion and modernity that have long pervaded Western perspectives. The view from Indonesia therefore problematises some of the assumptions underpinning much Euro-American cultural studies, and even some recent Inter-Asia cultural studies, and reminds us that it is vital not to assume universality when practicing cultural studies across different contexts. Scholarly fixation on 'Islamic modernity' as an antithetical pairing is a useful departure point for reflecting on the challenges and opportunities of working at the 'intersection' of Asian studies, media studies and cultural studies. In classical cultural and media studies, morality and religion are largely absent as key theoretical concepts, and are instead submerged beneath other more 'secular' concerns and enquiries around class, race and gender.[365] There is still much work to be done towards achieving serious engagement with the complexities of morality and religion in contemporary society, and as I will discuss in Chapter 4, this is a field in which 'intimacies' between cultural studies and specific area studies can be theoretically fruitful.[366] Religious practices and authorities remain an important part of capitalist modernity and modern mediascapes, particularly in postcolonial contexts, and to

[364]Alasuutari, "Is Globalization Undermining the Sacred Principles of Modernity?," 223-24.
[365] Baulch and Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies," 234; John Frow, "Is Elvis a God? Cult, Culture, Questions of Method," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998); John Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
[366] See Heryanto, "The Intimacies of Cultural and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia." See also (for broader Inter-Asia Cultural Studies perspectives) Sakai, "From Area Studies toward Transnational Studies."; Muto Ichiyo, "Asia, Inter-Asia, and Movement: Decolonization into the Future."; Chen, "Preface: The Trajectories Project."

approach pairings like ‘Islamic modernity’ as a surprising combination is to fundamentally misunderstand this reality.

In the context of highly blurred boundaries between the modern and the religious, it is important to critically examine more closely the particular elements of public debates around what kind of narratives should or should not be encouraged and endorsed: often there is a complex array of factors at work beyond simply religious conservatism versus secular libertarianism. We simply cannot capture these complexities when constrained by ill-defined and often deeply compromised keywords like ‘modernity.’ Undeniably, such keywords are indeed used frequently in Indonesian public discourse, and it is therefore tempting to seize upon these terms as analytical tools. Yet we must be wary here, for as outlined in Chapter 2, keywords like ‘modernity,’ ‘tradition’ or ‘development’ have specific histories and ideological legacies. Moreover, their vague and iridescent nature means that the function and meaning of such keywords is constantly shifting. This makes them useful metaphors for ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ complex messages stories, ideas, and discourses, but not necessarily helpful analytical categories.[367] If a keyword like ‘modernity’ is a convenient hold-all concept, we must closely examine what kind of stories, assumptions, and power relations are held within and around this term, and what kind of linear progress narratives that this keyword implies.

As well as questioning the usefulness of ‘modernity’ as an analytical category, I argue that in many ways, the ‘Islamic-ness’ of the ‘modern Muslim’ phenomenon is frequently over-stated. My research findings indicate that there is a broader public morality or religiosity at work here that goes beyond Islam in particular. Although given the Islamic majority in Indonesia, rising ‘popular piety’ has been discussed primarily in terms of Islam, my interviews and focus group discussions demonstrate that in fact a kind of ‘pan-religious morality’ is at work in the discourse of young consumers. When pressed further about what kind of moral messages are important in Indonesian popular culture, the terms that emerge amongst my respondents are ‘education,’ ‘commitment,’ ‘friendship,’ ‘family,’ and so on: that is, all very abstract, with no specific mention of Islam. Data from interviews with Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Buddhist and Hindu respondents is strikingly similar. Islamic elements and

[367] Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," *The cultural studies reader* 4 (1993).

aesthetics in recent Indonesian cinema are frequently described by audiences as 'just background' or 'context and decoration' and are not considered as important as the 'universal' moral messages offered by the films in question. In Chapter 4, I analyse in more detail the 'pan-religious public morality' evident in audience discussions of values, messages, and the responsibility of popular narratives. In the example I gave earlier in this chapter of the young teacher inspired by the film *Laskar Pelangi*, Putri is in fact Christian, yet sees little difference between her experiences teaching a mixed group of Christian and Muslim students in Kuala Kapuas, and the *Laskar Pelangi* story, set in a Muhammadiyah Islamic primary school in Bangka Belitung. Simply because there is such a large Muslim majority in Indonesia, the increasingly visible popular piety often takes on an Islamic note. I contend, however, that popular piety is not only about Islam, and looking at it purely through the lens of 'Islam' can obscure other important concerns underlying public pan-religious morality discourses.

If we look at the idealised figure of the successful modern Indonesian Muslim that appears to dominate popular narratives in the context of post-reform Indonesia, it is clear this figure becomes 'shorthand' for a whole range of concerns. Played out through this modern Muslim character are the tensions of postcolonial and post-authoritarian nationalism; the uncertainties of failed reform; historical legacies of inequality and uneven development; as well as anxieties over how to most effectively 'develop' self, nation, and others. When consumers discuss (and even re-enact) the story of *5cm*, for example, this becomes shorthand for a young urban Indonesian nationalism, which distinctly differs in tone from the dominant nationalisms of previous eras, because of its focus on individual self-development as the path to national progress. Other popular narratives such as *Negeri 5 Menara* and *Laskar Pelangi* dramatise inspirational tales of upward mobility and civilisation; they are 'success stories' about disadvantaged individuals exceeding their community's expectations and entering the world of global education. Yet, at the same time, the way that audiences and the media discuss these stories reveals the persistence of powerful developmentalist ideologies, in which individual motivation and hard work is all that is needed to achieve success, regardless of structural inequalities. Across all these stories, religion and morality are hugely important, but ultimately remain secondary to a more general narrative of progress.

My intention here has not been to play down the importance of Islam, which is undeniably an essential element of contemporary Indonesian life. Indeed, I propose that religion deserves to be taken extremely seriously. However, I have sought to caution against excessive focus on the 'Islamic-ness' of religious experience in Indonesia, when the reality can often be more complex. Amidst ongoing battles for legitimacy of different representations in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape, many stories and characters are sidelined or even silenced, yet the character of the 'modern,' cosmopolitan Indonesian Muslim has proved compelling and resilient, as an 'inspirational' figure that young urban Indonesians strive to emulate. Yet this figure cannot be captured with full analytical clarity by the keywords 'Islam' and 'modernity.' As this chapter has demonstrated, this figure reflects a range of complex tensions over social identities in a rapidly changing Indonesia, and the competing stories of progress that circulate in the contemporary mediascape.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has offered a detailed account of the context of popular cultural consumption in Indonesia at the time of my research. I have described the ways that popular films and novels become meaningful in the lives of young urban Indonesians, and provided examples of how specific stories come to represent broader socio-political concerns. Popular motivational Indonesian novels and films exist in wider social contexts beyond their textual form, and I revealed how audiences refer to and sometimes even re-enact these stories as a way of performing aspects of contemporary nationalist sentiment, developmentalist agendas, and popular piety in post-reform Indonesia. I have contextualised these case studies within two important trends in the Indonesian mediascape: deregulated censorship and inspirational self-help. These trends are two sides of the same coin in that they both rely on the powerful underlying assumption that popular narratives have the capacity to deeply affect, and even transform, their audiences. Censorship debates and self-help discourses both draw heavily on keywords like 'modernity' and 'tradition' in their quest to define what kinds of stories are beneficial or detrimental to the public. I have suggested ways of reading these debates that look beyond the keyword 'modernity' and instead foreground specific social, political and historical

contexts, and the complex contestations at work in the tangled relationship between popular narratives, everyday politics, and dominant narratives of progress.

It is vital to continue working towards serious analytical engagement with religion, but equally important to avoid categorising Islam as an 'exception' with regard to its centrality in defining modern Indonesian popular consumption parameters. This chapter has revealed that self-development and religious development discourses offer variations on dominant progress narratives – progress narratives which have lost some legitimacy, but still persist in insidious ways. By framing my analysis as an effort to trace various progress narratives, I have opened possibilities of looking in nuanced ways at the complexity and internal contradictions of postcolonial nationalism, neoliberal developmentalism, and public morality. Interrogating more conventional framing concepts such as 'Islamic modernity' is an important step in re-evaluating cultural studies in different global contexts, and in doing so I have prompted reflections on the strengths and drawbacks of scholarly work at the intersection of Asia, media, and cultural studies.

Chapter 4 will take up related questions, but with a stronger focus on audience, with the aim of deepening our understanding of both the specific personal implications of popular narrative consumption, as well as exploring broader historical resonances in that way that Indonesian audiences across the archipelago discuss film. I will draw closely on my ethnographic findings to examine striking trends in how young Indonesian audiences characterise their own consumption tastes. Using the Indonesian horror film genre as a case study, I demonstrate powerful processes of othering, social capital, and ultimately the discursive instability of keywords like 'modernity' within audience discussions of their viewing preferences. I also suggest that the ways in which audiences clearly categorise and engage differently with 'trashy' horror films, 'quality' national cinema, and 'dangerous' critical films, reveal that many long-powerful colonial, nationalist and authoritarian discourses on the social responsibilities of popular entertainment to 'advance' and 'develop' the nation remain highly resilient in contemporary Indonesia.

Chapter 4

Stories around the Screen: Critical Pleasures, Self-Representation and National Taste

In this chapter I turn my attention to the stories told by audiences. I examine how people describe their cinematic taste, how they characterise the tastes of 'others,' how they value certain film genres and themes, and how they define the roles and responsibilities of cinema. It is amongst audiences that key moments of consumption and interpretation occur, and it is these moments that form the basis of much cultural studies research, due to the insights they can offer into everyday identity politics. Drawing on ethnographic audience research carried out across six major Indonesian cities, throughout this chapter I explore how young, urban educated Indonesians engage with Indonesian cinema in the post-reform era, focusing in particular on how they position themselves on a linear scale of progress from the imagined 'uneducated masses' through to the 'enlightened modern viewer.' One of the main topics raised by respondents during my research was horror films, specifically, their concerns over the 'low quality' and 'pornographic' Indonesian horror genre.[368] Guided by audience concerns, I take the horror genre as a central case study in this chapter, revealing the ways in which Indonesian horror films become both a site of anxiety around notions of 'progress,' 'backwardness,' 'development,' and 'modernity,' as well as a site of ironic, critical enjoyment.

I begin by demonstrating how respondents consistently frame the imagined Indonesian horror audience as a symbolic other, and how this process is deeply linked with questions of class and social capital. Then I take a closer look at the sheer pleasure audiences take in criticising the horror genre. I introduce theories of 'anti-fandom' from U.S. cultural studies, and show how they can be useful in understanding the phenomenon. However, I also reveal some limits of this theory in the Indonesian context, which in turn highlights the challenges of practising cultural

[368] An initial analysis of this material appeared in Downes, "Critical Pleasures: Reflections on the Indonesian Horror Genre and Its Anti-Fans."

studies across different cultural contexts. I am centrally concerned with teasing out the complex interplay between more 'universal' global phenomena and specific local social, political and historical factors in shaping audience discourses around national cinema. With this in mind I turn to what audiences see as the roles and responsibilities of 'quality' national cinema in 'developing' the nation, and explore how these expectations have deep roots in many generations of cultural policy, and dominant ideologies of previous political regimes, including dominant stories of progress. I highlight the discursive instability of terms like 'modernity,' 'tradition,' 'East' and 'West' in audience discussions about cinema, and the ways in which focusing on these abstract keywords can potentially obscure many of the specific concrete historical legacies that this chapter seeks to highlight.

As a case study, the Indonesian horror genre is a rich entry point into such discussions. Indonesian horror films are the subject of ridicule and derision among most of the young consumers in my study, who consistently characterise the genre as cheap, exploitative and derivative, morally and aesthetically bankrupt, and emblematic of all the worst problems facing the Indonesian film industry, and society in general. In the opening section of this chapter, I illustrate, with reference to Pierre Bourdieu's theories of taste and distinction, how the imagined 'mass audience' of Indonesian horror functions as a symbolic other, reinforcing stereotypes around class and ethnicity, and emphasising the cultural capital of more discerning, critical audiences.[369] However, these consumers' modes of receiving and appreciating Indonesian horror are far more complex than a flat-out rejection and disavowal of the genre. At the same time as ridiculing Indonesian horror, many young urban Indonesians furtively enjoy watching the films in question. Judging by how lively, passionate and humorous the focus group discussions would become when discussing horror, there is also a certain critical pleasure being gained in mocking the genre and its moral failings. In exploring these intricacies of textual pleasure and repulsion, recent theories of 'anti-fandom' that have come out of U.S. cultural studies, particularly the work of Jonathan Gray, Francesca Haig and Sarah Harman

[369] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J Richardson (New York: Greenwood); *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

and Bethan Jones, can be highly illuminating.[370] There are many resonances between Indonesian anti-horror sentiment and U.S. anti-fandom, but also some important divergences, which reminds us that it is vital not to assume universality. I use these gaps and disjunctures as a departure point for reflecting on some of the challenges and opportunities of working at the 'intersection' of Asian studies and cultural studies.

There are always specific histories and social contexts shaping how audiences interpret and discuss popular film, and this chapter will examine in detail some of the deeper histories and contexts of Indonesian cinema consumption ideologies. For many young Indonesian consumers there are distinct roles and responsibilities for Indonesian cinema as opposed to films from East Asia or from Hollywood, which are considered 'just for entertainment.' These distinct normative roles are tied to contemporary socio-political factors such as rising popular piety and 'self-help' trends, as discussed in Chapter 3, yet they also point to the continued influence of long-powerful '*film nasional'* discourses operating in radically new contexts. *Film nasional* was a broad cultural agenda under successive Indonesian regimes since independence. Shaped by figures both within and outside the government, the *film nasional* project promoted 'quality' and 'modern' national cinema that would educate and advance the nation, in contrast with the more widespread 'popular' mass entertainment.[371] During the New Order, ideas around *film nasional* became closely tied with dominant state ideologies, particularly around the idealisation of 'apolitical' art (which in fact masked the deep ideologies of developmentalism, paternalism, and national stability at work in state-sanctioned artistic practice).[372] Since the widespread deregulation following *reformasi*, these discourses are no longer so tightly controlled by the state, so it is useful to re-examine how people are talking

[370] Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans."; "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (2005); Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C Lee Harrington, *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2007); Francesca Haig, "Critical Pleasures: Twilight, Snark and Critical Fandom," in *Screening Twilight: Critical Approaches to a Cinematic Phenomenon*, ed. W Clayton and S Harman (London: IB Tauris, 2013); Sarah Harman and Bethan Jones, "Fifty Shades of Ghey: Snark Fandom and the Figure of the Anti-Fan," *Sexualities* 16, no. 8 (2013).
[371] Salim Said, *Pantulan Layar Putih: Film Indonesia Dalam Kritik Dan Komentar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1991).
[372] Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*.

about national cinema, in order to understand resonances and shifts across eras. For a new generation of Indonesian filmmakers, the notion of '*film nasional*' has been increasingly irrelevant in recent years, with global markets and popular cultural demand becoming driving factors in the industry.[373] But I argue that while the *film nasional* discourse is no longer so carefully policed by the government, public discourse amongst many Indonesian consumers about the role of film as a tool for shaping and advancing society remains strong. While my focus group discussions primarily involved young, urban, tertiary-educated consumers, throughout the course of my fieldwork I also met and spoke with a wider, more diverse, range of audiences. I visited rural villages and urban high-rises, Islamic boarding schools and Christian prosperity churches. From small fishing communities in Sulawesi to elite political circles in Jakarta, I was struck by continuities in audience responses, particularly when it came to discussions around the failings of the Indonesian horror genre and the responsibilities of national cinema.

The ongoing resilience of *film nasional* discourses arguably reflects the continued power of New Order indoctrination processes, deeply entrenched ideologies, and powerful stories of progress. This in turn reflects the way that many political power structures and social realities in contemporary Indonesia remain unchanged and uncontested, and also the ways in which broader hegemonic versions of 'modernity' continue to be so influential around the globe. By examining the links between state ideologies, progress narratives, and keywords like 'modernity' and 'development,' I demonstrate how dominant stories of progress can shape audience engagement with popular texts in long-lasting ways. Often, it is the shifting iridescence of keywords that makes them so powerful and resilient, and I propose that the contradictory ways in which audiences use terms like 'modernity,' 'tradition,' 'East' and 'West,' reveal the underlying instability of such concepts as potential analytical categories. There is always room for contradiction and contestation within dominant stories, and audience research is a particularly rich site to examine this. In the case of Indonesian horror and *film nasional*, I point to audiences' exuberant critical pleasure in critiquing horror as an example of potentially subversive hyper-obedience to official film discourse. Ultimately, everyday audience conversations reveal both the

[373] Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry."

resilience of dominant narratives of progress in contemporary Indonesia, as well as cracks and contradictions within such stories.

The imagined horror audience as symbolic other

In April 2013 I sat cross-legged with a group of six students from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, discussing Indonesian national cinema. I could sense the group edging towards a topic that would inevitably generate lively conversation and trigger an outpouring of critical condemnation; very soon, someone in the group would mention horror films. And while the topic itself was not the main focus of my research at the time, I found myself looking forward to the subject being raised, and anticipating the deluge of ridicule to follow. 'I like watching Indonesian films, but only certain genres. Most importantly, not horror,' explained Agus, a 19-year-old management student. The rest of the focus group nodded enthusiastically in agreement. 'Why, what is wrong with horror films?' I asked, and the floodgates opened.[374] In the sections that follow, I seek to understand a striking similarity that emerged in all interviews and focus groups: the unanimous concern that the Indonesian film market is flooded with low quality and pornographic horror films.

While horror films have been produced in Indonesia since the 1930s when the archipelago was still under Dutch colonial control, the horror genre truly began to blossom in the 1970s and 1980s, with countless titles screened, frequently based on local myths and legends.[375] During this period, the highly successful 'Suzanna' franchise (starring beautiful actress and Indonesia's 'Queen of horror' Suzanna Martha Frederika van Osch), attracted millions of viewers to local outdoor cinemas. Although it has always been branded as somewhat trashy lower-class entertainment, horror is consistently one of the most popular and widely produced genres in Indonesian cinema. Along with other Indonesian film genres, horror experienced a slump during the 1990s, but resurfaced again in the increasingly deregulated media environment of the early 2000s, following the collapse of President Suharto's thirty-

[374] Field notes, Yogyakarta, 25/04/13. All translations have been made by the author. All respondents' names have been changed and replaced with pseudonyms.
[375] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past," 96.

year authoritarian New Order regime. This resurgence of Indonesian horror occurred around the same time that Japanese and Korean horror were experiencing unprecedented success on international markets, yet the films produced in Indonesia remained quite distinct from their international equivalents.

The 'new wave' of horror emerging in the 2000s has been well studied by scholars of Indonesian cinema. Katinka van Heeren has traced the changing role of religious figures such as the *kyai* (Islamic scholar) in horror films, as well the ways in which post-reform Indonesian horror directors produced films which were no longer set in the mythical past but in the real world, in everyday modern urban environments.[376] For van Heeren, this change in setting is related to a desire to seek 'truth' and 'authenticity' in the wake of the New Order regime. She also notes that such developments are arguably entwined with changes in the distribution of horror films, as high-end shopping mall cinemas increasingly outnumbered rural outdoor cinemas. Approaching cinema from a cultural economy perspective, Thomas Barker also demonstrates how some of the structural changes brought by the reform era have influenced Indonesian horror films.[377] Barker finds the classic 'return to order' narrative arc of the New Order era replaced by filmmakers' attempts to articulate past traumas and violences committed by the regime.[378] By looking at horror as a genre of allegory, he argues that the 'temporal gap' between an original violent incident and its reappearance as ghost (a narrative arc that characterised most reform-era horror films) is a way for filmmakers to confront and work through the residual traumas of history.[379] However, both van Heeren and Barker remain primarily focused on the production, distribution, and content of horror films, paying little attention to the voice of the audience. Given the role of the viewer in constructing and shaping meaning, the reception context can be just as important as the text itself, which leads me to examine this previously neglected area, of how viewers engage with Indonesian horror.[380] Throughout decades of horror production there have been

[376] "Return of the Kyai: Representations of Horror, Commerce, and Censorship in Post-Suharto Indonesian Film and Television."; "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past."
[377] Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry."
[378] On the 'return to order' narrative, see Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*.
[379] Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry," 30.
[380] On reception context, see Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*, 130. Although audience studies in the Indonesian context have been limited, key exceptions include Murtagh, "Gay, Lesbi and Waria Audiences in Indonesia."

many significant changes in the film industry, in the way that horror is produced and distributed, and in the kind of allegories at work within the films, yet for millions of everyday consumers the complaints remain much the same: Indonesian horror is seen as cheap mass entertainment of highly questionable moral value.

The majority of respondents in my study were keen to explain that in fact they rarely watch Indonesian films because the industry is dominated by '*jelek*' (ugly, trashy) B-grade horror; this was frequently the very first point raised in each conversation, with many respondents asking incredulously why I was interested in Indonesian cinema at all. 'Indonesian horror films aren't all pure horror, but actually porn,' explains 19-year-old Citra during a focus group discussion with anthropology and history students in Banjarmasin.[381] Among young consumers, there is widely voiced disapproval about the 'soft-porn' aspects of these films, and a sense that this is a worsening situation. Dessy from Padang tells me that 'not many people are interested in Indonesian horror films because these days the sexual aspects are so dominant.'[382] In Jakarta, Arif says 'I don't like Indonesian horror,' and jokes that 'we call them 'KFC' films: breast, thigh, breast, thigh.'[383] Due to the stigma attached to the genre, during the course of my interviews, it was very difficult to find fans of Indonesian horror. Only a handful of participants admit they enjoy the genre, and these confessions are accompanied by nervous giggles and attempts to change the subject. It was easiest to obtain information by inviting people to talk instead about 'friends' who watch horror. During a focus group discussion in Banjarmasin, one of the girls tells me that 'I know a friend of mine who likes to watch Indonesian horror movies. He likes to watch certain scenes. It's not officially blue film, but, you know…'[384] Usually, when explaining Indonesian horror consumption practices, respondents highlight the social aspects: 'Lots of couples go to the cinema to watch horror. It's a way to get closer you see. It's dark, the more scared you become the closer you get!' laughs Afdal, a 22-year-old literature student from Makassar.[385] Another respondent, Teddy from Banjarmasin explains to me that 'all this vulgar Indonesian horror… it's light entertainment. The scenes are funny! You can laugh

[381] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13.
[382] Personal interview, Padang, 02/05/13.
[383] Personal interview, Jakarta, 16/04/13.
[384] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13, English in original.
[385] Personal interview, Makassar, 12/06/13.

with your friends.'[386] Evidently for most young consumers, Indonesian horror films are linked to certain social situations such as dating or hanging out with friends; their appeal lies not in the film itself but in its social context. Even members of online 'Indonesian horror fan communities' (an anonymous space where we would expect to find 'true' fans) primarily obsess over 'retro' horror films from the 1970s and 1980s, and moreover, their fandom is often expressed in an ironic way. 'It's so bad that it's good' is a familiar refrain on such forums, implying a kind of 'anti-fandom' that I will explore further, after first turning to some important questions of class and social capital in audience self-representation.

Overall, criticising the horror genre is a favourite past-time for Indonesian audiences. Yet while everyone is keen to complain about such films, viewers are reluctant to talk about who consumes them and are anxious to distance themselves from the genre. Of course, many different people (including my respondents) watch these films in many different contexts and for a variety of reasons. But what is most interesting for the purposes of this chapter is how respondents seek to 'other' the Indonesian horror genre, explaining that it is 'other consumers' who create the demand. These others include 'people with low education', 'rural village people who just want some entertainment', 'kids who enjoy being frightened', 'curious teenagers', or the most abstract response, 'people in other regions and islands.' These stereotypes are rarely accurate, and require further critical attention. For example, from my own observations of living in both rural and urban areas of Indonesia, rural villagers tend not to watch films at all. Yet such stereotypes are highly consistent and powerful amongst respondents who are keen to distance themselves from horror. The following comment, from Ardi in Manado, exemplifies this process of distancing, as it firmly characterises the demand for horror as coming from 'elsewhere', from another island and ethnic group:

> Where does the demand come from? Probably not from Manado. Maybe in Java [horror films] have a good rating so they keep producing them… but we have different culture, different beliefs. The Javanese are too caught up in traditional mystic beliefs.[387]

[386] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/10/13.
[387] Personal interview, Manado, 23/10/13.

In the majority-Christian and relatively well-off city of Mandado, most people I spoke with would define themselves with reference to Java, positioning the Javanese as 'poor,' 'traditional,' and 'superstitious.'[388] This act of distancing or 'othering' can also occur at the more local level. Hikmat from Padang explains that it is rural people living out of town who watch horror, because 'their needs are at that level; they don't want anything serious, just some light entertainment.'[389] He too is locating the consumption of horror far from his own, better educated, urban lifestyle, and thus projecting a particular image of his own identity. 'Perhaps it's the *becak* [rickshaw] drivers…?' suggests 21-year-old Putri from Jakarta, revealing more about her own social outlook and assumptions than about the demographic of horror audiences.[390] The overwhelming tendency to 'other' the Indonesian horror genre as the purview of less worthy audiences reveals powerful hierarchies of class, region, age, and socio-economic factors, which become linked with ideas of taste, distinction and morality. Within these hierarchies, the audiences I spoke with tended to position themselves on a fairly linear scale of consumer progress, ranging from the 'other' uneducated masses through to the 'self' as enlightened and critical viewer.

By othering the horror genre, audiences gain a form of symbolic and cultural capital, positioning themselves as more discerning and principled than other consumers. Pierre Bourdieu asserts in his sociology of consumption that:

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects… distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.[391]

The notion of taste is relative, and invariably based upon the rejection of the 'lower' taste of someone else. Moreover, the social and cultural capital that is built upon hierarchies of taste is not merely abstract, but 'works hand in hand with economic

[388] Indeed, my own slightly Javanese accent and mannerisms when I spoke Indonesian were a constant source of amusement amongst Manadoese respondents, with several people telling me I reminded them of their Javanese maids or house-servants. This is an interesting reversal of the often Java-centric national rhetoric that has dominated successive political regimes in Indonesia.
[389] Personal interview, Padang, 04/05/13.
[390] Personal interview, Jakarta, 11/04/13.
[391] Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 6. See also "The Forms of Capital."

capital to produce social privilege and distinction.'[392] In earlier eras, when there were still cheap local outdoor cinemas, the horror genre was firmly associated with low-class mass entertainment.[393] Since the *Cinema 21* monopoly over film exhibition, cinemas are now in expensive malls, off-limits to poorer sections of society. Yet the association of horror with cheap mass entertainment remains, and is an influential factor in why young middle-class Indonesian students are so keen to distance themselves from the genre. As indicated in Chapter 3, for many of the young urban audiences I was working with, their socio-economic positions can be relatively tenuous; their so-called middle-class status can be unstable and uncertain, 'newly attained and easily lost.'[394] In this context, the act of rejecting the 'lower class' genre of horror plays an important role in reinforcing the status and cultural capital of many young Indonesian consumers. For these reasons, although in reality there are many who enjoy horror, during everyday conversation most people are scornful of the genre and its viewers. However, I also suggest that there is a more complex relationship at work between Indonesian audiences and the horror genre, one characterised by anti-fandom and critical pleasure, to which I will now turn.

Anti-fandom and critical pleasure

During the course of my fieldwork, it became clear that audience modes of receiving and appreciating Indonesian horror were far more complex than a flat-out rejection and disavowal of the genre. Although they ridicule Indonesian horror, many of these young urban Indonesians also secretly enjoy watching the films in question, even if only to laugh at them. In addition, if we take into account how lively, passionate and humorous focus group discussions would become when discussing horror, there is evidently significant critical pleasure being gained in insulting the genre. These kinds of paradoxes have been examined at length in recent U.S. cultural studies

[392] John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lewis LA (London: Routledge, 1992), 21.
[393] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past."
[394] Luvaas, "Dislocating Sounds: The Deterritorialization of Indonesian Indie Pop," 261. 'Middle class' is a contested term subject to much scholarly debate; here I use the term guardedly to describe the relatively well-off, urban, educated sections of society who are the primary consumers of Indonesian popular film.

theory around 'anti-fandom'; therefore, it is useful for us to critically engage with this body of theoretical work for what kind of resonances and contrasts emerge when looking at similar cases of 'textual hate' in the Indonesian context.

In his study of 'New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans**',** Jonathan Gray argues for the importance of studying the often neglected 'anti-fan' during audience research. Gray points out that many viewers watch distractedly or casually, while many also hate or dislike certain texts or genres, and cultural studies scholars therefore need to focus particular attention on anti-fans and non-fans as 'distinct matrices of viewing and textuality.'[395] This kind of approach represents a significant refinement of and elaboration on Stuart Hall's classic categories of 'dominant', 'oppositional' or 'negotiated' reader positions as well as Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst's taxonomy of audiences, ranging from the casual consumer, to the progressively more involved, active, and productive fan, cultist, enthusiast, and petty producer.[396] While not discounting the significance of these existing categories, and the important progress made by fan studies scholarship, Gray takes us to the other end of the audience spectrum, theorising about 'those who refuse to let their family watch a show, who campaign against a text, or who spend considerable time discussing why a given text makes them angry to the core,' and exploring the implications of this kind of textual engagement for our understanding of the nature of textuality itself.[397] According to Gray, 'textual hatred and dislike have been understudied and underestimated, as has their intricate and nuanced relationship to textual love.'[398] Subsequent research in this area, including Gray's joint work with Sandvoss and Lee in 2007, has elaborated on this complex relationship. Described variously as 'lolfans,' 'snark fans,' and 'ironic, guilty' fans, consumers engaged in practices of anti-fandom are increasingly the subject of scholarly attention, and are understood in ever more complex ways.[399] These recent

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[395] Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," 65.
[396] Hall, "Coding and Encoding in the Television Discourse."; Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*.
[397] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 840.
[398] Ibid., 841. A notable exception is Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (New York: Psychology Press, 1985).
[399] On 'lolfans,' see Madeline LeNore Klink, "Laugh out Loud in Real Life: Women's Humor and Fan Identity" (MA Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008). For 'snark fans,' see Haig, "Critical Pleasures: Twilight, Snark and Critical Fandom." On 'ironic'

theories of anti-fandom complicate the notion of fandom as uncritically affectionate, and also add nuance to Gray's initial characterisation of anti-fans as those who simply refuse to engage with certain texts. In Haig's (2013) analysis of snark fandom amongst readers of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (popular teenage vampire romance novels), and Harman and Jones's (2013) discussion of the ironic, critical online fandom of E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy (popular adult sadomasochistic romance novels), criticism becomes a form of 'pleasurable engagement' for these anti-fans, who engage in detailed close readings of the texts in question.[400] The texts explored in existing anti-fandom research have been primarily US-based, including *The Simpsons* television serial, the aforementioned *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* novels, as well as whole genres such as talk shows and reality television. Despite the different context and content involved, much of these scholars' work can be highly illuminating when analysing Indonesian audiences' engagement with the horror genre.

There are a number of reasons for characterising the Indonesian audiences I was working with as 'anti-fans'. Firstly, many of these respondents, although claiming to be uninterested in Indonesian horror, are in fact highly engaged with these texts, regardless of whether or not they have viewed the films themselves. They can name titles, stars and criticise specific elements of the story and setting. '*Suster Keramas* [*Evil Nurse*], *Pocong Ngesot* [*Crawling Ghost*], *Sumpah Pocong* [*The Ghost's Curse*], the titles are not good,' explains Rezky during a focus group in Banjarmasin.[401] In Manado, Billy advises me that 'it's best to avoid anything starring Dewi Persik [a sexy Indonesian actress].'[402] Doni from Padang has concerns with the believability of the films, saying that 'the scenes are very unrealistic, not at all like the real life. They only show a little bit of sex scene to make the films interesting.'[403] In Jakarta, Mia echoes this sentiment: 'films like *Beranak di Dalam Kubur* [*Birth in the Grave*] have a very illogical narrative, and are also very ambiguous. You find

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fandom, see Harman and Jones, "Fifty Shades of Ghey: Snark Fandom and the Figure of the Anti-Fan."

[400] "Fifty Shades of Ghey: Snark Fandom and the Figure of the Anti-Fan," 963.

[401] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/09/13. Film details: Helfi Kardit, "Suster Keramas," (Indonesia: Maxima Pictures, 2009); Nayato Fio Nuala, "Pocong Ngesot," (Indonesia: Rapi Films, 2011); Awi Suryadi, "Sumpah Pocong Di Sekolah," (Indonesia: Maxima Pictures, 2008).

[402] Personal interview, Manado, 23/10/13.

[403] Personal interview, Padang, 11/05/13.

yourself asking: is this a horror film or a semi-porno?'[404] 'The ghosts simply are not scary,' says Zulis from Makassar.[405] Maria from Manado complains that 'the cinematography is terrible, and so is the setting.'[406] Gray has suggested that the reason there is so little enquiry into anti-fans is that they are assumed to know little about the text, do not watch it, and therefore make 'poor informants.'[407] However, they must have some basis for their dislike. For Gray, 'clearly anti-fans construct an image of the text – and, what is more, an image they feel is accurate – sufficiently enough that they can react to and against it.'[408] In this Indonesian case, these consumers have certainly constructed such an image, which allows them to engage in detailed critiques of films they claim never to have watched.

A second key resonance with anti-fandom theories is the significance of 'paratexts' and 'intertexts' in shaping respondents' views about these films. Fiske has established that a text is much more than simply a book that is read or a film that is watched; a text is also made up of surrounding 'intertexts', including reviews, advertisements, and the comments of other consumers, which all contribute to a kind of 'secondary textuality.'[409] Gérard Genette has also explored this concept, using the term 'paratexts' to describe semi-textual fragments (such as blurbs, cover art and so on) that surround and position a work.[410] In theories of anti-fandom, the paratext or intertext plays a vital role in the 'distant reading' that characterises the textual engagement of many non-fans and anti-fans. For the Indonesian audiences I was working with, it was clear that semi-textual fragments indeed shaped their image of horror films: a film poster starring scantily clad film stars, a glimpse of a scene on a friend's computer, a nostalgic conversation with parents who yearn for the Indonesian horror of bygone eras, an online review decrying the 'stupidity' of

[404] Personal interview, Jakarta, 29/09/13. Film details: Adji Saputra and Freddy Lingga, "Beranak Dalam Kubur," (Indonesia: MD Pictures, 2007).
[405] Personal interview, Makassar, 10/06/13.
[406] Personal interview, Manado, 23/10/13.
[407] Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," 71.
[408] Ibid.
[409] John Fiske, *The John Fiske Collection: Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989).
[410] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

contemporary Indonesian horror; all these moments add to the meaning attributed to certain films.

The third reason for characterising young Indonesian audiences as anti-fans is the sheer enjoyment evident in their act of criticising the horror genre. As in the case of Haig's snark fandom and Harman and Jones's ironic critical fandom, Indonesian audiences enthusiastically embrace the chance to criticise the minutiae of trashy horror films, not just during focus group discussions but during everyday film-viewing practices. 'Have you watched horror porn?' asks one student, during a focus group discussion in Manado. '*Hantu Jeruk Purut* [*The Ghost of Jeruk Purut*], *Suster Keramas* [*Evil Nurse*]… it's funny! We kind of insult it. As far as I know there is no one who says "wow that's a good movie."'[411] Another respondent, Teddy from Banjarmasin explains to me that 'all this vulgar Indonesian horror… it's light entertainment. The scenes are funny! You can laugh with your friends about how terrible it is.'[412] The situations described here involve social, collective critiques of the genre, echoing Haig's analysis of *Twilight* snark fandom:

> The criticisms aren't incidental to the pleasure taken in the texts; they appear, in large part, to constitute that pleasure. This form of critical fandom does not simply recognise Twilight as rubbish and enjoy it in spite of that recognition; the recognition itself and the analysis, discussion and parody that it permits, provide much of the fans' pleasure.[413]

Enjoying the act of criticism is a key element of anti-fandom, and one which forges connection and community between anti-fans, whether in online forums or in everyday conversation.[414] It is in fact this lively, sociable element of the criticism that first drew my attention to the topic of Indonesian horror in the first place. A discussion of the Indonesian horror genre and its failings was always a failsafe way to break the ice during a quiet focus group discussion, and allowed for a kind of bonding over shared moral and aesthetic values before moving on to other topics. Moreover, as Gray has noted in his early musings on potential strategies for studying

[411] Personal interview, Manado, 23/10/13. Film details: Koya Pagayo, "Hantu Jeruk Purut," (Indonesia: Indika Entertainment, 2006); Kardit, "Suster Keramas."
[412] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/10/13.
[413] Haig, "Critical Pleasures: Twilight, Snark and Critical Fandom," 15.
[414] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 854.

anti-fans, 'because part of our interest in interviewing anti-fans and non-fans would be to see how media texts fit into society, we could learn a great deal from observing how a group of friends activate the text in discussion.'[415] During my focus group discussions I indeed encountered a wide range of group dynamics, from a group of girls who strove to out-do each other in their disgust at the genre, to a mixed group who found it very awkward to discuss pornography in front of the opposite gender, to an all-male focus group who laughingly singled out one of their number as a 'big fan' of horror films.[416] As predicted by Gray, these kinds of interactions are highly illuminating for observing the connotations and social roles of certain texts.

Fourthly, as has been examined in the previous section on the imagined audience of horror films, respondents often express concern for 'other' viewers less discerning than themselves (children, uneducated rural villagers, and so on). This is also a preoccupation that emerges frequently in studies of the anti-fan. In Gray's 2005 study of the online forum 'Television Without Pity', he found that much of the animosity directed towards certain shows or characters 'stemmed from a concern for third-person effects.' In other words, viewers claimed to be worried about other people's reception ('children, racists, human resource departments'), which for Gray, reveals 'the degree to which much reception occurs with an imagined community of others.'[417] In this way, the text is a 'remarkably refracted object', and much of what the text means to the viewer in fact stems from what they perceive its impact to be on others.[418] Here, we can see a familiar concern with the impacts of 'mass culture' (essentially any form of mass produced entertainment) on the so-called 'masses.'[419] Similarly, Harman and Jones's analysis of online anti-fandom communities concludes that:

> The oppositional reception of Fifty Shades of Grey says more about anti-fans than it does about those actually 'enjoying' the trilogy, who are largely silent in mainstream discourses. In fact, one wonders whether this constructed Other of the 'vanilla' housewife, the undiscerning reader of 'trash', truly

[415] Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," 77.
[416] Here it is also important to take into account my own presence as a non-Indonesian researcher, and how this influenced the way that my respondents discuss these topics.
[417] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 851.
[418] Ibid.
[419] See Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*.

> exists except as an imagined spectre, or whether, for the majority of readers, it is this 'hate-reading'… which offers the real readerly pleasures of performing and sharing distinctions of taste.[420]

This 'imagined spectre' is something I regularly grappled with during my own research; despite the selection of highly varied respondent groups, I was ultimately unable to find any consumers who engaged in pure un-critical, un-ironic enjoyment of Indonesian horror films.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the centrality of morality in Indonesian audiences' critiques of the horror genre. According to Gray, all texts have moral, rational-realist, and aesthetic dimensions, yet anti-fans are often 'unwilling or unable to interact with all three levels'; that is, having already passed judgement on the 'moral text', they dismiss any possibility of enjoying the cinematography, acting, or plotlines.[421] Indonesian horror films are frequently criticised for their 'monotony,' 'irrational' plotlines, and 'ugly' cinematography, yet during focus group discussions it becomes clear that the main judgement criteria underlying these complaints is a moral one, premised around the insertion of gratuitous sex scenes into the films. In contrast, sub-par aesthetics and plotlines are frequently overlooked if audiences agree with the moral messages of a film. From my outsider's perspective, I could not discern a huge difference in terms of cinematic 'quality', narrative coherence and acting capability when comparing a typical horror film with a romantic comedy or religious drama of similar budget. This suggests that, as in Gray's examples, the Indonesian horror genre's moral text engulfs the aesthetic or rational text.

Ultimately, given the many resonances between my own case and the work of Gray and others, there is a strong case for engaging with their theories. The existing work on anti-fandom undoubtedly enriches analysis of these young Indonesian audiences' modes of engagement with the horror genre. Yet at the same time, there are some important divergences, and in examining these, I propose some ways in which engagement with different cultural contexts can in turn enrich anti-fandom theory specifically and cultural studies more broadly.

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[420] Harman and Jones, "Fifty Shades of Ghey: Snark Fandom and the Figure of the Anti-Fan," 961.
[421] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 844.

Limits of transnational cultural studies conversations

While there are certainly valuable insights we can take from anti-fandom theories here, there are also some important distinctions about the specific Indonesian context that further complicate the view from U.S. cultural studies. I will focus on three main issues here: firstly, the different methodological challenges involved when 'anti-fans' are not a small minority group, but rather a mainstream shared national sentiment; secondly, how the role of the moral text in the Indonesian context can shed light on some of the blind-spots of the Euro-American approach to cultural studies; and thirdly, the central importance of taking into account deeper histories and socio-political circumstances when examining popular culture across different transnational contexts.

In his early theorisation of anti-fandom, Gray points out that most 'fan studies' projects likely set out simply as reception studies, but found it convenient to study fans, as they guarantee an engaged commentary on the text. 'Intentionally or not, audience research often equals fan research, as anti-fans and non-fans are ignored or assumed,' and Gray challenges researchers to engage instead with these 'other' viewers, in order to create a more complete and nuanced picture of consumption.[422] Yet during my own fieldwork I experienced quite the opposite methodological challenge: when it comes to Indonesian horror, anti-fans are not the 'other', but rather the comfortable majority. In fact, even when I was not interested in pursuing the subject of horror, it was among the first topics raised in any discussion of contemporary Indonesian cinema. This forced me to take anti-fandom seriously from the outset: to look beyond what was being said to some of the implications behind it, to expose the gaps between self-representation and actual consumption practices, and to investigate the way that cultural capital and stereotypes are played out in anti-fan critiques. Gray, Haig, and Harman and Jones all characterise their anti-fans in one way or another as a small community or even 'subculture'. In contrast, I found myself conceptualising Indonesian horror anti-fandom as a kind of shared national sensibility. Although the primary focus of my project was young

[422] Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," 64.

middle-class university students, during my time in Indonesia I interacted with a diverse range of audiences. From Islamic boarding schools to Javanese villages to evangelical Christian prosperity churches to Buginese fishing communities, to elite Jakartan malls, at the surface level there is widespread mainstream condemnation of contemporary Indonesian horror. In fact, being an anti-fan is the only socially acceptable option throughout much of Indonesia. This has prompted me to speculate more broadly than existing anti-fan studies, which limit themselves to, say, the minutiae of a particular online forum. By engaging with the notion of anti-fandom on a national scale, we have the opportunity to tease out wider issues of socio-political importance that become entwined with anti-horror critiques.

The other significant disjuncture between the Indonesian context and the conventions of U.S. cultural studies is different assumptions about and approaches to morality, or the 'moral text' as Gray terms it. Gray has suggested that studying anti-fan disapproval can offer media and cultural studies 'meaningful re-entry points' to discussing quality, values and expectations – particularly the ways in which everyday viewers' values interact with media consumption, use and meaning – a discussion he claims rarely arises in cultural studies.[423] Elsewhere, he makes the apparently ground-breaking pronouncement that 'the text, long considered the basic unit of aesthetics, may at times be solely or predominantly a moral unit instead.'[424] I find Gray's surprise here somewhat unexpected. Working in the Indonesian context, researchers have always been forced to come to terms with the text as a moral unit. This is a situation common to many postcolonial contexts, where ethics and moralities become important sites in the struggle to define contemporary national identities in the wake of the colonial encounter. Furthermore, when living and researching in Indonesia, it is impossible to lose sight of religion as a public and private reality of Indonesian lives. Around 88 percent of Indonesia's population of around 240 million self-identifies as Muslim; for them, as well as for significant minorities such as Hindus and Christians, religion is an important lens through which to interpret contemporary realities, including media products. This has become increasingly clear in the post-authoritarian context, with the power vacuum left by

[423] Ibid., 73.
[424] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 844.

the collapse of Suharto's regime in 1998 increasingly filled by public morality discourses, as discussed in the previous chapter. Gray explains how it is possible film can pass from screen into the terrain of news and public debate on morality and the media, 'overloading' expectations of the text and limiting the frames through which many viewers could make sense of it. In my own research around Indonesian screens, these kinds of framing processes involving public debates over media and morality are always a given, making Gray's argument above somewhat self-evident and redundant.

Yet if we examine the bulk of Euro-American cultural and media studies, it is clear that morality and religion are largely absent as key theoretical concepts, and are instead submerged beneath other more 'secular' concerns and enquiries. As Emma Baulch and Julian Millie point out in their reflections on working at the 'intersection' of area studies and cultural studies, 'in classical cultural studies, religion has deferred to other modes of subjectivity considered as key constituents of capitalist modernity: race, class and gender.'[425] Of course, these different approaches and focus-points are shaped by the concerns of specific research contexts. Gray notes, in his analysis of online anti-fandom in the U.S., that 'all posters temper their comments somewhat, most with humor,' in order to seem 'less overtly moralistic' because of their awareness that 'outright moral posturing may be considered decidedly uncool.'[426] In contrast, the rise of an increasingly performative style of popular public piety in Indonesia means that the opposite is true: to avoid making moral judgements is the 'decidedly uncool' option in this case. As discussed in Chpater 3, in a context where religion, particularly Islam, manifests in fashion, pop songs, and celebrity culture, moral posturing can in fact signal a modern and trendy outlook.[427] This situation problematises the assumptions underpinning much Euro-American cultural studies. While there is nothing inherently wrong with a theory tailored to either of these specific sites of enquiry, any attempt to internationalise cultural studies requires an

[425] Baulch and Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies," 234. See also John Frow, "Is Elvis a God? Cult, Culture, Questions of Method."; Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*.
[426] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 849.
[427] Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*; Subijanto, "The Visibility of a Pious Public."

acknowledgement of diverse cultural contexts and therefore a more serious engagement with questions of morality and religious practice. Despite the 'secular ideal underpinning the genesis and history of cultural studies,' it is undeniable that religious practice, religious authority and religious media remain ever-present facts of capitalist modernity, particularly in postcolonial contexts.[428] Baulch and Millie contend that 'coming to terms with' religion is:

> [A] process more complex than simply applying staple cultural studies conceptual tools to existing structures and practices. It will also entail giving serious attention to spaces outside the 'approved' cultural studies structures, and recognizing the different historical and social realities that motivate the scholarly interventions produced within them.[429]

The position of religion within 'approved' cultural studies structures is made particularly clear in Lawrence Grossberg's 2010 work *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, where, in an otherwise highly nuanced and sensitive analysis, religious sentiment is consistently described as 'worrying' and synonymous with conservatism.[430] When discussing globalisation processes, Grossberg points to 'troubling' developments such as 'the "globalization" of new forms of conservative politics, of fundamentalist structures of feeling… and of evangelical Christianity, to name but a few.'[431] Later, when analysing the ways in which Euro-modernity has come under widespread attack and rejection, he notes that 'even at the apparent height of its success it was already in trouble, as was made visible in anticolonial and antiracist movements, in emergent youth cultures, in feminist and other social movements, as well as in the rise of various religious movements and new conservatisms.'[432] Here, we see religion paired firmly with 'conservatism' as opposed to the more 'progressive' movements of feminism, anti-colonialism, or youth cultures. However, my analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 clearly demonstrates that in contexts like Indonesia, religiosity can be a central element of youth cultures, feminist debates, and social justice movements. A more nuanced re-engagement with questions of religion and morality is therefore one of the many areas in which

[428] Baulch and Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies," 235.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*.
[431] Ibid., 59.
[432] Ibid., 69.

'intimacies' between cultural studies and specific area studies can be theoretically fruitful.[433] As noted in Chapter 1, pioneering initiatives such as the establishment of an Inter-Asia Cultural Studies community have reinforced the significance of re-evaluating cultural studies in Asian contexts, prompting reflections on the strengths and drawbacks of different scholarly approaches in different areas of the world.[434] By attempting to locate anti-horror sentiment amongst Indonesian audiences as a kind of 'anti-fandom,' yet also acknowledging the limits of such a categorisation, my own study joins these important conversations.

Working at the intersection of area studies and cultural studies is a valuable endeavour, with lessons to offer both areas of enquiry. While insights from this particular Indonesian context can be helpful in expanding the horizons of cultural studies research, there is, vice versa, much in U.S. cultural studies that has been useful in examining the Indonesian case. Extended critical analysis of the nature of textuality and audience engagement has been relatively limited in the context of Indonesian studies, where scholars have tended to prioritise formal political processes and structures as frames for viewing Indonesia.[435] Furthermore, as noted previously, Indonesian media studies tends to focus on the production and content of texts, rather than the living text as it operates in day-to-day life. The work of Gray and others therefore offers important insights into these questions of audience and textuality. For Gray, because a text can exist in 'everyday talk', it becomes a 'structure of feeling and a matrix of power, meaning, effects, and identity that can and frequently does separate itself from its mooring of the actual program as broadcast.'[436] Anti-fandom theory's analysis of the 'multiple connections between fandom and antifandom, the moral and the emotional, the text, and ideals of the public and textual spheres' therefore offers an important framework for looking beyond the surface of media, representation and communication in the case of Indonesian horror films.[437] Ultimately, to grasp the nuances of audience textual

[433] Heryanto, "The Intimacies of Cultural and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia."
[434] Sakai, "From Area Studies toward Transnational Studies."; Muto Ichiyo, "Asia, Inter-Asia, and Movement: Decolonization into the Future."; Chen, "Preface: The Trajectories Project."
[435] Baulch and Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies."
[436] Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Television without Pity and Textual Dislike," 843.
[437] Ibid., 841.

engagement, it is important to combine critical application of theory with a keen awareness of local histories and socio-political contexts. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will examine these histories, and the specific ways in which certain stories of progress have shaped audience discourse in contemporary Indonesia.

Echoes of discourses past: *Film nasional* and cinematic responsibility

While debates around national cinema and A-grade/B-grade dichotomies are familiar around the world, examining the particular contours of the Indonesian case can allow us to intervene in apparently universal 'global' theory. In what follows, I examine specific social, political, and historical contexts of film production and consumption in Indonesia, as a way to demonstrate the central importance of taking local context into consideration when engaging in transnational cultural studies conversations. These historical legacies also reveal continuities in how keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' are used in audience discussions around national cinema. The flip-side of the strong tendency to condemn horror is respondents' normative discourses on what makes quality national cinema. This notion of 'quality' is linked to ideas about education, motivation, morality, and the social responsibility of Indonesian films. Here I use 'quality' in the sense it is used in everyday conversation by my respondents. That is, not 'quality' as a matter of international awards or positive reviews by national 'intelligentsia', but rather popular understandings of what makes good national cinema. The most popular and successful films of recent years have not been horror films, or Hollywood blockbusters, or festival films, but rather mainstream Indonesian dramas or biopics that strike a certain chord with audiences.

Almost every respondent explains that quality Indonesian films have 'moral messages', 'good values', 'educative' capacity, and provide 'motivation and inspiration'. 'Films should educate,' says Doni from Padang, 'there should be values like honesty, hard work, love, friendship, family.'[438] Zulis from Makassar agrees, explaining that 'quality stories always have good content… educative for children,

[438] Personal interview, Padang, 02/05/13.

giving inspiration and motivation.'[439] According to Bobby from Manado, 'films are important; they push Indonesia to become more advanced and modern. We need to see positive local stories from Indonesia.' Similarly, Reni from Yogyakarta points out that 'films are capable of touching and motivating citizens and young people of Indonesia, so they should have educative capacity and be beneficial to the audience.' These normative ideas about the responsibility of films to develop the character of audiences are highly consistent across all respondent groups, and significantly it is Indonesian films that are burdened with this task, while foreign films are enjoyed simply as entertainment or escapism. 'Films from elsewhere have to be fun,' explains Indah from Banjarmasin, 'but Indonesian films, because they are produced for Indonesians themselves, their morals have to be more effective.'[440] Her classmate Rizal agrees, saying 'to be honest, [when watching] foreign films [it's] more about enjoying [better cinematic] technology. There are rarely moral messages.'[441] Similarly, Eva from Jakarta explains that 'production effects in Indonesia are pretty backwards, so the content of the film is more important. Yeah, the content, the core, the morals.'[442] Certainly, there are technical and cinematic factors at work here, but there is also a political dimension to this distinction. Films from the U.S. or Korea, for instance, are considered so 'foreign' that it does not matter if their messages do not reflect so-called Indonesian values.[443] Indonesian films, on the other hand, which have more potential to 'touch' audiences and 'reflect' society, are judged according to a stricter normative framework.

The keywords that surface in normative discussions of Indonesian national cinema include 'family values', 'friendship,' 'fidelity,' 'struggle,' 'education,' 'real life,' 'struggle,' 'moral messages,' and 'inspiration.' Such comments are tied to some of the contemporary socio-political trends I have mentioned in earlier chapters, such as the popularity of 'self-help' and motivational products, the increased public interest in the struggle of poor, marginalised regions of Indonesia, and the rising levels of popular piety and pan-religious public morality. As in Chapter 3, I would like to note

[439] Personal interview, Makassar, 10/06/13.
[440] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 10/09/13.
[441] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13.
[442] Personal interview, Jakarta, 30/08/13.
[443] For a complementary look at this issue in the context of television dubbing debates in Indonesia, see Boellstorff, "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian 'Gay' and 'Lesbi' Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World."

here that although rising 'popular piety' has been discussed primarily in terms of Islam, my findings indicate that in fact a kind of 'pan-religious morality' is at work in the discourse of young consumers. This becomes particularly evident in examining the relaxed responses of non-Muslim participants. 'Yeah, I still enjoy Islamic films, their moral messages are still positive,' explains Billy in Mandado, 'the most important thing is whether it is a good film, no matter what religion. Besides, their values are not so different from ours.'[444] His classmate Christa concurs that 'I don't really mind – the stories are good, and we are indeed a majority Muslim country.'[445] Others point to the fact that Islamic films are primarily a shrewd business move: 'Because most people are Muslim, films with Islamic elements will automatically turn a profit because there is plenty of interest among the majority.'[446] Ultimately, the moral messages that are valued (family values, friendship, education) do not vary greatly across respondents from different religious backgrounds. I suggest that what audiences see as the distinct normative role of national cinema (to guide, educate, inspire and advance the nation) is entangled with a range of contemporary socio-political factors; however, I also propose that consumers' widespread concern with the social responsibility of film echoes much older ideas and debates, especially in connection to '*film nasional*' discourses, to which I now turn.

This question of what makes 'quality' national cinema has long preoccupied Indonesian commentators, filmmakers and consumers, as well as politicians and policymakers. Historically, the role of Indonesian films was an important area of cultural policy under both the Sukarno and Suharto governments, and was formalised through the official discourse of '*film nasional*.' Shaped by government bodies, filmmakers, intellectuals, artists and nationalist figures, the *film nasional* project aimed to build a film industry that 'educated' and 'developed the character' of the nation.[447] The normative responsibility of popular culture was flagged very early in newly independent Indonesia, with the Head of the Cultural Office, Soedarsono, explaining in 1951 that his department's goal was the 'democratization of every

[444] Personal interview, Manado, 23/10/2013.
[445] Personal interview, Manado, 22/10/2013.
[446] Personal interview, Mandao, 22/10/2013.
[447] Said, *Pantulan Layar Putih: Film Indonesia Dalam Kritik Dan Komentar*; Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry."

cultural field until they penetrate to all of wider society and become popular' but also 'protected so they do not become vulgar.'[448] In a similar way to current condemnations of horror, there was a clear distinction made between popular mass cinema and the more art-house, auteur-produced '*film nasional*'. This in turn echoed colonial-era debate around national literature and theatre. For example the apolitical, moral, 'improving' literature of the official Dutch publishing house *Balai Pustaka* was frequently contrasted with the immoral, substandard, cheap pulp fiction known as '*Bacaan Liar*' ('wild' or 'feral' books).[449] *Film nasional* was in this way a paternalistic discourse, an ongoing legacy of colonial cultural policy that saw the Indonesian people as in need of 'improvement' and unable to make responsible consumption choices, whether in theatre, music, literature, or elsewhere, without state guidance. As noted in Chapter 2, this style of cultural policy involves a highly developmentalist outlook, which 'disregards the tastes and affiliations of groups and individuals using the excuse that those subjects do not have the capacity to maturely and rationally exercise their own judgement.'[450] While this was a common state attitude throughout most of the twentieth century in the Dutch East Indies and newly independent Indonesia, paternalistic cultural policy arguably reached its height during the New Order regime, evident in increasingly prescriptive state definitions of national cinema.

Under the New Order, a particular version of *film nasional* was legitimised through the canonisation of certain directors and the development of film festivals, all aimed at crafting what Bourdieu terms a 'legitimate culture.'[451] In many ways, this legitimate culture was founded upon the erasure of 'leftist' voices in art, literature, and film, following the anti-communist mass killings of 1965-1966. Keith Foulcher has examined at length the New Order government's systematic demonisation of the communist party-affiliated LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat,* 'The Institute of

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[448] Soedarsono (1951), cited in Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 85.
[449] Tickell, "The Writing of Indonesian Literary History."; Teeuw, McArthur, and Stephens, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, 2. Similarly, in the case of theatre, see Cohen, "Hybridity in Komedi Stambul.". Later, these distinctions were echoed in discourses around television, see Philip Kitley, ed. *Television, Regulation and Civil Society in Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); "Fine Tuning Control: Commercial Television in Indonesia."
[450] Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 271.
[451] Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

People's Culture), an organisation committed to the production of socially critical literature and art. During this process, literature that was deemed to have 'political' or 'ideological' content was 'actively pilloried and caricatured, to the point where it emerged as a travesty of the very nature of literature itself.'[452] In this context, an uneasy alliance formed between the military state, and the artists, authors and filmmakers who, in contrast to LEKRA, advocated an 'apolitical' universal humanism in their work. Yet as Foulcher perceptively notes, 'the denial of ideology can always be seen as an indication of the very strength of its presence… What is posed as a distinction between art and ideology is in fact a choice between competing ideologies and their implications for social and cultural practice.'[453] In other words, the 'apolitical' nature of art idealised under the New Order was in fact an ideology in its own right, one which supported the (military, secular, patriarchal) status quo, by excluding any alternative or critical voices. On film more specifically, Heryanto has demonstrated that official film historiography in Indonesia exhibits similar characteristics of exclusion and erasure, with the central role of ethnic Chinese and Eurasians in Indonesia's early film industry erased in favour of more nationalist narratives about 'native' Indonesian directors, committed again to positive 'apolitical' depictions of the nation.[454] Ideas about quality national cinema may appear to emerge naturally, but these discourses were ideologically constructed by the state, and became increasingly powerful under Suharto, with widespread encouragement of 'quality films with good values, not just for entertainment.'[455] These values were often closely aligned to New Order interests and ideologies, which included a strong developmentalist agenda and the aforementioned narrow definition of ideal 'apolitical' art and culture.

A key aspect of the New Order progress narrative and '*pembangunan*' (development) ideology was the importance of order and harmony, and the dangers of critical politics. This narrative persists in contemporary audience discussions around the dangers of 'negative' or 'critical' films. As noted in Chapter 3 with regard to censorship, films that challenge the status quo or offer a negative portrayal of

[452] Foulcher, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian 'Institute of People's Culture' 1950-1965*, 2.
[453] Ibid., 10-11.
[454] Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*.
[455] Said, *Pantulan Layar Putih: Film Indonesia Dalam Kritik Dan Komentar*.

Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity are frequently subject to protests and media controversies. Just like in public debate in the Indonesian mediascape, for Indonesian audiences, the concept of 'SARA', which emerged in the New Order, remains an important determining factor in what makes a film too 'sensitive.' SARA stands for *Suku* (ethnic groups), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race), and *Antar-golongan* (class), and for decades, the mass media in Indonesia, including filmmakers, were highly discouraged from covering these subjects in a critical or controversial way, for fear of 'destabilizing the nation.'[456] My interviews revealed that SARA persists as an influential filter through which young Indonesians judge contemporary cinema. 'Filmmakers must be careful when portraying SARA and religious tensions, or material that can interfere in harmony between groups', says Roni from Makassar.[457] Members of a focus group in Manado unanimously agree that 'themes related to Ethnicity, Religion and Race will always cause trouble.'[458] This is echoed during a focus group in Banjarmasin, when participants express particular concern with 'negative portrayals of religion.'[459] In Padang, Donny also warns me about the controversies that can be caused by 'stories about the negative side of race, tribe, nation and religion.'[460] His classmate Aulia agrees, adding that 'I think that a film will trigger controversy if it contains overt criticisms, or if it shows images of conflict, such as cultural conflict for example.'[461] Some young viewers are not completely versed in the acronym itself, but certainly understand its underlying intent: 'Films with a whiff of… SARS…? Um, what is it? That sensitive thing… SARA! That's it. Because Indonesia is so richly diverse in ethnicity, religion and race. Although it may just be a fictional story… it can trigger conflict and cause trouble.'[462] These consumers' discussion of SARA demonstrates how old ideologies persist in insidious ways, although their official names may be forgotten.

The discomfort that young Indonesian audiences display towards the idea of 'negative' or 'critical' Indonesian cinema is entirely different to their attitude

[456] van Heeren, "Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past," 119.
[457] Personal interview, Makassar, 20/06/2013.
[458] Personal interview, Manado, 22/10/13.
[459] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/09/2013.
[460] Personal interview, Padang, 11/05/2013.
[461] Personal interview, Padang, 12/05/2013.
[462] Personal interview, Manado, 22/10/13.

towards the Indonesian horror genre. In contrast to the animated and playful way in which horror is discussed, films portraying social conflict provoke no such extended and pleasurable critique. This is arguably a legacy of the erasure and demonisation of socially critical approaches to art following the 1965-1966 mass killings, and the climate of fear that haunted subsequent decades, in which critiques of the status quo could potentially result in imprisonment or mysterious 'disappearance.'[463] Simply discussing the idea of critical film continues to cause discomfort among audiences, and respondents are quick to align themselves with the official pro-stability SARA doctrine. Horror, on the other hand, is a much safer and more fun topic of discussion, which allows people to build a sense of unity and shared morality through their critique of its questionable moral and aesthetic value. In their work on cultural policy, Toby Miller and George Yudice contend that 'standards on taste…are part of hegemony, a key means of differentiating and stratifying society. The value projected by aesthetic hegemony is ultimately premised on a series of exclusions…Social harmony is bought at the expense of those whose tastes are not only aesthetically unacceptable but, more importantly, potentially contestatory.'[464] Audience attitudes towards horror films, 'quality' films, and 'critical' films can be read in a similar way. As well as the more obvious processes of building social capital by rejecting horror, the *shared* rejection of horror amongst young Indonesian audiences also promotes a sense of social harmony in a context where the notion of critical cinema carries a certain sense of danger and conflict.

Following the widespread deregulation of the reform era, in the first decade of the twenty-first century Indonesian films are produced and distributed in a radically different context, leading some scholars and local commentators to suggest that since 1998 the concept of *film nasional* is no longer as important as the global market and demands of popular culture.[465] Indeed, the distinctions between serious auteur-produced cinema and popular commercial cinema are increasingly blurred. In contemporary Indonesia, it is not art-house films but 'popular' films, such as *Laskar*

[463] On New Order state terrorism, see Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*. For an analysis of the dynamics of widespread intellectual middle-class support for the regime's pro-stability and anti-political stance throughout the 1970s and 1980s, see Aspinall, "The Broadening Base of Political Opposition in Indonesia."
[464] Toby Miller and George Yudice, *Cultural Policy* (London: Sage, 2002), 11.
[465] For example, Barker, "A Cultural Economy of the Contemporary Indonesian Film Industry."

Pelangi (*The Rainbow Troops*, 2008), that audiences cite as representative of quality Indonesian cinema. Yet previously powerful visions of national cinema can easily outlast both regime change and structural changes in the industry; from my interviews it is clear that public discourse on film as a tool to advance and educate Indonesian society remains strong amongst consumers. When respondents earnestly bring up these abstract concepts of 'education,' 'inspiration,' 'development,' 'family values,' and 'SARA,' they are echoing decades of official film discourse. These young Indonesians, raised in the *reformasi* era and never directly subject to New Order propaganda, still use the language and concepts of *film nasional* to praise and critique popular films in Indonesia. This is arguably because, following the erasure of the Left, for so many decades there was no alternative framework for understanding cinema, literature, and art, in schools, universities and everyday discussions. In his 1983 study of world cinema, Robert Kolker describes how 'narrative film can set out to please its audience, soothe it, meet and reinforce its expectations. Or it can challenge, question and probe, inquire about itself, its audience, and the world they both inhabit and reflect…film made in a spirit of resistance, rebellion, and refusal.'[466] For so long in Indonesia, the former kind of film was idealised in official Indonesian film discourses, and it appears that there is relatively limited desire among post-reform audiences for the latter kind of film. Evidently despite huge changes in the film industry over the past decade, long-standing discourses on the function of *film nasional* remain powerful in contemporary Indonesia. The ongoing resilience of *film nasional* discourses arguably reflects the continued power of New Order ideologies around progress, framed in terms of 'development' and 'modernity.' However, while these dominant stories of progress are powerful, they often contain internal contradictions and spaces for contestation, as I will discuss in the closing sections below.

Contradictions and hyper-obedience in audience stories of progress

Everyday audience conversations are a rich site to explore both the resilience of dominant progress narratives in contemporary Indonesia, as well as cracks and

[466] Kolker, *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema*, xvii.

instabilities within such stories. Media and cultural studies scholarship offers varying perspectives regarding to what extent audiences are 'active' and 'autonomous' in interpreting and responding to the texts that they encounter, and to what extent structures of media power continue to limit and frame audience activities and understandings.[467] From my research, it is clear that we need to take into account elements of both these perspectives. The way that contemporary Indonesian audiences interpret and discuss popular film has undoubtedly been influenced by state ideologies and cultural policies, but these audiences are also active agents in determining the tone of such discussions. The shifting ways in which respondents define notions of 'modernity' and designations of 'national' and 'foreign' culture, as well as the exuberant enjoyment they experience when discussing the horror genre, point to a complex relationship between dominant narratives and popular interpretations. Within this relationship, there is space for subtle contradictions and contestations.

As explained in Chapter 2, the appeal of keywords like 'modernity' lies partly in their flexible and iridescent nature, which allows them to shift in meaning depending on the context and angle of interrogation. This kind of discursive instability is clearly evident in consumer conversations around 'tradition' and 'modernity.' One of the ways in which these keywords are used in audience discussions of Indonesian cinema is in the nostalgia almost all respondents express for horror films of earlier eras, such as the legendary 1980s 'Suzanna' films. 'When I was little, I used to watch lots of Suzanna. There were still those kinds of [sexual] scenes, but nowhere near like they are today,' says Elfi in Banjarmasin, while a focus group in Makassar unanimously agree that 'it's been so long since there was a ghost film based on local stories… these days the narratives are really stupid, the vulgar aspects stand out, and they're not even scary.'[468] There is even nostalgia for more recent film eras such as the local myths and urban legends of early Reform era films:

> There used to be films about jelangkung or kuntilanak [spirits appearing in local folklore], the stories were great! It's just in the last few years there have

[467] See David Morely's section on 'Audience' in Bennett, Grossberg, and Morris, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 8-10. For a highly useful discussion of this in the Indonesian context, see also Jurriëns, "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited."
[468] Personal interviews, Banjarmasin, 09/09/13 and Makassar, 10/06/13.

> been this kind of porn scene. Yeah, they used to be great, because there are so many urban legends in Indonesia. So much more interesting. Nowadays, the storylines… they don't have any point at all![469]

Pessimism over the apparent decline in horror standards is widely shared. In Padang, Rizky laments that 'there used to be quality films, based on urban legends. Now they are too modern, and no longer compatible with Indonesia, [for example], the clothes, the setting and so on.'[470] Related to their strong sense of nostalgia, respondents will often voice concern about how 'traditional' Indonesian horror has been negatively affected by outside influences. Afdal explains, 'There are so many films that have started adapting elements that are so far from traditions, so far from Eastern culture, [such as] sexual scenes. It's the influence of Western films.'[471] Here, local 'traditions' are portrayed in a positive light, as something under threat from an amorphous 'Western modernity.' In a strikingly similar way to the stories arising in academic scholarship and in media coverage (as discussed in preceding chapters), these young consumers simultaneously characterise horror *films* as negatively influenced by 'modernity' and horror *audiences* as not sufficiently 'modern' or discerning as consumers. Such internal contradictions and discursive instabilities are common to keywords like 'modernity,' and it is within these contradictions that we can grasp at some of the complexities of progress stories as articulated by everyday consumers.

Many intriguing contradictions arose during my interviews, particularly around definitions of 'East' and 'West.' When pressed about the meanings of 'Eastern culture', some respondents will not include East Asian countries in this definition:

> These days in Indonesia, people have gone too far in embracing modernity… Clothing, for example: there are so many who embrace Korean style, American style, and so on. It's not so much an issue of clothing itself; it's about not forgetting ourselves, it's about maintaining Eastern culture… Eastern culture means Indonesia. It certainly doesn't include Korea! It's about local culture.[472]

[469] Personal interview, Banjarmasin, 09/0913.
[470] Personal interview, Padang, 06/05/13.
[471] Personal interview, Makassar, 11/06/13.
[472] Personal interview, Makassar, 11/06/13.

This kind of ambivalence over categories of East and West is deeply entangled with dominant narratives of development and 'modernity' that locate Japan and Korea as highly advanced 'modern' nations that have left behind their 'traditions' in the process of pursuing a 'Western-style modernity.' In his 2002 collection *Recentering Globalization,* Koichi Iwabuchi characterises Japan as a 'non-Western semi-centre,' which exports a 'mode of indigenized modernity for culturally and/or geographically contiguous nations.'[473] In other words, Japanese media companies successfully export a hybrid Asian modernity to elsewhere in the region. Similar arguments have been made around Korea and the enormous popularity of K-Pop in Southeast Asia.[474] While these previous studies have focused on the positive cultural capital attached to this process, audience anxieties over the influence of these hybrid Asian modernities on 'Indonesian culture' reveal a different side to this narrative. In this alternative narrative, East Asian nations have followed a path towards progress in which their identities have been subsumed by 'Western modernity' and the supposed moral degradation this entails. In this context, films from the U.S. or East Asia are both considered so 'foreign' that it does not matter if their messages do not reflect so-called Indonesian values. The influence of these film industries on Indonesian cinema, however, is what concerns viewers, who often echo familiar anxieties around hybridity and 'bastard modernity.'[475] The growing trend of producers casting actual porn stars from the U.S. and Japan (e.g. Sasha Grey, Sora Aoi, Maria Ozawa) to play the lead roles in Indonesian horror films has added to these concerns, while also reinforcing the kind of nationalist morality articulated by young audiences when they characterise pornographic influences as coming from 'outside' Indonesia. While the Indonesian horror genre is a very specifically Indonesian product, by blaming 'negative influences' from 'outside' Indonesia for aspects of the genre they are uncomfortable with, respondents are defining a certain kind of Indonesian 'self.' This self is located within a story of progress in which, unlike Korea, Japan, and 'the

[473] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 48. See also Iwabuchi, *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese Tv Dramas*.
[474] Sun Jung, "K-Pop, Indonesian Fandom, and Social Media," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 8 (2011).
[475] David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia." See also Boellstorf on the dubbing debate in late New Order Indonesian television. Boellstorff, "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian 'Gay' and 'Lesbi' Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World."

West,' Indonesia maintains its 'traditional' values while pursing 'modernity.' Here, although a linear progress narrative is still in play, some aspects of classic 'Western' stories of progress are embraced, while others are contested and reframed.

Another area where cracks appear in dominant progress narratives is the exuberant nature of audience discussions around horror film, as opposed to more subdued and serious conversations about quality national cinema. While respondents widely position the genre as 'backward' on a linear scale of progress, the sheer joy that audiences find in critiquing horror reveals a kind of playful hyper-obedience to official designations about what kinds of cinema 'modern' consumers should enjoy. Ariel Heryanto has made similar points about hyper-obedience in the context of New Order election processes.[476] Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theories around apolitical masses and the spectacular, as well as Achille Mbembe's work on the 'potential for play, improvisation, and amusement, within the very limits set by officialdom' in postcolonial contexts, Heryanto points to the 'excessive compliance of the masses' in the state-organised 'festivals of democracy' which accompanied the highly controlled and politically predetermined elections.[477] The excessive enthusiasm with which contemporary Indonesian audiences disparage the horror genre can similarly be read as an act of hyper-obedience, with subtly subversive effects. The notion of 'transgression' is also relevant in explaining the excitement of a horror film discussion versus the slightly boring earnestness of a conversation about more 'worthy' cinematic offerings. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have argued that when societies construct and define their norms and values by excluding 'filth' and building binaries between high and low culture, paradoxically, the cultural products that are 'forbidden' by informal social regulations gain a certain appeal amongst consumers, who enjoy the thrill of transgression.[478] This process is arguably apparent in respondents' attitudes towards Indonesian horror: although they officially disapprove of the genre, discussion about horror film invariably invokes giggles and

[476] Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, 151.
[477] Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities and Other Essays*, trans. Paul Foss, John Johnston, and Paul Patton (New York: Semiotext, 1983), 43; Achille Mbembe, "The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony," *Public Culture* 4, no. 2 (1992): 11; Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, 151.
[478] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Poetics and Politics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986).

squeals of gleeful discomfit. The extent to which conversations about the horror genre carry a sense of 'transgressiveness' is also evident in audiences' different responses depending on the interview setting. For example, during focus group discussions held in formal educational settings such as universities, these discussions were more restrained than in more informal locations like cafes, food stalls, or boarding houses. In formal contexts, respondents were far more likely to reproduce official narratives of national cinema, while in more casual settings, a sense of transgression and playful hyper-obedience to these official narratives was clearly apparent. It is vital to pay close attention to these subtle shifts in tone between different settings and demographic groups when conducting audience research, for such shifts can be a highly useful entry point into alternative and contested progress narratives, and the internal contradictions such stories contain.

Concluding remarks

Based on extensive audience research, this chapter has described how young urban Indonesian audiences strongly criticise the horror genre, and contrast these films with 'quality' cinema more in keeping with their own better tastes and their idealism about the social responsibilities of Indonesian film. The process of 'othering' Indonesian horror reveals social hierarchies, and strategies for crafting symbolic capital amongst educated middle-class consumers. These normative discourses do not necessarily accurately reflect people's actual consumption practices, yet they reveal the important role of media consumption as a cultural space for negotiating identities. There are parallels here with my discussion of censorship and self-help discourses in Chapter 3. Again, clear patterns emerge in what are considered appropriate materials to consume, and conversely, what materials are excluded from (idealised) consumption practices.

Despite increasing transnational flows of people and media products, the Indonesian horror genre remains a remarkably situated phenomenon, serving very specific functions in local discourses of morality and taste. Indonesian horror, as the local genre that audiences love to hate, becomes a site for performing critical condemnation and reinforcing stereotypes and divisions of cultural capital within the

specific Indonesian context. My attempt to locate anti-horror sentiment amongst Indonesian audiences as a form of 'anti-fandom' has prompted an interactive encounter between U.S. cultural studies and the Indonesian context. I have built a case for critically engaging with – and if necessary, adapting – cultural studies theories and approaches in the Southeast Asian context. Put most simply, we should not only be interested in what a particular theory can tell us about a situation, but also in what a particular situation or cultural context can tell us about the theory in question. During the course of my fieldwork, I came to understand that, for my respondents, modes of receiving and appreciating Indonesian horror go beyond simple rejection and disavowal, and the works of Gray and others have been highly useful in illuminating how textual pleasure and repulsion can be inextricably linked. Behind dislike, after all, there are always expectations – of what kind of story deserves media time and space, of what morality or aesthetics a text should display, and of what we think others should watch or read. Studying the anti-fan is, therefore, a way to study the expectations and values that structure media consumption; thus, anti-fandom can be a useful framework for audience research everywhere. Conversely, some of the divergences apparent in the Indonesian case point to ways in which research into different cultural contexts can challenge and enrich the existing theoretical and methodological conventions of cultural studies. Taking more seriously the role of religion and public morality is one among many areas in which working at this intersection of area, media and cultural studies can prove fruitful, and contribute to new research directions.

I have also demonstrated the central importance of exploring the deep histories and socio-political backgrounds that shape particular film production and consumption contexts. For instance, it would be impossible to grasp the nuances of Indonesian audience engagement with national cinema without a solid knowledge of how colonial, nationalist, authoritarian, and developmentalist agendas have shaped film ideologies throughout the history of Indonesia. In exploring these legacies, I have offered a new perspective on the relevance of '*film nasional*' discourses in contemporary Indonesia. Although directors and producers claim to be operating in a radically new context, by shifting the focus to consumers, I argue that the paternalistic and developmentalist language of *film nasional* still resonates with young Indonesian audiences, who attribute a very specific role to Indonesian film: a

responsibility to educate, inspire, and advance the nation. Yet I have also shown that despite the resilience of official film discourses, audience discussion and interpretation always leaves room for contradiction and contestation within dominant stories. Consumers display a subtly subversive hyper-obedient attitude in their critical condemnation of horror, and they also use keywords like 'modernity' in discursively unstable ways, pointing to alternative readings of progress narratives. In Chapter 5, I will look more closely at the ideal kind of self being defined in these progress narratives, from a textual analysis perspective, paying close attention to how authors, like audiences, construct this self by excluding others based on region, class, gender and political outlook.

Chapter 5

Stories on the Page: Intersecting Identity Politics in Indonesian Fiction

In preceding chapters, I examined audience interpretations, public debates, and scholarly analyses – now I turn to the fictional work of Indonesian authors to examine how progress narratives are articulated in popular novels. I focus on how the trope of progress appears in fictional representations of region, gender, and history, and how this trope interacts with dominant stereotypes at each of these sites. I then turn to the complex connections between fictional representations of Indonesian history, idealised gender roles, and regional 'traditions,' and argue that only by examining the intersections between these sites can we understand why some stereotypes and master narratives are apparently easily challenged, while others are powerfully resilient. I select several novels as a case study of how themes of state violence, female sexuality, and regional mythology interact in complex and sometimes unexpected ways within these narratives. This case study ultimately demonstrates how Indonesian authors, by narrating their own stories of progress, can in some ways contest, and in other ways reinforce dominant definitions of keywords like 'modernity,' and 'development.'

The reform period in Indonesia, following the New Order regime's collapse in 1998, was a time of change and contestation, including in the realm of literary representations.[479] For those who agitated for, and then celebrated the downfall of the authoritarian regime, *reformasi* promised a new era of literary freedom, in which previously dominant representations – of regional identity, of gender roles, of state violence – would give way to a more diverse range of critical voices, which would then have concrete effects on reducing social inequalities.[480] Yet among both

[479] This was a time when previously hegemonic ideals of state secularism, Java-centrism, male dominance, and official histories were all challenged, as has been well documented in many scholarly accounts such as Hill and Sen, *The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy*; Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*.
[480] See, for example, Hatley, "New Directions in Indonesian Women's Writing? The Novel Saman."; Budianta, "Plural Identities: Indonesian Women's Redefinition of Democracy in

Indonesians and those who study Indonesia, there has been widespread disappointment in the apparent failures of reform, bemusement over resilient legacies of New Order state ideologies, and despair over continued inequities and injustices. Despite a variety of apparently positive changes, serious inequalities around region and gender remain entrenched, and in some cases are even growing. Similarly, challenges to official versions of history and violence continue to face a strong backlash that reinforces deep historical inequities between perpetrators and victims. In this chapter, I explore how these issues are represented in popular fiction, offering literary insights into how and why some dominant ideologies are difficult to effectively challenge.

I begin by critically examining shifting representations of region in contemporary Indonesian fiction. The popular inspirational stories of self-development and upward mobility described in Chapter 3 are usually spatially linked to 'marginalised' parts of Indonesia, as protagonists from humble regional or rural backgrounds beat the odds and succeed in the cosmopolitan world of urban consumption and global education. Although these stories are widely hailed as empowering challenges to dominant centre-periphery relations, a close reading reveals they can actually reinforce disempowering orientalising discourses, as authors construct an impoverished regional 'other' against whom an ideal self can be contrasted. I then turn to gendered aspects of this ideal modern Indonesian self. In contrast to dominant gender ideologies promoted by New Order narrative logics – where hard military masculinity, soft feminine domesticity, and patriarchal nuclear families were key cornerstones of 'development' – recent Indonesian fiction features more moderate gender representations of sensitive new-age men, and strong, sexually confident women. Yet while the authors under review all distance themselves from certain aspects of official state gender ideologies, they also reinforce dominant ideals around heterosexuality, family hierarchies, and female beauty. I conclude by examining how fictional portrayals of gender and region intersect with representations of history and violence, particularly legacies of the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings. In official state narratives of progress, this violence was justified as a necessary step

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the Post-Reformasi Era."; Sarah Turner, "Setting the Scene Speaking Out: Chinese Indonesians after Suharto," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 3 (2003); Harry Aveling, "Indonesian Literature after Reformasi: The Tongues of Women," *Kritika Kultura* 8 (2007).

to save the nation from taking the wrong path, and instead ensure 'order' and 'development.' Fictional interventions into this dominant narrative have offered a more nuanced and sympathetic portrait of those targeted in the mass violence. However, such stories often maintain dominant stereotypes of 'real communists' as immoral and dangerous, and also reproduce linear histories of progress, 'modernity,' and 'development.' Across all three sites of contestation I examine in this chapter – history, gender, region – *pembangunan* (development) ideology remains a key structuring narrative, and I trace how contemporary authors both contest and reinforce elements of its central logic, through their fictional literary representations.

By focusing primarily on textual analysis in this chapter, I reveal representational details and nuances that are sometimes lost in media and audience accounts of popular novels. Fictional representations differ from both lived experience and state-sanctioned ideologies, but interact with both in complex ways. The detail contained in the texts is therefore a rich window into complex dialectics between dominant ideals and potentially subversive artistic representations.[481] My analytic approach here is influenced by Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature,* in which he characterises cultural systems – and the literary texts produced within them – as dynamic processes, involving both continual challenges to dominant cultural representations and the simultaneous co-optation and incorporation of these challenges by the dominant system.[482] I draw on Williams' categories of 'dominant,' 'residual,' and 'emergent' cultural representations to examine the emergence of alternative representations in contemporary Indonesian literature, and reflect on how authors contest or reinforce previously dominant portrayals of region, gender, and history. The 'dominant,' which Williams also refers to as the 'effective' or the 'hegemonic,' is the existing social order that shapes and often constrains the bounds of legitimate literary representation. Complete dominance, however, is impossible to achieve within dynamic social processes, and this is where the 'residual' and 'emergent' come in, and are 'significant both in themselves and in what they reveal

[481] A focus on written literature is also a way of accessing alternative representations not found in mainstream film. Because the audience base for literature is so much smaller, it is less subject to the dictates of official state ideology and unofficial morality policing that permeates processes of censorship and self-censorship in the case of cinema.
[482] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121-22. Williams was in turn influenced by Gramsci's notions of hegemony, as put forward in Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State."

of the characteristics of the "dominant."'[483] Williams defines the 'residual' as past social identities or literary representations which have been neglected, undervalued, or actively repressed by the dominant culture; meanwhile, the 'emergent' involves new meanings, values, or identities, sometimes emerging in opposition to the dominant, which the dominant social order then seeks to incorporate within itself.[484] I suggest that the distinction between these last two categories is not so clear. In Williams' work, the residual sometimes reads as 'traditional' identity and the emergent as 'modern' identity on a linear scale of societal progress, and, given the discursive instability around tradition/modernity narratives I have examined in preceding chapters, I distance myself from this aspect of his theory. However, Williams' theorising about dominant social narratives, and the ways in which 'the dominant' is regularly challenged, but just as regularly incorporates such challenges, remains highly applicable in many contexts. In the Indonesian case, Williams' account of the dynamics around dominance and co-optation is helpful in grasping tensions in the texts under review, which simultaneously defy and reproduce existing stereotypes and representations.

While Williams' theories are useful in understanding how a dominant social order co-opts potentially subversive elements, I take my analysis one step further, drawing on intersectionality theory as a way to explain *why* certain dominant representations come to hold such resilient power. In her widely influential 'Mapping the Margins,' Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that we cannot begin to understand the multidimensional aspects of systemic injustice without taking into account the ways that different social identities (i.e. race, gender) can combine to produce powerful processes of subordination which are difficult to effectively challenge.[485] She closely examines 'intersecting patterns of racism and sexism' in the U.S. social and legal system, which serve to doubly marginalise women of colour and exclude them from the struggles of both anti-racist and feminist movements.[486] While Crenshaw is primarily focused on social policy and legal frameworks around domestic violence

[483] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 122.
[484] Ibid., 125-26.
[485] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." See also Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation."
[486] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," 1243.

and rape, her analysis also touches on the role of 'cultural images' in shaping the treatment of Black women victims, and the way that prevalent social narratives of race and gender combine to produce certain stereotypical popular cultural representations of such victims.[487] I draw on this notion of 'representational intersectionality' in my own analysis of contemporary Indonesian literature, to highlight complex links between how Indonesian authors portray gender, region, and history. In doing so, I reveal how dominant stereotypes and master narratives operate across these three sites in mutually reinforcing ways, which can undermine authorial attempts to create alternative representations. As a case study, I closely examine representational intersectionality in the work of several authors, who take female sexuality, historical violence, and local regional mythology as central narrative themes. In the context of U.S. race and gender politics, Crenshaw proposes that 'the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately.'[488] Similarly, I suggest that we cannot understand some of the deeply entrenched regional or gender stereotypes in Indonesian literary representation without also looking at how they relate to histories and narratives of progress, and vice versa.

The literary texts addressed in this chapter are the more highly valued 'other' to the much maligned horror and ghost stories I explored in Chapter 4. I return to the 'inspirational stories' I introduced in Chapter 3, including *Laskar Pelangi* (*The Rainbow Troops*, 2005), *Negeri 5 Menara* (*Nation of 5 Towers*, 2009), and *5cm* (2005).[489] I also revisit popular 'Islamic stories,' *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*The Verses of Love*, 2004), and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (*Woman with a Turban*, 2001).[490] Although these have all been adapted for cinema, I focus on the novel versions, which allows for detailed close reading. Three further key texts I introduce in this chapter are Laksmi Pamuntjak's historical novel *Amba* (2013), Leila Chudori's family saga *Pulang* (*Homecoming*, 2013), and Ayu Utami's philosophical *Seri Bilangan Fu* (*Fu Numeral Series*, 2009-2014).[491] Although these final three novels

[487] Ibid., 1282.
[488] Ibid., 1244.
[489] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*; Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*; Dhirgantoro, *5cm*.
[490] El Shirazy, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*; Khalieqy, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*.
[491] Pamuntjak, *Amba*; Chudori, *Pulang*; Utami, *Bilangan Fu*; *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*.

have not been adapted into films, and therefore have a more limited audience, they are highly instructive for examining critical representations of gender and history. Pamuntjak's *Amba*, a tragic love story set in the lead-up to the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings, was short-listed for the prestigious 2013 Khatulistiwa literary award. *Amba* recounts the passionate affair of young lovers Amba and Bhisma, cut short by political turmoil and mass violence. The eventual winner of the 2013 Khatulistiwa award was Leila Chudori's *Pulang*, a family saga of exile and homecoming, set during historic events in Paris and Indonesia, including the anti-communist violence, and the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. *Pulang* describes these events and their ongoing repercussions, through the story of exiled Dimas Suryo and his daughter Lintang Utara. Ayu Utami's *Bilangan Fu* series (the first book of which won the 2008 Khatulistiwa prize) also revisits histories of political violence in Indonesia: the eponymous first book of the series, *Bilangan Fu*, explores the impacts of militarism and authoritarianism on a rural Javanese village, and its sequel, *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, tells the story of Marja, a contemporary young Jakartan woman learning for the first time the tragic realities behind official narratives about 1965 she learnt in school history textbooks. All of the texts under review offer rich insight into both dominant and alternative representations of region, gender, and history in post-reform Indonesian literature, and the role of progress narratives in structuring these representations.

When read in the context of the previous chapters on context and audience, my close analysis of these texts resonates powerfully with many of the broader issues addressed in this thesis. There are important recurring stories, recurring keywords, and recurring themes, that weave their way through the novels, including linear historical trajectories of progress, the role of the patriarchal family in national development, hierarchies between urban centres and rural peripheries, and contrasting light and dark sides of 'tradition' and 'modernity,' which are portrayed either as strategic resources or dangerous constraints. Dominant local and global progress narratives are deeply and pervasively entangled with the textual representations I examine throughout this chapter, and because of this, my detailed literary analysis of these representations offers crucial insight into my central research questions around where, how, and why certain stories of progress achieve dominance, and also where they are called into question.

Spotlight on marginalised regions: celebration or condescension?

Previous chapters have demonstrated that a powerful narrative of progress, often expressed via keywords like 'modernity' and 'development,' permeates mainstream public debate and audience engagement with popular film and fiction in the post-reform Indonesian mediascape. Taking a closer look at this from a textual analysis perspective, it becomes clear that authors often spatially link this narrative of progress to physical journeys between Indonesia's centre and periphery. The relationship between 'peripheral' or 'marginalised' regions and the central state has shifted significantly during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and in this section, I critically analyse representations of region in selected works of fiction. I focus on both the positive and empowering changes evident in the growing literary trend of 'inspirational' stories set in remote areas, as well as continued elements of marginalisation at work in these narratives. For, while there is indeed increased authorial and audience interest in areas beyond Java and Jakarta, a closer reading of these texts suggest they often promote paternalistic and orientalising perspectives, steeped in the kind of developmentalist rhetoric that is so concerning to critics of development theory.[492] In their representations of 'outer' regions, authors frequently create a backwards, static, impoverished regional 'other,' in a way that echoes how young urban Indonesians construct an imagined mass audience of horror films, as discussed in Chapter 4. Ultimately, despite apparent challenges to the centre, the 'periphery' of rural Indonesia continues to function symbolically in literature for very narrow and specific purposes, including as a foil to the idealised urban cosmopolitan subject.

During the reform and post-reform periods, Indonesian writers and filmmakers produced an increasing number of positive stories set in regions that in previous years had rarely featured in film and literature.[493] The most popular of these was

[492] Esteva, "Development."; Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*; Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*.
[493] From colonial times through to the authoritarian New Order regime, mainstream fictional representations of marginalised areas often painted a picture of primitive, dangerous peoples, or of young people being held back by restrictive, rigid and backward-looking 'tradition.' See *Plaridel* special issue on Cult, B-grade and Exploitation Cinema, particularly the editor's introduction: Ekky Imanjaya, "The Significance of Indonesian Cult, Exploitation, and B-

Laskar Pelangi (set in Bangka Belitung island, off the coast of Sumatra) which follows Ikal and his schoolmates, poor children growing up during the 1980s in a small village described ironically as 'the richest village in Indonesia' due to the presence of major tin-mining company PT Timah.[494] Ikal and his friends have big dreams for their futures, and despite the hardships and barriers they face with their disadvantaged backgrounds, most of them reach their goals, with the help of dedicated teachers and an enthusiastic work ethic. Given its unprecedented success in both novel and film sales, it is unsurprising that *Laskar Pelangi* was followed by many other 'inspirational' stories about children from remote or marginalised regions struggling to achieve their dreams. Many popular novels from other genres also feature similar elements. For example, the Islamic education novel *Negeri 5 Menara* is set in East Java, yet features young protagonists from throughout the archipelago, mainly from humble rural backgrounds, who ultimately achieve success on both on a national and global scale.[495] The mountain-climbing adventure *5cm* describes a group of young protagonists' journey across Java, revealing more than one 'Java' and complicating our notions of 'Java-centrism,' by demonstrating that it is not just Java that has dominated other islands, but that the urban centre of upper-class Jakarta has taken representational precedence, particularly over rural and lower-class parts of the island. In the *Bilangan Fu* series, although famed for the urban upper-class sexualities portrayed in her early novels, Ayu Utami's work has also explored in detail the inequities faced by rural Indonesia. Her first novel *Saman* (1998) featured harrowing scenes in an exploited Sumatran rubber tapping community, and the *Bilangan Fu* series is set almost entirely in rural Java, again contrasting New Order Jakarta-centrism with the everyday challenges facing poor rural communities. What all these stories share is a sense of pushing back against dominant centralising tendencies of the state by incorporating traditional legends, local history, and

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Movies," *Plaridel* 11, no. 2 (2014). Also, in the case of literature, see the novels of Hamka, as described in Teeuw, McArthur, and Stephens, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, 2.

[494] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 49. Note: All translations from the novels are my own.

[495] Admittedly, author Ahmad Fuadi uses fairly standard tropes of official multiculturalism when he describes the boys' backgrounds and relationships with each other: 'we'd drink coffee together, enjoying various tastes of coffee, from Acehnese coffee, to Medanese coffee, to Lampung coffee, to Torajan coffee. It depended on who had received a coffee packet and from where.' This idealised representation of 'unity in diversity', symbolised by sharing coffee from different regions, harks back to official New Order 'sanitised plurality,' and is therefore an example of previously dominant representations persisting in literary discourse.

regional languages into their narratives.[496] In the following discussion, I look first at how the texts under review seek to challenge dominant tropes and stereotypes around region, and then turn to the ways in which these apparent challenges are co-opted back into master narratives of progress and development.

As well as being hailed as 'inspirational,' the new regionalist trend in the 2000s is widely celebrated in audience and media accounts for giving a 'voice' to marginalised areas and exposing the hardships and exploitations faced by these areas. Commonly described in Indonesian as places that are '*terpencil*' (remote), '*terasing*' (isolated), '*dipinggirkan*' (marginalised), the connotations of these words imply a lack of agency, and suggest that these areas do not feature on the nation's radar: they have been 'left behind' and 'forgotten.' Simply by setting stories in these locations, and providing a 'local' perspective, authors arguably give a 'voice' to these areas 'forgotten' by dominant New Order narratives, and indeed, this is how stories like *Laskar Pelangi* have been evaluated in both academic and general accounts.[497] What is more, many of the authors explicitly portray processes of exploitation in these regions. The central dramatic tension of *Laskar Pelangi* arises from contrasts between Ikal's poorly equipped local religious school, attended by children of local fisherman and mine labourers, and the 'center of excellence' attended by the more privileged children of the mining company's wealthy (and mainly Javanese) white-collar workers. Local people's homes and domestic routines are juxtaposed with the newcomers' lavish mansions, and there are recurring references to the unwelcoming sign which denies locals access to what should be their own land: 'NO TRESPASSING FOR THOSE WITHOUT RIGHTS.'[498] Meanwhile, the mining company, PT Timah, is explicitly introduced as a legacy of Dutch colonialism.[499] The implication is that current exploitation of the island by Javanese immigrants is highly comparable to local people's experience under the Dutch, and hence a kind of domestic colonisation. This depiction has led some commentators to laud *Laskar*

[496] The growing regional sentiment in these stories has a long history in Indonesia. Both Keith Foulcher's account of 1940s regional literature, and Arief Budiman's account of 1980s regional literature, find echoes in the 2000s regionalist turn. See also Pam Allen, "Reading Matters: An Examination of Plurality of Meaning in Selected Indonesian Fiction, 1980-1995" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2000), 67.
[497] See, for example Andreas Akun, "A Local Counter-Discourse against National Education Problems: Postcolonial Reading of Andrea Hirata's Laskar Pelangi," *k@ta* 12, no. 2 (2011).
[498] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 36, 41-8, 58, 426.
[499] Ibid., 40, 43.

Pelangi as a 'counter-discursive' attack against the 'mainstream Indonesian centre.'[500] In attempting to give a 'voice' to Belitung and expose inequalities, Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi* suggests that, contrary to dominant state narratives, not all citizens benefit from exploitative national progress.

There are references to similar situations in the other texts under review. In *Negeri 5 Menara*, when Alif first moves to Java he describes how 'for the first time in my life I shook hands with a non-Minangkabau person,' noting that the only other Javanese hand he had seen before was President Suharto's waving hand, 'out the half-open window of a dark car at the opening of the Lake Maninjau Hydroelectric Power Plant in 1983.'[501] Here, Alif's region of rural West Sumatra is framed as both peripheral (in that it is rarely visited by those from the centre), while at the same time an important site of economic development for national companies.[502] In *5cm*, the privileged young protagonists (Genta, Zafran, Arial, Ian and Riani) are confronted by daily realities of poverty and inequality during their trip across rural Java. On the train, in their economy class carriage, they are surrounded by 'faces full of despair and disappointment.'[503] The group of friends have an uncomfortable relationship with the hawkers and beggars approaching them: they feel confronted by their presence, but at the same time Riani recalls the 1998 anti-Suharto student rallies, when 'we shouted in the name of the small and powerless people throughout Indonesia,' and realises to her surprise that their less privileged fellow passengers are 'the people that we fought for.'[504] Such scenes are a reminder that within Java there is also a centre and periphery. *Bilangan Fu* engages with similar questions of inequalities within Java, as an urban middle class couple (Yuda and Marja) befriend a young man (Parang Jati) from a rural central Java village nearby a popular mountain-climbing area, who criticises their superior attitude towards the local

[500] Akun, "A Local Counter-Discourse against National Education Problems: Postcolonial Reading of Andrea Hirata's Laskar Pelangi." For Akun, this is particularly so when the disadvantaged Ikal and his classmates are shown beating the more privileged children in several inter-school competitions.
[501] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*, 43.
[502] Notably, many locals opposed the development of this power plant at the time, particularly the seizure of land. For an account of this, see Muhammad Reza, "Penolakan Warga Nagari Ii Koto Terhadap Pengadaan Lahan P.L.T.A. Maninjau 1978-1983" (Thesis, Andalas University, 2008).
[503] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 184.
[504] Ibid., 185.

villagers. Again, these stories feature alternative perspectives on national development, and seek to give a voice to those 'left behind' in such processes.

Another key point raised in Indonesian media reports, and also by respondents in my interviews, is the role stories like *Laskar Pelangi* play in raising urban awareness about remote or rural regions, and in celebrating various forms of 'local tradition' as a source of strength and resistance. In *Laskar Pelangi* for example, Ikal's local school-group defeat the rich newcomers in several inter-school competitions, drawing on a mix of local ingenuity, religious piety, and in one scene, exoticised traditional dance. Their victories mean that their school 'will never again be humiliated' and earns them respect from the 'centre.'[505] These scenes where disadvantaged local students prove their worth have been read as an affirmation of the role of the *rakyat*, the 'little people,' in contributing to national development.[506] In *5cm*, meanwhile, the narrative revolves around urban city-dwellers 'discovering' the cultural richness of rural Indonesian life. The five young travellers find themselves admiring the apparently marginalised peoples they encounter on their journey for living more authentic and meaningful lives compared with the urban alienation of Jakarta. Gazing out the window, Zafran observes 'a group of villagers waiting to watch the train pass at the crossing… [they] smiled up at the carriage, farmers with hoes and baskets slung across their shoulders, a young mother laughing freely.' In awe of this rural idyll, Zafran whispers to himself, 'This country is so beautiful.'[507] When they arrive in Madiun, East Java, they buy a simple *nasi pecel* rice dish from an old woman and 'they all agreed that this food far surpassed all the international *fast food* they had ever tried in Jakarta.'[508] The *Bilangan Fu* series is also structured around two 'modern' urban youths, Yuda and Marja, discovering local legends and learning to take seriously local 'traditional' practices. After Parang Jati tells him the story of Watugunung from the ancient *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Yuda

[505] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 247.
[506] Andreas Akun reads *Laskar Pelangi* as politically subversive in this respect, claiming that the story demonstrates 'how the minority actually have the potential to fight back ideologically [against] the domination of the mainstream.' Akun, "A Local Counter-Discourse against National Education Problems: Postcolonial Reading of Andrea Hirata's Laskar Pelangi." However, as I will demonstrate, a closer reading suggests that the story is more about members of the minority joining the ranks of the mainstream, and becoming part of this class.
[507] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 178.
[508] Ibid., 179.

admits that 'perhaps for the first time I began to see the magical aura of the South Sea, as Parang Jati continued to weave together his geological and mythological explanations about how the mountains were formed, stories where fact and fiction became indistinguishable.'[509] Here, like in many of the texts under review, local tradition comes to symbolise strength and authenticity in the face of negative impacts emanating from the urban capitalist centre.

Whose narrative voice, and for what purpose?

The regional and rural depictions I have outlined above are familiar ones. Such portrayals have been evident in many colonial representations for centuries, and reveals the resilience of dominant modes of representing regional life as a kind of rural idyll. Indonesian consumers and commentators have applauded the apparent 'regionalist' turn in contemporary Indonesian literature for giving a 'voice' to these areas, exposing injustice and exploitation, and encouraging appreciation of local cultures and traditions. However, there is a darker side to many of these highly praised narrative elements, to which I will now turn. In what follows, I systematically address four elements – 'giving a voice,' 'exposing exploitation,' 'raising awareness,' and 'valuing tradition' – which may initially seem like a challenge to dominant stereotypes of region, but are in fact ultimately co-opted back into dominant narratives of progress and 'tradition/modernity' dichotomies. As discussed in preceding chapters, these dominant ideas around progress in Indonesia have been shaped by legacies of Dutch colonial discourses, and in more recent history, the New Order regime's ideological cornerstones of 'modernisation' and 'development' at all costs, working in tandem with global ideologies of neoliberal capitalist development. Because many of the authors under review simply reproduce new versions of this same progress narrative, their work often ends up reinforcing stereotypes and inequalities.

Firstly, when a story is described by critics and audiences as 'giving voice' to marginalised peoples or regions, it is important to closely examine exactly whose 'voice' is involved. The authors, filmmakers, and audiences of these texts are

[509] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 47.

certainly not struggling farmers, low-paid plantation-workers or exploited mine coolies. They are generally urban-dwelling, tertiary educated, privileged classes. Although authors of semi-autobiographical fiction (e.g. Hirata, Fuadi) can claim to speak from experience, their own subsequent journeys through the circuits of the global education system means it is wise to be sceptical of any claim that they speak 'on behalf' of Indonesia's marginalised rural poor. Their stories are often highly prescriptive, prompting questions about the agenda behind providing this 'voice.' The underlying ideology at work in these narratives is one of 'development' and 'modernisation' and the implication of the autobiographies is that everyone should follow the authors' lead and 'get out of there.' Throughout *Laskar Pelangi,* Ikal longs to escape his village.[510] He admiringly describes one of the PT Timah mining managers as an '*orang hebat*' (great person) because he studied abroad and now works in a high position for the central government.[511] Applying for a scholarship to a leading university in Bandung, West Java, Ikal calls it his 'ticket to leave my dead-end life behind.'[512] In stark contrast to Ikal's own success story, the fate of his classmate Lintang, the most academically gifted amongst them, functions as the narrative's central tragedy. After his father dies, Lintang drops out of school to support his family, becoming, as described by Ikal, a 'poor, dirty' truck driver living a 'life of loneliness and malnutrition.'[513] A similar plot point occurs in *Negeri 5 Menara*, when Alif and his friends lament the fact that their gifted classmate Baso must return to his village in Sulawesi. In both stories, while 'humble roots' are something to be proud of, the reality of life in marginalised regions is presented as the ultimate tragic failure, in contrast to the authors' own stories of global education.

[510] This echoes the narrative arc of many local novels from the 1920s in the Dutch East Indies, revealing strong continuities in powerful narratives of progress from colonial era through to today.
[511] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi,* 46. Nurhady Sirimorok has drawn attention to this aspect of the narrative in a compelling Indonesian-language critique of Andrea Hirata's work, as has Katrin Bandel, with regard to the novel's English translation. See Bandel, *Sastra Nasionalisme Pascakolonialitas*; Sirimorok, *Laskar Pemimpi: Andrea Hirata, Pembacanya, Dan Modernisasi Indonesia*. For English language critiques of *Laskar Pelangi,* see Pam Allen, "From the Mouths of Babes: Children in Recent Indonesian Film and Fiction," *k@ta* 13, no. 2 (2012); Anjar Dwi Astuti, "Becoming Europeanized 'Native' in Andrea Hirata's the Laskar Pelangi Quartet" (Sanata Dharma University, 2015).
[512] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi,* 460.
[513] Ibid., 468.

This complicates the notion that such narratives give a 'voice' to isolated rural communities.

Secondly, any political critique in these texts of the hardships and exploitations faced by remote regions is often undermined by individualistic 'try your best' success narratives and paternalistic developmentalist rhetoric. As I explained in Chapter 3, narratives of self-help can in fact mask deep structural inequalities around poverty, labour, and self-perpetuating income gaps, and impede any concrete political action to address such exploitation.[514] While *Laskar Pelangi* highlights economic exploitation by the mining company, the only solution proposed is for individuals to study hard and obtain a scholarship for study abroad. Ikal frequently laments the 'poor' and 'primitive' state of his village, but cannot envisage any possible collective action against the power structures that have left his family and friends marginalised. Instead, Ikal feels '*termenung*' (pensive) and '*perih*' (poignantly sad), but ultimately 'blessed' at being fortunate enough – due to a combination of hard work and good luck – to join the 'modern world.'[515] In *5cm*, also, while the five young urban Jakartans feel sympathy for the marginalised poor who they meet on their trip across Java, in the end they simply return back to their privileged lives, 'spiritually enriched' by the journey. Often, when there is an attempt to help those 'left behind' this is also framed as an individual project, not a collective action arising from within the community itself. In *Negeri 5 Menara,* for example, Alif and his friends develop a paternalistic attitude towards their homelands after their success in the 'modern world.' One of the boys, Dulmajid, is from a poor salt-farming family in Sumenep, Madura, and plans to 'return home and emancipate his village from backwardness by establishing a school.'[516] While this may seem like a noble sentiment, Dulmajid's plan reinforces dominant representations of rural areas as 'backward,' and ignores many of the existing structural inequalities that may not be solved simply by one individual opening a new school in the area. In this way, many potential critiques of

[514] See Schmidt, "Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-Themed Post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture."; Gellert, "Optimism and Education: The New Ideology of Development in Indonesia."; Munro, "The Violence of Inflated Possibilities: Education, Transformation, and Diminishment in Wamena, Papua."
[515] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 471.
[516] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*, 243.

inequality in these novels, as well as suggestions for how to address such inequities, are incorporated back into dominant narratives of progress and 'development.'

Thirdly, in raising awareness about marginalised regions amongst Indonesia's urban population, many of these popular narratives also encourage orientalising discourses and touristic exploitation. The depiction of the 'mystical,' 'untouched' climb up Mount Semeru in *5cm,* for example, has promoted urban tourism in the area to an extent that has led to widespread environmental degradation.[517] Stories like *Laskar Pelangi* and *5cm* frequently portray the populations living in such areas as primitive or amusing. 'The Malays are simple folk,' says Ikal, who 'shudders to imagine how close our community still is to primitive cultures.'[518] The young protagonists in *5cm* are highly amused by the local East Javanese mini-van driver they hire to bring them to the base of the mountain: his accent, his DIY business card with a made-up website, cause them all to 'lol heartily.'[519] Even the apparently positive depictions of happy uncomplicated farmers in the countryside, which is shown to awaken a sense of nationalism in the young Jakartans, serve to reinforce powerful rural/urban stereotypes.[520] Among the texts under review in this chapter, only the *Bilangan Fu* series engages critically with such frameworks. While the primary narrator, Yuda, characterises rural populations and 'traditional people' as 'stupid' and 'backward', his worldview is challenged by Parang Jati, who criticises Yuda's 'urban arrogance' and encourages him to stop looking at the world through 'modern glasses.'[521] *Bilangan Fu*'s more nuanced representations of rural and remote areas, however, are

[517] Bocah-Petualangan, "Peraturan Baru Pendakian Gunung Semeru." See also Achmadi on other impacts of domestic tourism in Indonesia, including its influence on local architecture. Amanda Achmadi, "The Architecture of Balinization," in *Architecture and Identity* ed. Peter Herrle and Erik Wegerhoff (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008).
[518] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 162-63. In Sirimorok's critical reflections on Hirata's orientalising tendencies he imagines imaging Edward Said reading *Laskar Pelangi*: 'after finishing the trilogy – if he can stand it – he would probably let out a long sigh and shake his head.' Sirimorok, *Laskar Pemimpi: Andrea Hirata, Pembacanya, Dan Modernisasi Indonesia*, 131.
[519] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 199.
[520] In the Indonesian mediascape more broadly, some of the most extreme examples of orientalising discourses can be found in popular cultural representations of Papua, often used as a wild, exotic and primeval setting, in ways reminiscent of exploitation movies of the 1980s. From comedy films like *Lost in Papua*, through to harrowing 'real life' novels, Papua as the ultimate remote region is represented as an entirely foreign 'other' to the modern, urban Indonesian self.
[521]Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 133.

very much the exception to dominant discourses in popular narratives, which tend to reproduce dominant orientalising and paternalistic perspectives.

Finally, local 'tradition', while celebrated in these stories, is often placed in a hierarchical relationship with images of an external 'modernity.' Echoing dominant global narratives of 'development' and 'modernity' as described in Chapter 2, 'tradition' is often directly linked to backwardness and 'underdevelopment.' In *Laskar Pelangi,* traditional local knowledge is positioned as less valuable than knowledge and science from 'outside.' The word '*ilmu*' (knowledge) is only ever used to describe the kind of learning that happens in schools, and Lintang, the school genius in science and mathematics, has (in Ikal's opinion) truly mastered '*ilmu.*'[522] Yet when Lintang is facing a crocodile who blocks his path to school, Ikal explains how Lintang's 'knowledge was of no use here,' revealing that everyday survival skills are not included in Ikal's definition of knowledge.[523] 'We Malays are simple people,' explains Ikal, 'who gain life's wisdom from religious teachers and our elders… the stories of the prophets [and] the stories of [ancient adventurer] Hang Tuah.'[524] Ikal firmly dismisses this traditional local knowledge, in favour of 'modern science and rationality.' On several occasions, Ikal's classmates turn to local mystic shaman Tuk Bayan Tula for wisdom and advice. Ikal, however, views local mysticism as a constraining, anti-rational, and an impediment to joining the 'modern world.' When his classmate Flo goes missing, Ikal scathingly describes how 'it was the panicked atmosphere that caused people to lose their sense of reason so much that they asked for help from Tuk Bayan Tula.'[525] Ikal sees people as '*goblok*' (stupid) when under the influence of 'traditional mysticism.' The climax of the Tuk Bayan Tula story is when Ikal's classmates, struggling at school, beg the shaman to conduct a ritual to improve their results. After consulting with otherworldly forces, the shaman reveals: 'HERE IS TUK-BAYAN-TULA'S MESSAGE FOR BOTH OF YOU: IF YOU WISH TO PASS THE EXAM, OPEN YOUR BOOK, STUDY!!'[526] Ultimately, Ikal achieves an ideological victory in the narrative, as Tuk Bayan Tula

[522] For a related discussion on this, see Sirimorok, *Laskar Pemimpi: Andrea Hirata, Pembacanya, Dan Modernisasi Indonesia*, 65-69.
[523] Hirata, *Laskar Pelangi*, 88.
[524] Ibid., 162.
[525] Ibid., 315.
[526] Ibid., 424.

is co-opted for the developmentalist 'self-help' message of the novel. In Ikal's worldview, and in the world of *Laskar Pelangi*, traditional local wisdom is sharply dichotomised against modern scientific rationality: the two are perceived as incompatible, and the narrative awards a decisive victory to the latter. Ultimately, any potentially empowering challenges to dominant stereotypes about regional 'tradition' are co-opted and overshadowed by powerful developmentalist rhetoric that constructs an ideal urban cosmopolitan self, unconstrained by local superstitions, and who is represented here by the author himself.

Because of its complex character development and polyphonous narration, *Bilangan Fu* avoids some of the developmentalist rhetoric that pervades many of the other texts under review. Parang Jati's intervention into Yuda's patronising attitude towards local villagers means that several different perspectives are brought into a dialogue. Also, Yuda, who is writing about his experiences almost a decade after they occurred, has several different narrative voices himself: 'Sadly – and now I regret this – it seems that we were still just young city kids…We did not realise that our feelings of superiority made us deaf to the local village tales... I should have seen how blinkered our climbing group was.'[527] This sense of looking back with regret rather than with a sense of superiority can be contrasted starkly with the tone of the other novels I have discussed. The *Bilangan Fu* series is not as popular as many of these other texts, nor has it been adapted into a film, perhaps because its more critical portrayal of centre-periphery and urban-rural relations does not sit comfortably within some of the hegemonic discourses around region and progress in Indonesia. As revealed in Chapter 4, audiences display a certain level of distrust towards 'critical' or 'negative' films, a legacy of the apparent 'apoliticism' idealised in New Order discourses around universal humanism in arts and culture.[528] Yet despite its deviation from more mainstream portrayals of region, it is important to note that *Bilangan Fu* is still a development story, but a different kind of development,

[527] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 27, 113.
[528] See Chapter 4 of this thesis and, for more detail on New Order legacies of idealised 'apolitical' art and culture, Foulcher, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian 'Institute of People's Culture' 1950-1965*; Aspinall, "The Broadening Base of Political Opposition in Indonesia."

articulated in terms of ‘discovering roots’ and embracing local ‘tradition’ as an alternative source of legitimacy and progress.

Most of the ‘regionalist’ stories under review here, while often hailed as confronting injustice and inequality, upon closer reading actually reinforce many negative representations of marginalised regions. Authors recreate powerful stereotypes around region, class and knowledge, in which ‘under-developed’ and static rural areas become a foil to modern urban selves. In this way, such texts can in fact obscure structural inequalities and reinforce dominant orientalising tropes. In the case of literary representations, for instance, there are real barriers to people from marginalised regions representing themselves in such arenas, given the highly urban and centralised circuits for producing and consuming national literature. These circuits reproduce familiar stories and common keywords, with authors regularly referring to the vague forces of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity.’ Authors use ‘tradition’ to refer to regional ethnic identity and cultural practice, to local wisdom, to humble roots, and to an idealised sense of rural community. ‘Modernity,’ meanwhile, comes to signify in these novels education, monotheistic religion, economic success, and global upward mobility. Yet just like in the classic conceptions of ‘modernity’ in Western social theory, there is often a darker side to each concept as well. ‘Tradition’ is portrayed in many cases as a constraining, conservative force in the lives of people. And ‘modernity,’ as well as being a source of opportunity, can also become a force of exploitation, whether quite physically through the economic activities of large-scale multi-national mining companies, or in more insidious ideological ways. These multiple and competing definitions and connotations occur, to different extents, within all the texts under review here, sometimes on the same page, and sometimes even in the same sentence. On the one hand, local ‘traditional’ identities are valorised and celebrated as a source of authenticity and distinction from the urban centre. On the other hand, strongly teleological narratives of ‘modernisation’ and ‘development,’ with nationalistic but also paternalistic overtones, permeate many of these stories, undermining the legitimacy of local ‘tradition.’ Ultimately, these double-edged concepts of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ are simultaneously embraced and rejected, pointing again to the discursive instability of the terms. The iridescent quality of these keywords can also serve to flatten out complex realities within the novels under review, and obscure the ways in which colonial and authoritarian power

relations continue to insidiously influence literary representations of different regions in postcolonial contexts like Indonesia.

In subsequent sections I examine similar processes around fictional engagements with gender and history, revealing links between these sites and how stereotypes at each site can function in mutually reinforcing ways. Many fictional representations of region create a hierarchy between 'modern' urban citizens and (often infantilised) 'traditional' rural communities. I propose that this hierarchy is linked to other hierarchies, including gender hierarchies, and within the texts under review, this 'natural order' is frequently framed as vital in achieving national progress and development.

Emergent gender representations versus resilient gender stereotypes

Another significant site of contestation throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century in Indonesia has been the representation of sex and gender, with an increasingly diverse range of ideal gender roles being championed in the deregulated mediascape, and arguments around sexuality claiming a central position in public debate. In Indonesia and throughout the world, gender has long been a terrain upon which images of 'modernity' are constructed and contested. The figure of the mother in particular is often burdened with the task of upholding local 'tradition' and frequently comes to symbolise national identity.[529] The New Order regime's guiding ideology of *pembangunan* relied heavily on an idealised model of the productive and patriarchal nuclear family, and within this model, the state promoted particular gender roles. While fictional representations would sometimes deviate from this ideal model during that period, following the demise of the regime Indonesian authors have increasingly experimented with more diverse ideas about what makes a 'modern' Indonesian man or woman. In this section, I discuss in particular two emergent gender archetypes that have gained increasing national legitimacy in popular fiction during the first decade of the twenty-first century in Indonesia, a period which ushered in structural changes in the creative industries and increasingly

[529] Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation."

diverse representations of gender.[530] Firstly, I examine the character of the confident, critical and sexually active women, who disrupts previously hegemonic ideals of demure motherly women. In contrast to the narrative logic of previous eras, these women are not punished for pursuing their desires, and importantly, authors portray them as 'modern' urban cosmopolitan Indonesians, in contrast again to the dominant tropes of previous decades, where sexuality was primarily associated with lower classes, foreign outsiders, or regional 'ethnic traditions.'[531] Secondly, the character of the sensitive, spiritual and peace-loving man, who disrupts formerly dominant discourses around militarised masculinity. Across most fictional representations, both these male and female ideal archetypes become tied to authorial representations of ideal modern urban citizenship.[532] The imagined resources of 'regional tradition' play an ambivalent role here, and I demonstrate how some authors use regional Hindu-Javanese *wayang* shadow-puppetry mythology to construct an idealised masculinity that balances local and global influences. Yet despite these emergent representations which challenge aspects of previously hegemonic gender ideologies, some stereotypes remain resilient, and are adapted in complex ways into the emergent gender archetypes. Dominant ideals around female beauty, heterosexuality, and family hierarchies, for instance, persist in insidious ways within apparently oppositional gender representations.

Turning first to fictional representations of female characters, across both 'religious' and 'secular' narrative genres, ideal women are portrayed as intelligent, strong, independent and opinionated, with a range of interests and activities outside the home, and significantly, they enjoy sex. The most pious Muslim women figures,

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[530] These structural changes include deregulation and decreased state control over media, film and fiction, allowing for more diversity and deviation from state-sanctioned ideologies. For more detail, see Hapsari Dwiningtyas Sulistyani, "The Construction of Women in Contemporary Indonesian Women's Cinema," in *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*, ed. Krishna Sen and David T Hill (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

[531] On the narrative logic of punishing sexually active women, see Sen, "Repression and Resistance: Interpretations of the Feminine in New Order Cinema." On links between sexuality and class, region and nation, see Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*.

[532] Due to limitations in scope, my analysis here is primarily devoted to normative male and female gender roles. Gender fluidity and non-normative sexualities are also a hugely important element of this discussion, and for more on this see Blackwood, "Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia."; Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*.

such as Aisha in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, or Nisa in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, are depicted as active and mobile agents of change, unafraid to speak out against the men around them. Aisha, for instance, stands up for herself when a violent Arab man on a train in Egypt berates her for giving up her seat to an American tourist with heatstroke, and later she actively enquires about Fahri's marriage eligibility. In *Negeri 5 Menara,* Alif is entranced by Sarah, the daughter of one of his *pesantren* teachers, describing her admiringly as 'the kind of girl who was upbeat, active, and not afraid to offer an opinion.'[533] The only female among the five friends in *5cm,* Riani, with her thick black glasses, has 'an inner beauty that makes people pay attention… she is a campus activist… her only "boyfriend" is her electronic organiser, filled with important appointments.'[534] Even minor female characters in *5cm*, such as Arial's love interest Indy, are confident and active in the public sphere. When Indy and Arial stop to buy hot ginger tea and barbequed corn during a trip to Bogor, 'as a woman Indy had to put her foot down and bargain for a lower price.'[535] In *Amba,* a new acquaintance describes the title character as having 'a mind of her own, strength of her own, a history of her own, and whatever happened, nobody would be able to hinder her quest.'[536] Many of these female figures are also highly critical of gender stereotypes. Nisa in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is an outspoken critic of the conservative gender regulations in her community, and she actively campaigns to be allowed to ride a horse, to divorce her polygamous husband, to study at university, and to start a library aimed at young *pesantren* girls. In *5cm*, when Ian is joking that if Arial does not want Indy, he will 'have her,' Riani cuts in 'on behalf of her gender' and asks, 'but does she want to have *you*? Are girls just like cake for you?'[537] In *Pulang*, Lintang also criticises men's objectification of women, as they 'gaze repeatedly up and down my body…laughing boisterously like a pack of male gorillas who had never seen a female before.'[538] Evidently, from family sagas, to self-discovery stories, to historical epics, to coming-of-age tales, to religious

[533] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*, 262.
[534] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 8-9.
[535] Ibid., 95.
[536] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 70.
[537] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 58.
[538] Chudori, *Pulang*, 160.

melodramas, the figure of the outspoken and critical young woman is a strongly emergent gender archetype in post-reform popular fiction.

Sex and sexuality are always a key part of how female figures are represented, and in post-reform Indonesia, the legitimacy of women's desire in dominant fictional representations has markedly increased. According to Catherine Belsey, desire can be a powerful site of resistance to social norms, particularly female desire, which is seen to challenge normative social constructions of women as 'passive.'[539] Although their individual approaches, characteristics and preferences vary significantly, female characters in the texts under review all actively pursue their sexual desires, in ways that counteract some of the previously dominant state representations of female sexuality as dangerously disruptive to the family structure. Following a violent and traumatising first marriage in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, Nisa divorces her husband to marry her childhood sweetheart, Lek Khudori. While the film version is less explicit, the novel describes in detail Nisa's desire for her new husband, and the sexual pleasure she experiences: 'I felt something warm flowing in my vagina… I moved his hand onto my genitals… he satisfied me completely.'[540] Such scenes remind us that devout religious piety and sexual desire are by no means mutually exclusive.[541] Similarly, in *5cm*, the Indy gazes greedily at Arial's 'broad chest,' and 'solid thighs' and 'something inside her stirred and her libido grew, as is completely normal for a young woman like Indy.'[542] Indy is depicted as a positive religious influence on Arial: '"Have you prayed yet?" asked Indy softly, as she swept blush onto her cheeks… This was one of the things Arial liked about Indy, she was always reminding him to pray, an obligation he would often forget.'[543] Clearly, religious piety is rarely framed as a barrier to female sexual desire. In more 'secular' stories, meanwhile, active female sexuality is even more explicit. In *Pulang*, while at dinner with her boyfriend Nara, to celebrate the submission of her research proposal, Lintang smiles 'with gleaming eyes' and suggests 'how about we just forget this

[539] Catherine Belsey, *Culture and the Real: Theorizing Cultural Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
[540] Khalieqy, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, 218-19.
[541] For more on this, see Hellwig, "Abidah El Khalieqy's Novels: Challenging Patriarchal Islam."
[542] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 91.
[543] Ibid., 88.

dinner? We can take a bottle of wine to my apartment.'[544] He agrees, and 'for three burning hours… Nara succeeded in making Lintang forget all about [her stress].'[545] Here, Lintang confidently instigates their sexual liaison. In *Amba* too, the central heroine yearns for the 'fiery passion' she hears about in stories, and is concerned that her pious and over-protective fiancé Salwa 'does not seem to notice the signs of her arousal.'[546] In *Bilangan Fu*, Yuda describes his girlfriend Marja as 'strong as a horse… I never met a woman more capable of entertaining herself than Marja. And if I take a step back from my ego, I'm pretty sure that this extends to sex. I do not satisfy her. She uses me to satisfy herself.'[547] Later, when browsing books from the shelves at Parang Jati's father's house, Marja reads aloud, 'Parthenogenesis, or reproduction without sex… Hmm… Some animals live without having sex at all… Ouch, fortunately we are not lice or plankton.'[548] Marja's interest in sex and her forwardness in fulfilling her desires are presented in a highly positive light. In one scene, Yuda describes how 'I held her against the wall and she circled her legs around my waist, her arms around my neck. I admired her strength. That strength made me feel safe.'[549] While New Order Indonesia featured plenty of explicit accounts of sex, the narrative logic of the era, and the censorship guidelines in place, meant that within the narrative arc, sexually active females were ultimately punished for their behaviour, sometimes even with death.[550] The fact that none of these sexually active female figures face any negative consequences for pursuing their desires is a significant departure from these previously dominant narrative conventions.

Turning now to male representation, the ideal masculine figure represented in these texts is also very different to the New Order era archetype. The figure of the 'modern Muslim man' I described in Chapter 3 is undoubtedly one of the most powerful and compelling characters to emerge in Indonesian popular culture during the past decade. Part of this figure's appeal is how sharply he contrasts with the violent

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[544] Chudori, *Pulang*, 281.
[545] Ibid., 282.
[546] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 146.
[547] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 410.
[548] Ibid., 292.
[549] Ibid., 188.
[550] Sen, "Repression and Resistance: Interpretations of the Feminine in New Order Cinema."; Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*.

military masculinity idealised by Suharto's authoritarian regime, as has been documented by Evi Eliyanah in her study of emerging Islamic masculinities in Indonesian cinema.[551] In *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, the central character Fahri is represented as an ideal open-minded and non-violent contrast to several fanatic and aggressive 'Arab' men he encounters while studying in Egypt. Similarly, in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, Nisa's childhood sweetheart and central love interest Lek Khudori is portrayed favourably as a gentle and peace-loving figure, in contrast to Nisa's violent first husband. Khudori teaches Nisa about female empowerment through stories of the Prophet's wives and Sufi women, positioning himself as a male Muslim feminist. In *Negeri 5 Menara*, Alif and his *pesantren* friends are also depicted as sensitive new age guys, in contrast to the previous generation, represented by an older boy who terrorises them.[552] They are not afraid to show emotions, and when Baso leaves the *pesantren* to return to Sulawesi to care for his ailing grandmother, they all embrace tenderly and shed tears.[553] In many ways, the explicitly pious male figure starring in these 'Islamic' narratives is not so different from his more 'secular' counterparts, who are represented in a very similar way as sensitive, open-minded and well-rounded. In *5cm*, of the five friends, it is sensitive and open-minded Genta, 'The Leader,' who emerges as the ideal male figure.[554] In *Pulang*, Lintang's boyfriend Nara is gentle, artistic, and domestically inclined, cooking for her while she completes an important research proposal.[555] Bhisma, the central male character in *Amba*, is depicted as tender and thoughtful, and vehemently opposed to force or violence.[556] Those who knew him in the Buru prison camps describe Bhisma as an 'ageing knight' who 'wore an aura of care and responsibility.'[557] In the *Bilangan Fu* series, this ideal type of gentle and caring male figure is contrasted very explicitly against militarised masculinity. Parang Jati, a sensitive and spiritual young man, with 'eyes like an angel,' uses the metaphor of mountain climbing to criticise Yuda's militarised masculinity, arguing that 'part of men's greediness is to want to conquer nature by raping it. Just like their attitude

[551] Evi Eliyanah, "Representations of Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Masculinities in Recent Indonesian Films" (paper presented at the EuroSEAS, Vienna, 11-14 August 2015).
[552] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara*, 65.
[553] Ibid., 367.
[554] Dhirgantoro, *5cm*, 13.
[555] Chudori, *Pulang*, 253.
[556] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 169.
[557] Ibid., 58.

towards women, really.'[558] He explains that 'dirty climbing' using drills and picks is only suitable for the military:

> Because their purpose is indeed to fight and conquer... The military way does not require dialogue... But a true climber must enter a dialogue with the cliff-face, if we damage the cliff, how are we any different from thugs? …Thieves and soldiers rape. But true knights and gentlemen treat sex as a dialogical relationship.[559]

Here, notions of ideal masculinity are drawn from the heroic *ksatria* 'knight' figures from Hindu-Javanese *wayang* (shadow puppet) mythology.[560] Yuda admits that in the past he 'did not really care about *wayang* shadow puppetry or its iconography,' but as he looks back and writes the story, 'I find now, to my surprise, that I really admire the iconography of Javanese shadow puppets' as well as the noble, knightly qualities espoused in *wayang* philosophy.[561] He particularly likes that the depictions of knights' and warriors' bodies 'closely resemble the physique of a mountain climber. Lean and strong, not huge and burly,' which he notes is 'very different to the ideal male body in mass culture icons from America. Superman, Batman, Sylvester "Rambo" Stallone, Mr Universe Arnold Schwarzenegger.'[562] Yuda goes on to reflect that: 'Islam has influenced their design in just the right amount… In appropriate and fitting levels.'[563] Ultimately, Yuda concludes that ideal masculinity is not the macho masculinity of US superheroes, nor the militarised masculinity of

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[558] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 79.
[559] Ibid., 81.
[560] *Wayang* is an ancient performance genre primarily associated with Java and Bali, and its most recognisable form involves leather shadow-puppets operated behind a screen by a skilled *dalang* (puppet-master). Although *wayang* storylines are primarily drawn from the ancient Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, *wayang* performances also provide significant scope for improvisation and allegories to contemporary political events. And, *wayang* is a broader cultural force than purely performance art; its features have been appropriated and adapted in comics, television and novels and *wayang* metaphors remain popular for expressing views on contemporary Indonesian culture, politics and society. See Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*; Clark, "Shadow Boxing: Indonesian Writers and the Ramayana in the New Order."; Meghan Downes, "Shadows on the Page: Javanese *Wayang* in Contemporary Indonesian Literature," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 46, no. 1 (2012); "Hybridities and Deep Histories in Indonesian Wayang Manga Comics," *Situations* 8 (2015).
[561] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 86.
[562] Ibid., 86-88.
[563] Ibid., 88. For instance, Islamic restrictions against artistic representations of humans and animals have contributed to the distinctive highly stylised figures in *wayang* shadow puppetry aesthetics.

the Indonesian armed forces, nor the fanatical religious masculinity espoused by Parang Jati's younger brother after his time studying abroad; rather it is a balanced and critical combination of different aspects of these various masculinities, represented for him by the knight figures from Javanese *wayang* mythology. Across many of the popular narratives under review, the emergent version of ideal masculinity is conceived of in a similar way. A 'moderate' masculinity, balancing aspects of 'local tradition,' with religious influences, and also broader global images of the 'sensitive new age guy.'

In these cases, both the idealised male and female archetypes in these novels are characterised by a sense of 'balance,' in that they are attempting to draw the most positive aspects from a range of 'modern' gender regimes. In particular, the balance between spiritual, Islamic, or pan-religious modernity on the one hand, and secular, or 'Western' modernity on the other hand, appears to be a central characteristic of these ideal gender representations. At the heart of these emerging archetypes, as in the case of regional representations, are competing ideal types of Indonesian citizenship and questions of national identity. Such questions occur in the context of ongoing anxieties over 'foreign' influence, including, but not limited to, 'Arabisation' and 'Westernisation.' Ideal Indonesian gender types come to be positioned as a moderate 'third way' between external influences, including the 'Middle East' and the 'West,' and ultimately represent authors' visions of the future Indonesian nation-state. These emergent fictional representations can be contrasted with the extremely demarcated gender roles promoted by the New Order regime, in which demure submissive housewives and dominant militarised patriarchs held specific functions within the idealised productive nuclear family. However, at the same time, potentially contestatory aspects of these alternative gender representations are often co-opted back into master narratives about gender and family, and many gender stereotypes are resilient, as I will reveal below. In the same way that dominant representations can never attain complete hegemony, challenges to dominant representations are rarely completely successful.

Within these new ideal types, aspects of previous archetypes remain unchallenged. Women are portrayed by many novelists as a beautiful and exotic 'other,' unknowable to the male protagonists and defined solely by their appearance.

Excessive fixation on female beauty in these stories has wider implications for gender relations, for as Saraswati has pointed out, the 'emphasized femininity' that features in narratives of female beauty in turn supports the construction of 'hegemonic masculinity,' particularly in postcolonial contexts.[564] Aisha in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, although fully veiled, is still identified primarily by her beautiful green eyes, which captivate Fahri. In *Negeri 5 Menara,* female visitors to the *pesantren* receive highly objectifying male attention. When one boy's sisters visit, everyone gathers to see 'these three young female creatures… like beautiful birds in the park… laughing and smiling, and pretending they did not notice they were being watched.'[565] The mysterious and beautiful other-worldliness of these female figures is presented as a natural fact of life, and little attempt is made by male protagonists to look beyond the surface of such figures. Even stories by female novelists, such as *Amba*, *Pulang* and the *Bilangan Fu* series, tend to reproduce ideals of feminine beauty, sexual attractiveness, and fundamental gender differences. Marja in *Bilangan Fu*, for instance, has 'a slim waist, a rock-hard abdomen, and firm supple breasts,' and for the entire eponymous first book she has no narrative voice, and is represented solely through the eyes of Yuda.[566] In the sequel, *Manjali and Cakrabirawa,* Marja is 'taught' by Parang Jati, who, sometimes condescendingly, educates her in Indonesian history and Javanese mythology. Amba too is consistently framed as an object of male desire, needing protection and guidance: as a young woman she is courted by three different men, who are struck by her beauty and long to 'protect' her. Even as an older woman in her sixties she attracts the much younger Samuel, who becomes her protector as she searches Buru Island for clues about Bhisma's fate. Her relationship with Bhisma is represented in a similar way to that of Marja and Parang Jati: with his vastly broader life experience, Bhisma lectures her on what he learned from living abroad, while she barely speaks. When she raises concern over their safety during the mass violence, Bhisma reassures her that 'no one could possibly want to kill someone as beautiful as you.'[567] In *Pulang*, Lintang, with 'her slender nose was in perfect proportion to her delicately pointed face,' is also characterised in

[564] L Ayu Saraswati, "Why Beauty Matters to the Postcolonial Nation's Masters: Reading Narratives of Female Beauty in Pramoedya's Buru Tetralogy," *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 2 (2011): 114.
[565] Fuadi, *Negeri 5 Menara,* 322.
[566] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 38.
[567] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 209.

terms of her beauty.[568] Even during a critique of the hidden 'dangers of beauty' which a young Amba articulates early in the novel, there is no analysis of the gendered power relations at work behind this:

> Mother, Ambika and Ambalika [Amba's young twin sisters] were always given special treatment. But, Amba did not see beauty as a path to happiness… Just look at the twins, who were suddenly banned from entering the district arts competition because the teachers from other schools were worried their beauty would influence the judges... Or the youngest child of a trader from Sleman, a famed beauty, found murdered in a ditch at the edge of town, with her throat cut and her vagina torn. On the one hand, beauty gives life. On the other hand, it is damning and terrifying.[569]

Here, Amba blames the abstract notion of 'female beauty' for discriminations and violations occurring in her community. Absent is any discussion of the structural patriarchal inequalities that have made beauty a 'danger' in these cases. Ultimately, although throughout the texts I have analysed the emergent female archetype is active, strong, opinionated, and not punished for pursuing her sexual desires, she is also invariably characterised as beautiful, in ways that are not necessarily empowering.

In addition, while there are often multiple and varied roles available for male characters in the texts under review, women's roles remain more limited. *Negeri 5 Menara*, set in a male *pesantren*, revolves around six central male characters, all of them individually drawn in complex psychological detail. Meanwhile, the female characters inhabiting the story's periphery are all represented as 'beautiful birds,' fleeting, fascinating and superficial. In *5cm*, main female character Riani is the sole representation of her gender in the friendship group. The four male friends represent the diversity of male roles: Genta, the sensitive but strong leader figure; Arial, the straight-talking gym-junkie; Zafran, the creative and free-spirited musician and poet; and Ian, the fat, lazy and clown-like figure of the group. Evidently, the scope and range of possible acceptable roles available for female characters is much narrower than those afforded to male characters. Moreover, stories of female experience, such as *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, are often portrayed (and read by audiences) as particular (i.e. 'women's struggles'), while stories of male experience are interpreted

[568] Chudori, *Pulang*, 232.
[569] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 80.

as universal representations of human experience (i.e. 'struggles'). While women occupy the periphery of stories about male protagonists, men remain a central focus and narrative impetus within stories about women. In *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, for instance, Nisa's character development is shaped by her relationships with her childhood sweetheart and then abusive first husband. Similarly, the entire narrative structure of *Amba*, including chapter titles, is structured around Amba's relationships with three different men, and Marja in *Bilangan Fu* is caught in a love triangle with Yuda and Parang Jati. Many of these relationships also reproduce previously dominant ideals of family. Although approaches to female sexuality are more relaxed, the women in these stories are all in heterosexual relationships and the male characters often take on the role of leader and teacher, implying a gender hierarchy in which male guidance is important to achieve progress.

Gender representation in the Indonesian mediascape is a huge and complex subject, and while I do not have the scope to explore all aspects of the topic, in this section I have identified some important broad trends in contemporary literary representations. The ideal urban self, discussed in the opening section, is distinctly gendered. Ideal modern citizens are being constructed here, with different versions of 'modernity' being drawn upon, in an apparent case of 'multiple' or 'alternative' modernities. Contemporary Indonesian gender roles are often portrayed as a delicate and fruitful balance between so-called 'Western' and 'Islamic' modernities, resulting in men and women who are confident, open-minded, successful, sensitive, spiritual and mobile. The keyword 'modernity' here is used as short hand to encapsulate competing notions of progress, national identity, and visions of the future. While 'regional tradition' can be portrayed as constraining in these novels, in some cases, local regional 'traditions,' such as Hindu-Javanese *wayang* mythology are also used in constructing ideal gender roles, as a resource for negotiating between different 'foreign' influences, revealing a certain amount of authorial ambivalence on the place of regional 'traditions' in the idealisation of 'modern' Indonesian citizenship. This is a common trope in narratives of progress and gender, as has been well studied by feminist theorists who note that women's bodies in particular occupy a site of anxiety around 'tradition,' 'modernity,' and nation.[570] As in the case of regional

[570] See, for example, Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation."; McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family."; Moghadam,

representations, while I have revealed a range of ways in which authors seek to challenge dominant ideas around gender, I have also highlighted persistent stereotypes and hierarchies. Just like the previously discussed hierarchy of urban identities over rural identities, men are often positioned as the leaders in hierarchical heterosexual relationships.[571] Hierarchies and stereotypes can be mutually reinforcing, and the remainder of this chapter explores intersections between different hierarchies and stereotypes as a way to understand the possibilities and limits of challenging stereotypes and master narratives in contemporary Indonesian fiction.

Reimagining histories of violence through fiction

During the first decade of the twenty-first century in Indonesia, many of the official, militarised, epic historical narratives promoted by the New Order regime have been increasingly challenged by more fragmented, plural, personal narratives of traumatic historical experience.[572] The New Order's master narrative of history is a highly linear one, in which the 1965-1966 anti-communist mass killings were a necessary step for Suharto's military regime to save the nation from taking the wrong path and to guarantee stability and development (*pembangunan*). While the state master narrative has been called into question since 1998, a close reading of emergent alternative accounts of history also reveals some of the limits of exploring oppositional histories in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. In this section, I examine several key fictional reimaginings of history, and the ways in which narratives of historical violence are deeply linked with representations of gender roles and regional 'traditions.' To illustrate complex intersections between these

Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies; Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation."

[571] For more on the links between family hierarchies and racial and gender politics, see Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation."

[572] Examples from non-fiction include Sukanta, *Breaking the Silence: Survivors Speak About 1965-66 Violence in Indonesia*; Wardaya, *Truth Will Out: Indonesian Accounts of the 1965 Mass Violence*. In terms of fictional reinterpretations, in addition to the novels I analyse here, significant film and literary engagements with the 1965-1966 mass violence include *Sang Penari* (a film adapted from the Ahmad Tohari novel), and Kurniawan, *Cantik Itu Luka*. For a brief analysis of these, see, respectively, Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*, 101-02; Katrin Bandel, *Sastra, Perempuan, Seks* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2006).

different aspects of identity politics, I analyse Laksmi Pamuntjak's *Amba*, Leila Chudori's *Pulang* and Ayu Utami's *Bilangan Fu* series. All three texts recount the events of 1965-1966, yet what is even more striking is how these authors each combine their reimaginings of history with attempts to challenge gender norms (as discussed in the preceding section), and also attempts to integrate local regional mythology, most notably the Hindu-Javanese *wayang* epics, into their stories. Pamuntjak draws her characters and narrative structure from an ancient tale featuring Bhisma and Amba, and Chudori's *Pulang* is also peppered with *wayang* references. Utami's work has frequently attracted attention for controversial depictions of gender and female sexuality, but less widely noticed is her use of characters, philosophies and even aesthetics from Hindu-Javanese mythology.[573] These three texts sit at the intersection of the three main sites of contestation I am dealing with in this chapter. In these final sections, I examine how and why these three elements are being combined, and what can we learn about each by examining the intersections between them. I argue that this intersection is useful in understanding the dynamics of challenge and incorporation at work in Indonesian literary representations, and the reasons why dominant progress narratives are able to remain so resilient.

Pamuntjak's *Amba* intervenes in dominant representations of history by providing a more nuanced portrait of the Indonesian countryside during the 1960s and revealing complex competing political agendas leading to the 1965-1966 mass killings. The novel gives equal weight to accounts of violent acts perpetrated by capitalist factory owners or landholders, communist collectives, and religious groups, countering official government narratives of solely communist cruelty against innocent parties (which had been used as justification for the subsequent mass killings). Working at a hospital in Kediri, Amba witnesses people from all sides of politics injured and dying. 'It did not matter who was right or wrong,' she reflects, 'the concrete outcome was many victims.'[574] In its detailed descriptions of complex political tensions, *Amba* captures the fear and confusion gripping Central and East Java in the lead-up to the mass killings, but does not blame these tensions only on communist-affiliated groups. Reimagining these events, Pamuntjak uses regional mythology as a thematic

[573] See Downes, "Shadows on the Page: Javanese *Wayang* in Contemporary Indonesian Literature."
[574] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 188.

motif: Amba and Bhisma's doomed romance is framed by the story of the *wayang* characters that share their names, and Amba makes sense of the chaos around her through Javanese myths and legends, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Serat Centini*. Amba sees the violence gripping Kediri in East Java as a continuation of ancient battles between kings of the Majapahit era, and when she arrives at the hospital in Kediri, 'she suddenly felt brave and important, imagining herself as a *wayang* character entering an empty screen, entering an epic with an unknown ending.' She meets Bhisma in an otherworldly scene filled with rain and lightning, and, following their separation, her life-consuming quest to discover his fate is framed in similarly epic terms, lending a sense of inevitability to their tale, and indeed the fate of Indonesia, as the violence explodes around them. Pamuntjak also uses *wayang* mythology to critique gender norms: the young Amba reflects that 'the *wayang* plays about the *ksatria*'s wives made her furious…She enjoyed *wayang* stories, but at the same time she secretly laughed at them. She would never become the poor pitiable Amba.'[575] While she later enacts the very *wayang* story that provides her name, she plays a more active role than Amba from the original tale, who is a princess, kidnapped by Bhisma, and then rejected by her former fiancé Salwa as well as by Bhisma himself. Pamuntjak's Amba, in contrast, actively seeks out the dangerous affair that changes her life. Ultimately, Amba and Bhisma are represented as victims of circumstance, and the untimely demise of their relationship can be read as representative of lost and stifled potential in Indonesia, brought about by the mass killings, imprisonments and exiles. In this way, Pamuntjak counters dominant state representations of history by portraying the violence as complex national tragedy, rather than an unfortunate but inevitable necessary step on a linear path towards progress.

In Chudori's *Pulang*, the exiled Dimas is not an evil bloodthirsty communist as per official government narratives; rather, he and his friends had a vague interest in leftist ideas, and were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Chudori reveals ongoing repercussions of New Order state terrorism by showing how Dimas' friends and family, even his daughter, born long after 1965, are persecuted for their alleged 'communist sympathies.' Even after starting a new life and opening an Indonesian

[575] Ibid., 86.

restaurant in Paris, Dimas still receives ominous visits from government intelligence officers, and when his daughter Lintang attends an Indonesian cultural event, she faces open hostility and hears people muttering that she is from an 'unclean environment,' the preferred New Order metaphor for having communists in the family. Chudori's central concern is how impacts of the 1965-1966 violence spread across continents and through generations. Throughout *Pulang*, Chudori uses *wayang* references to craft a sense of connection back to Indonesia for the exiles living in Paris. At key moments in his life, Dimas is compared to different *wayang* characters: in Indonesia before his 1965 exile, his reluctance to support any of the competing ideologies is likened to Wibisono's divided loyalties in the *Ramayana*.[576] The *Ramayana* follows the quest of Rama to recover his beloved fiancée Sinta after she is kidnapped by evil King Rahwana. Rahwana's brother Wibisono finds himself torn between family loyalty and his sympathy for Rama's more noble cause; in *Pulang*, Dimas is portrayed as a similarly conflicted character. He is also compared to several *Mahabharata* characters: when his lover Surti leaves him to marry his best friend Hananto, Dimas feels like Bima longing after beautiful Drupadi who always chooses handsome knight, Arjuna.[577] In Paris, Dimas is linked most closely to Ekalaya, a character rejected by his teacher Resi Dorna, just like Dimas is constantly rejected by his beloved homeland of Indonesia.[578] Throughout Chudori's novel, we encounter challenges to state master narratives, articulated via a range of positive representations: of regional mythologies as a highly relevant frame through which to interpret contemporary realities; of strong and sexually confident women, who are not punished within the narrative arc of the story; and of 'communist exiles' as innocent victims who have been written out of history.

Set around the end of the New Order regime, Utami's *Bilangan Fu* series does not attempt to recreate scenes from the past; rather she focuses on three young Indonesians (Marja, Yuda, and Parang Jati) attempting to make sense of their nation's history. In the second book in the series, *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, Marja and Parang Jati join an archaeological project in East Java, uncovering a lost temple linked to the mythical Calon Arang, an evil widow-witch character in Balinese and

[576] Chudori, *Pulang*, 31.
[577] Ibid., 65.
[578] Ibid., 206.

Javanese mythology. Marja learns another side to the Calon Arang story, where the widow and her daughter are the victims, but because the story is usually told from the perspective of King Airlagga, the man who wronged them, their voices are never heard. Marja's mythological discoveries are interwoven with discoveries about the more recent past, as she meets Murni, an old woman formerly a member of PKI-affiliated women's organisation Gerwani. This woman's tale of imprisonment, torture and the loss of her family lead Marja to reassess her own assumptions about Indonesia's past. In 1965, Murni's husband Sarwengi was killed, and Murni herself held prisoner and tortured for ten years, the details of which are described explicitly in the novel.[579] While the setting is contemporary rather than historical, Utami's representations of historical violence are perhaps the most intimate and confronting of the three novels under review. The intersection between representations of gender, history, and regional mythology is clearly and consciously articulated in Utami's work. In *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, Marja's sexual desire for both Yuda and Parang Jati is framed mythologically with references to the *Ramayana*, which is twisted to make central female character Sinta the subject rather than the object of desire. Typically presented as Rama's quest to recover his kidnapped fiancée, Sinta's starring moment is when she is rescued after twelve years imprisonment, and must prove that she remains 'pure' by walking through fire. Marja, however, recalls watching the *Ramayana* as a girl, and muses that 'twelve years is a long time. Could love have grown between Sinta and Rahwana during that time? Did Rahwana really not touch Sinta? And, if Rahwana indeed did not give into desire and force himself on her, surely Sinta herself in the end might crave the touch of such a chivalrous king?' In the same way that she shifted the narrative perspective of the Calong Arang widow-witch story, Utami again reframes regional mythology, to demonstrate how these stories can be read differently from alternative perspectives. Such reframing is a central part of her attempt to deconstruct both dominant sexual norms and official government histories.

[579] Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*, 149-51, 234.

Sex, death, and shadow puppets: An intersectional approach

Utami, Chudori, and Pamuntjak are all relatively big names in the Indonesian literary landscape, and it is significant how similar their themes and approaches are in these recent novels. I propose that they are working at a particular thematic intersection around gender, region, and history, that is the confluence of key contested topics in contemporary Indonesia. These intersections are not so surprising, if we take a deeper look at the links and overlaps between mythical epics, mass violence, and gender representations, and how powerful narratives of progress pervade these three areas. The links between mythical epics and narratives of mass violence are a particularly useful starting point here. Writing in the South Asian context, Ashis Nandy has long insisted that the story of partition genocide in India and Pakistan should be understood as an epic, like the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, which has been written in fragments, assigned specific meanings, and then passed on to subsequent generations. He argues that in India the violence is understood as 'part of an epic journey towards a modern nation-state' which is used to 'explain away instances of enormous, unnecessary human suffering as necessary sacrifices for a larger cause.'[580] Similar epic frames have been used in the Indonesian case, with the state constructing a foundational national myth around the alleged communist coup. Within this myth, the New Order military regime cast itself as a heroic saviour guiding Indonesia along the correct road to progress, with violence as simply an unavoidable part of this trajectory. The novels under review often echo this sense of inevitability. For instance, despite Pamuntjak's attempt to challenge official histories, her central character Amba describes fate as 'inscribed in the heavens,' implying there is little use in revisiting or regretting past violence.

Secondly, while official accounts of political violence occupied the 'epic' register, alternative histories occupied a forbidden yet alluring status akin to pornography. As Ariel Heryanto notes in a his work on state terrorism: 'During much of the New Order period, the murky history of the violence in 1965-6 and its haunting effects on the everyday lives of millions of Indonesians were both as taboo and as tantalizing as pornography, especially to those not personally affected by the 1965-6 killings.'[581]

[580] Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination*, 10.
[581] Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, 24.

In *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, Marja characterises Indonesian history as a haunting, ghost-like myth that simultaneously repels and intrigues.[582] Another thread of the *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa* narrative is the story of Musa Wanara, a soldier in the military and a friend of Yuda's. Musa has an all-consuming obsession with 'talismans' of communism, for he believes that collecting symbols of the 'enemy' will increase his own power and also his sexual prowess. This perverse desire for the thing he most despises reflects the ways in which the New Order regime thrived on keeping alive the latent threat of communism, even when such a threat no longer existed. Links between history, violence, and sexual transgression can serve to dampen open discussions about violence, but at the same time, lend such discussions an aura of forbidden pleasure.

There are also important links between the state's master narrative of history, and its construction of ideal gender roles. Following the 1965-1966 mass violence, the new government fabricated and circulated graphic stories about how members of Indonesian women's organisation *Gerwani* danced partially naked around the mutilated bodies of military generals, brandishing knives and severed penises. Barbara Hatley notes that in 1965 'a concocted, aggressively sexual image of the communist women's movement served to demonise communism and justify the annihilation of its adherents… in contrast, the demure, decorous image of woman as wife and mother symbolised the social order that Suharto's New Order regime supposedly then restored to the nation.'[583] Susan Blackburn and Saskia Wieringa have described the military's demonisation of Gerwani as 'an orgy of misogynistic vilification' designed to deter any further threats to the status quo, both military, economic and religious.[584] Blackburn also draws attention to the role of history museums in keeping the fear of 'aggressive' women alive, describing a recreated scene at the Lubang Buaya Memorial Park and Museum's Pancasila monument:

> The frieze on the monument shows women 'before' and 'after' the New Order regime. 'Before' is clearly meant to depict the stereotype of Gerwani

[582] Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*, 68.
[583] Barbara Hatley, *Javanese Performances on an Indonesian Stage: Contesting Culture, Embracing Change* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008).
[584] Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, 181. See also Wieringa, "The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism."; "Sexual Metaphors in the Change from Soekarno's Old Order to Soeharto's New Order in Indonesia."

> women: they are indeed militant, shouting, gesticulating and generally in revolt. 'Afterwards' shows women in what the army presumably considered their rightful orderly role, standing quietly in the background and nursing babies.[585]

This museum, as a regular site of school excursions, along with other initiatives like annual screenings of the film *PengkhianatanG30S/PKI,* successfully circulated official narratives of both history and gender. When the state links a certain gender representation (in this case, dangerously outspoken activist women) to such a hugely traumatic national tragedy, fear of these excluded gender roles inevitably remains powerful. Representations of sex and gender in Indonesia are therefore irrevocably bound up with questions of history and violence, and this is where an intersectional analytic approach is so important.

These intersections lie at the very heart of the three novels discussed here. In the opening scene of *Amba*, set in a remote village on former prison island Buru, the narrator describes how the area 'has witnessed many incidents – too many incidents – that have occurred on the muddy ground, in the middle of the forest, in the rain. Incidents involving death, sex, or death and sex.'[586] Framed in the grand language of an epic, this scene explicitly flags the important intersection of sex and violence that haunts the entire novel. In *Pulang,* Lintang describes her parents' memories of student protests in Paris 1968 as 'full of the sentimentality of revolution, freedom, justice, and liberty,' and says that their nostalgia is definitely tied up with 'the issue of sexual freedom.'[587] The powerful combination of political revolution and sex acquire a mythical aura, which is reinforced when sex scenes in *Pulang* and *Amba* coincide with climactic and violent historical events. Yuda in *Bilangan Fu* reflects on memories of his first sexual fantasy, about a wolf killing a sheep, and admits that 'sex, for me, is always connected with power, destruction, and death.'[588] In the sequel, *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa,* sexual aspects of the Gerwani story are addressed explicitly, via Marja's descriptions of scenes from a history museum she visited in primary school, where 'Gerwani members, wearing thin fabric that showed their nipples, sliced the flesh and the genitals of the generals, while singing [popular folk

[585] Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, 157.
[586] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 17.
[587] Chudori, *Pulang*, 363.
[588] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 517.

song] *Genjer-genjer*.' In the closing scenes of the novel, a snake-shaped birthmark reveals that Musa Wanara, the soldier staunchly hostile to an imagined communist threat, is in fact Murni and Sarwengi's lost son, forcibly taken from his imprisoned mother after 1965.[589] While this revelation comes to too late for either of them, there is a poetic symmetry in the intimacies between victim and perpetrator, enemy and family, that reflects broader tensions around these histories of violence in Indonesia.

Conventional history writing in Indonesia suffered greatly under the New Order regime, so emergent fictional reconstructions like these can be important avenues for interrogating the past.[590] However, the official master-narrative of Indonesian history has been far reaching and powerful, and although these authors contest some aspects of it, they often still operate within its framework. Chudori and Pamuntjak's novels, for example, portray their lead characters as relatively apolitical, not 'real' communists, just innocent victims caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. In this way, their work becomes incorporated into the dominant master-narrative by implying that violence against 'real' communists was perhaps still justified. For example, in the increasingly tense political context of Central Java in 1965 as depicted in *Pulang*, Dimas reflects on how his committed communist friend Hananto 'always said I was like Wibisono, Rahwana's younger brother who fought on Rama's side. But I had no idea who was the Rama and who was the Rahwana of Indonesian politics.'[591] He explains that 'although there was a sharp demarcation between those who admired and followed the PKI and those who did not, I was a neutral zone like Switzerland, and I also often chatted with [Islamic activist] Bang Amir and his friends.'[592] He asks 'why must we pick a side in order to demonstrate our conviction? And, is it even possible to have one single-minded belief? Socialism, communism, capitalism, must we embrace one of these ideologies completely, without any sense of doubt? Without any critical thinking?'[593] Dimas is positioned outside the political passions of the time, an innocent bystander caught up in others'

[589] A clue to this revelation lies in his name, which includes references to Musa (Moses) and to Siung Wanara (from *Babad Tanah Jawi*), both of whom are abandoned babies.
[590] Laurie J Sears, "Postcolonial Identities, Feminist Criticism, and Southeast Asian Studies," in *Knowing Southeast Asian Subjects*, ed. Laurie J Sears and Carlo Bonura (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).
[591] Chudori, *Pulang*, 31.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Ibid., 43.

ideological warfare. In contrast to the sympathetic portrayal of Dimas, the only passionate and politically committed communist figure in *Pulang* is Hananto, Dimas' former best friend who seduces and marries the love of Dimas' life, Surti. Hananto's character is single-minded and selfish, apparently unconcerned about the impact of his actions upon others. Dimas is disgusted to discover Hananto is cheating on Surti with a fellow communist activist, but Hananto 'insolently' replies that 'Surti is a wife, my life companion. But with Marni, I can feel the raging lust of the proletariat.'[594] This negative characterisation reinforces many aspects of the dominant government narrative about the inherent immorality of communism.

Amba offers similar descriptions of how its central characters are targeted as communists through misunderstandings, and bad luck of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As society polarises and radicalises around her, Amba 'chose the middle road, chose to be silent.' When pressured to 'take a side,' Amba's heart 'whispers no,' preferring to live in a more abstract word of poetry and art, where rhymes are 'a world unto themselves' and sides are not important.[595] Again, politically partisan characters (against whom Amba is contrasted) are represented as fanatical and somewhat dangerous. And while Bhisma harbours some sympathy for the socialist cause, he is located on the outlying fringe of the leftist movement. When he and Amba visit a friend in leftist artist community, Bumi Tarung, where artists are more interested in political resistance than beauty, he whispers to her that he finds 'most of the paintings here very unconvincing.'[596] The focus here on art and poetry is significant, given the 'cultural polemics' of the time, which pitted politically committed social realism against the more apolitical 'universal humanism' that came to be endorsed by the new regime. Again, these fictional representations resonate with the official ideologies discussed in Chapter 4, around political and critical literature, the demonisation of LEKRA, and the hegemony of universal humanism.[597] Amba and Bhisma are firmly positioned as supporters of the latter, which adds to the sense that they were 'wrongly targeted' as communists, and therein

[594] Ibid., 68.
[595] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 148.
[596] Ibid., 230.
[597] For accounts of the ongoing hegemony of an anti-political approach to art and culture, see Foulcher, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian 'Institute of People's Culture' 1950-1965*; Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era*, 72.

lies the central tragedy: not in the widespread massacres of communists *per se*, but in the mistaken killing of 'innocent' non-communists.

Among these novels, only Utami's *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa* offers a detailed sympathetic portrait of a politically committed victim of the 1965-1966 violence. Murni, the old lady that Marja meets, is described as 'a bright and well educated girl. She wanted to advance women's rights. She wanted to help free farmers and poor labourers from suffering and exploitation. She became a member of Gerwani.'[598] Here, Murni is depicted as firmly political, but in no way selfish or immoral, thus disrupting an important element of the dominant master narrative. This is, however, a very rare example. Significantly, beyond the bounds of fictional representation, many victims of the anti-communist killings are most concerned with proving that they (or their family members) were not in fact communists and were therefore wrongly persecuted, rather than arguing that mass killing of communists constitutes an injustice in itself. This reveals the power of the dominant master narrative in co-opting apparent challenges to its underlying logic.

Another important aspect of the dominant progress narrative structuring these stories is the implicit message that Indonesia's 1965-1966 violence was the result of 'modern' ideologies embraced in the 'wrong' way by 'traditional' peoples. This is a familiar trope in progress narratives globally, and I have explored anxieties over the notion of 'bastard modernity' or 'failed, distorted' attempts to be 'modern' in preceding chapters.[599] In *Amba*, Bhisma's measured and rational socialist sympathies (which he developed while studying abroad in East Germany) are starkly contrasted with the chaotic and confused political landscape of 1960s Indonesia. Bhisma regularly quotes European intellectuals and explains to Amba the complexity and contradictions within socialist thought. Meanwhile, in the Indonesian countryside,

[598] Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*, 148.
[599] See, for instance David on how this notion emerges in national evaluation of popular cultures: 'Although Bollywood as well as *dangdut*, as non-traditional mass culture genres, were clearly "modern," they were perceived as a failed, distorted attempt to be "modern" by uneducated, "backward" people. This "bastard" modernity…was highly embarrassing to the more educated, Western-oriented elite.' David, "Intimate Neighbours: Bollywood, Dangdut Music, and Globalizing Modernities in Indonesia," 183-84. In official state representations, 'communists' are similarly portrayed as anti-modern and anti-progress in their rejection of 'the West,' while at the same time 'too modern' in their apparent amoral atheism and supposedly liberal sexual attitudes.

any ideals of justice or equality are swamped by frenzied violence amongst gangs who commit fanatically and uncritically to different ideological 'brands.' They shout 'crush, destroy,' and force everyone to become either 'friend or foe, with no moderate middle ground.'[600] A similar contrast is set up in *Pulang*, between the 1968 student demonstrations in Paris and the bloody chaos of 1965 in Indonesia. While both are framed as 'political revolutions,' the Europeans are shown to be much more capable of peacefully, maturely, and intellectually solving ideological conflict compared with the Indonesians who resort to 'rivers of blood.'

Set almost forty years after the violence, the *Bilangan Fu* series is also concerned with the ongoing 'problem' of 'bastard modernity' in Indonesia. In *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, Marja and Parang Jati discuss this with Jacques, a French archaeologist with whom they are investigating the temple. Jacques explains that when he first came to Indonesia, he enjoyed a simple life in harmony with nature, but:

> after modernity arrived, Indonesian people all became stupid. They became a consumerist society… In Europe, modernity is inseparable from democracy. There, modernity was born alongside a democratic spirit… [and] the acknowledgement of human rights. But here? Modernity just means modern technology. Electricity, telephones, cars, including army tanks and military weapons, which are instead used to violate human rights. The values which originally gave birth to modernity are not adopted. Why? Because this is a nation of consumers.[601]

Marja and Parang Jati are uncomfortable with this lecture: they feel defensive and belittled, but at the same time they 'see some truth to it.' What is not included in this description of 'modernity,' however, is the fact that, as I outlined in Chapter 2, what most people refer to as 'Western modernity' is fundamentally built not upon universal human rights, as Jacques suggests, but upon exclusion, violence, and exploitation.[602] Instead, the narrative focuses on how people embrace 'modernity' in the 'wrong' way. In *Bilangan Fu*, Yuda mounts a similar criticism to Jacques, arguing that 'modern' technology is dumbing down the Indonesian population. He

[600] Pamuntjak, *Amba*, 148.
[601] Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*, 159.
[602] See Chapter 2 of this thesis and Kahn, *Modernity and Exclusion*.

laments the 'mediocrity and superficiality' brought by electricity and television.[603] Yuda argues that the mass media has made rural people in particular 'incoherent and confused.'

> Too many rural people are ignorant these days... I'm not saying that rural village people are fundamentally stupid. But, television has now made most of them dumb. My grandmother was from a village, but she was not stupid. She may not have understood much about the world outside her hometown, but she could always express her opinions clearly. It is much better to be simple than to be schizophrenic… Television has trapped people's heads in a glass tube while their feet remain planted in the fields. They live off cassava at 10 cents per kilo in the village, but in the glass box they see people forced to spend millions of dollars in one hour of shopping, in what is called a *reality show*.[604]

Yuda blames these discrepancies – between 'modern' consumer life on screen and the realities of 'traditional' village life – for the violence and chaos that occurs throughout the story. In a clearly hierarchical worldview dichotomising 'noble tradition' and 'bastard modernity,' Yuda laments how popular culture distorts 'traditional' local mythology and drains its power. After Parang Jati recounts the story of Nyai Roro Kidul, mythical Queen of the South Java Sea, Yuda reflects that he never realised how complex, powerful, and ambiguous this figure was in the ancient texts: 'I'd always felt like the Queen of the South Sea was just cheap tacky entertainment, especially when she appeared in trashy horror films... played by [sexy 1980s actress] Suzanna… No wonder I used to disparage her banality.'[605] For Yuda, the 'modernity' of cheap mass entertainment corrupts the 'tradition' of ancient mythologies. Parang Jati also criticises how ideologies of 'modernity' are embraced in Indonesia. He describes how 'experimentations with modernity' in 'new developing countries' inevitably 'fail,' and subsequently these nations 'fall to corrupt authoritarian military regimes,' which in turn results in 'uncritical embrace of monotheistic religion.'[606] Indeed, the central narrative of *Bilangan Fu* implies that both 'Islamic religious modernity' and 'Western consumerist modernity' are embraced in the wrong way by the Indonesian population. This is symbolised clearly

[603] Utami, *Bilangan Fu*, 44.
[604] Ibid., 125.
[605] Ibid., 47.
[606] Ibid., 476.

in the character of Parang Jati's younger brother Kupukupu, or 'Farisi,' as he prefers to be known after returning from study abroad:

> He wore a white shirt like [Indonesian historical figure] Diponegoro, but with a leather vest that made him look like a Tatar from a fantasy novel… Something about him suggested that he originally came from the village, but that some external force had transformed him into a cartoon character.[607]

This particular character, a local village boy exposed to the isolating experience of studying abroad in 'the West' and turning to religious fanaticism as a way to cope, is the primary cause of almost all the conflict and tragedy that occurs in the novel, and can therefore be read as an indictment of how 'modernity' is dealt with in contemporary Indonesia. Utami's work challenges so many aspects of dominant progress narratives, yet even in this highly critical novel, powerful tropes of 'modernity' and 'development' operate in familiar ways.

The prevailing sense in these novels that historical violence in Indonesia is somehow related to inappropriate or incomplete adoption of 'modern' technology and ideologies is of course a dangerous and reductive oversimplification. In this case, convenient keywords like 'tradition' and 'modernity' can impede more complex understandings of the social, political and historical factors which structure such violence. For instance, by characterising 'modern' ideologies as coming from outside Indonesia, and violent tendencies as the result of local people reacting irrationally against such ideologies, these novels ignore the role of broader global power relations: in the case of 1965, for instance, powerful international actors such as the U.S. supported and encouraged the Suharto regime's anti-communist massacres. Beyond these texts, the keywords 'tradition' and 'modernity' regularly emerge in public debates around Indonesian history. Within Indonesia, those who would prefer not to 're-open the wounds of history' claim that 'traditional' non-confrontational ways of dealing with a violent past are more appropriate for Indonesian society than 'modern' impulses to seek truth, rationality and reconciliation in history.[608] However, local government silence and preference for non-confrontational approaches is often less to do with an imagined 'tradition' and

[607] Ibid., 95.
[608] See, for example, debates over the International People's Tribunal on 1965, held at The Hague in The Netherlands from 10-13 November 2015.

more to do with legacies of New Order propaganda, the deep complicities of contemporary elites in historical violence, and a residual climate of fear and intimidation.[609] Outside Indonesia, international pressure on Indonesia to 'confront its past' is frequently articulated in terms of the importance of dealing maturely with violence and reconciliation if the nation is to become a true 'modern democracy.'[610] In this paternalistic narrative, colonial legacies and international complicity in the violence remain invisible. As both victims and perpetrators of historical violence pass away, it is really only representations that are kept alive, which is why fictional representations like those I have discussed here are so important, and also why it is vital to examine the complexities often masked by dominant narratives of progress and keywords like 'modernity.'

This section has demonstrated that it can be difficult for authors to fully challenge master narratives of history without being co-opted by some of its narrative logic. In a similar way, representations of region and gender in the texts reviewed in this section also continue to reinforce a range of dominant tropes and stereotypes. Although embracing 'regional traditions,' these texts are all highly Java-centric, and the central characters are from privileged, educated backgrounds. And, while challenging some gender stereotypes, other powerful discourses around female beauty and heterosexuality continue to be reproduced. Ultimately, this points to the limits not just of alternative history, but alternative gender archetypes, and alternative voices for marginalised regions. I propose that it is precisely the links between the representations of each that make them so resilient, which is why intersectionality theory is illuminating in this context. In the context of U.S. race and gender politics, Crenshaw has argued that:

> The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women. These

[609] Silence can work to serve a particular elite, and by extension the security forces, who are often implicated in the violence and whose legitimacy would be undermined by such investigations. See, Elizabeth Collins, "The Legacy of Violence in Indonesia," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002).
[610] See, for example Phelim Kine, "Indonesia's Act of Denial," *Al Jazeera*, 3 March 2014.

> mutual elisions present a particularly difficult political dilemma for women of color.[611]

In the Indonesian context, I suggest that dominant state narratives around ideal histories, ideal gender roles, and ideal modern citizens can similarly all serve to mutually reinforce one another, making it difficult to successfully challenge one set of stereotypes without addressing the other. As noted by Crenshaw, 'when one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations that each attempts to challenge are strengthened.'[612] For instance, in the case of Indonesian authors intervening in official state histories, if they do not also address stereotypes around gender and region, they are likely to reproduce them. Similarly, if fictional challenges to state gender ideologies do not engage critically with histories of violence, these challenges too will continue to be co-opted. For, as Williams notes, as soon as a potentially oppositional representation emerges, 'the process of incorporation begins.'[613] This process can occur 'by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion,' and 'much incorporation looks like recognition, acknowledgement, and thus a form of *acceptance.*'[614] In the case of the texts under review here, Chudori's *Pulang* won the prestigious Khatulistiwa literary award in 2013, a clear symbol of recognition and acknowledgement from the Indonesian literary establishment.[615] However, of the three texts discussed, *Pulang* is arguably the least critical of dominant state representations. Moreover, at the award ceremony and in media reviews, the novel was praised primarily for exposing how 'innocent' non-communists and their families came to be targeted in the violence and subsequent state discrimination.[616] As I explained earlier, this aspect of the story clearly reproduces central elements of the state master narrative. Ultimately, both the fictional representations within these novels, and the ways in which they are received, reveal complex dynamics of hegemony, resistance and co-optation, in which dominant representations are rarely

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[611] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," 1252.
[612] Ibid., 1282.
[613] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 126.
[614] Ibid., 125. Emphasis in original.
[615] However, given the relatively limited reach of literature in Indonesia, fiction has always had somewhat more scope to question dominant narratives, compared with film or television.
[616] This observation is based on my own attendance at the Khatulistiwa award ceremony (November 2013) and from following media coverage at the time.

completely unchallenged, but simultaneously, challenges to such representations are rarely able to operate completely outside the previously hegemonic narrative.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have examined region, gender, and history as three major sites of contestation in contemporary Indonesia. By closely analysing textual representations of these three areas, I traced important emerging patterns in post-reform Indonesian identity politics. I have also shown how popular literature can be a space in which authors construct and negotiate dominant narratives about Indonesia's past and future. Following the dizzying diversity of the reform era, it is now possible to identify clear trends in how debates around region, gender, and history are represented in popular texts. These representations do not occur in a vacuum, but have been affected by highly complex social, political and historical contexts. My analysis shows how contemporary textual representations in some ways challenge but in other ways reinforce existing dominant narratives. In line with Williams' literary theories, 'emergent,' 'residual' and 'dominant' representations interact in complicated ways in these texts.

In fictional representations of marginalised regions there is a clear tension evident between on the one hand celebrating the local, the rural, and the 'traditional' as a source of strength against the exploitative urban centre, while on the other hand characterising such areas in paternalistic and orientalising ways, in order to construct an ideal urban self. This ideal self is often gendered, and if we look at emerging gender archetypes in contemporary fiction, while there has been a clear break with New Order era militarised masculinity and submissive motherly femininity, some stereotypes still persist, particularly around female beauty, male leadership, and heterosexuality. Similarly, some fictional accounts contest dominant histories of violence, yet even in attempts to deconstruct official state narratives, these texts continue to reproduce myths about 'communists' as dangerous, immoral, and intolerant figures, who perhaps deserved to be targeted, and ultimately blame the violence on 'modernity' being embraced in the 'wrong' way by 'traditional' people. I demonstrated that by closely examining the complex intersections between fictional

portrayals of region, gender, and history, we can begin to understand why certain dominant representations are easily challenged, while others less so. Crenshaw's ideas around representational intersectionality have been a highly useful addition to Williams' literary theories of dominance and co-optation in this case, for we cannot fully understand the dynamics of one set of representations in isolation without taking into account their relationship to other sites of contestation.

The push to 'develop' marginalised regions, to promote 'modern' gendered citizens, and to treat history as a linear journey of progress, are all deeply entangled with ongoing legacies of New Order *pembangunan* (development) ideologies. Within these ideologies, histories of state violence were justified in terms of order, stability, and national development, where the military regime supposedly saved the nation from 'progressing' in the wrong direction. In terms of gender, the patriarchal nuclear family was a key cornerstone of *pembangunan* ideology, and this irrevocably linked gender roles to national development discourses. Similarly, within the logics of *pembangunan*, Indonesia's diverse regions and local traditions were often valued only in so far as they supported national progress. In addition, *pembangunan* ideology suggested such regions required external guidance to successfully 'develop' in the right way. As explained in Chapter 2, this dominant story of progress is linked not just to New Order *pembangunan* ideology, but to Dutch colonial legacies and also wider narratives in Western social sciences. In Utami's *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa*, French archaeologist Jacques claims that:

> Javanese researchers are simultaneously both the researching subject and the research object. Their relationship to the myths they are studying is very close. Too close. They are still living those myths. Therefore, they often conduct archaeological research in order to prove the reality of the myths. In the West, scholars conduct research in order to test and analyse a myth. Here, it is the opposite. The Javanese do not test, but rather they look for confirmation of what they already believe.[617]

Ultimately, in the novel, Marja counters Jacques' opinion by proving the value of Javanese mythological outlooks in solving real-world problems. However, I would suggest that a more powerful counter-criticism here would be to suggest that the narrative of 'tradition' and 'modernity' is in fact a sacred myth of 'Western'

[617] Utami, *Manjali Dan Cakrabirawa*, 30.

humanities social science, a myth that pushes scholars to seek evidence to reinforce its own power, and which often obscures the possibility of more nuanced understandings of reality. In Chapter 6, I conclude by returning to these wider issues of knowledge production, and reflect on the position of my own thesis in scholarly power structures.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Whose progress? To what end?

In this thesis I have examined several different genres of storytelling: fictional stories in popular films and novels, audience accounts of everyday consumption practices, and the various stories circulating in media, public debate, and academic scholarship. A common narrative theme of progress features across all these genres, and I have demonstrated the diverse ways in which central keywords 'modernity' and 'development' are circulated and contested across these different types of storytelling. Given the deep colonial legacies of this narrative, stories of progress are not always as empowering as they may sometimes initially seem. My own work sits within the genre of scholarly storytelling, and therefore I have been especially conscious of how dominant progress narratives affect my own story in this thesis. As I noted earlier in the thesis, any project of extended critique or deconstruction can run the risk of giving back a privileged position to the object, concept, or narrative being deconstructed. In order to evade this risk, I have sought to capture as many nuances, complexities, and contradictions as possible, in an attempt to tell the best possible story about the situations, characters, and debates that I encountered throughout my research. I have sought to avoid examining the issues I came across as abstract 'struggles over modernity,' and instead I have taken into account complex local and global historical legacies, searching for grounded and contextualised rather than abstract and generalised explanations. My central aim in this endeavour has been to provide what Raymond Williams calls an 'extra edge of awareness,' in addressing representational inequalities.

In order to achieve this kind of nuanced understanding, my approach has been to trace stories of progress through several popular cultural trends and key sites of contestation in post-reform Indonesia. I have closely examined trends in Islamic themed film and fiction, and attendant debates over the role of religion in Indonesian public life and popular culture. I also looked at inspirational tales set in rural or remote regions of Indonesia, and the implications of these stories for representations of sometimes marginalised communities. Normative ideas around gender and sexuality are always a key part of debates around 'tradition,' 'modernity,' and

national identity, and I have explored several stories of gendered experiences and sexualities in the post-reform context. In addition, I analysed fictional reinterpretations of historical violence, and reflected on the role of linear progress narratives in Indonesian national historiography. These four sites, and their related popular cultural trends, have been the subject of much scholarly and general interest, often separately, but in this thesis I have brought these sites into a conversation with each other, searching for common themes and notable discrepancies in how progress narratives are articulated at each site.

Another key strategy in my quest to tell 'better stories' and provide an 'extra edge of awareness' has been to examine these four central trends and sites from diverse analytical perspectives. Textual representations, personal narratives of consumption, and the complex social relations and public debates around contemporary Indonesian film and fiction have all been important areas of investigation in this thesis. Inspired by the notion of 'media ecology,' I have sought to map out a comprehensive environment of production, consumption, content, debate, and analysis.[618] I have not given excessive analytic privilege to either authors, filmmakers, critics, or audiences, but have instead taken all these actors seriously and paid close attention to the diverse stories that they tell. Throughout my analysis of these stories, I focused in particular on where, why, and how dominant tropes of progress appear to be either challenged or reproduced. In 'emergent' literary representations, in audience anti-fandom, in public debates around censorship and self-help, and in postcolonial and post-development critiques of 'modernity' and 'modernisation,' I have revealed a range of contestations and fascinating contradictions, which call into question: whose progress, and to what end? Often, progress narratives, and their central keywords 'modernity' and 'development,' turn out to be constructed around exclusions and inequalities. As I have demonstrated, while many aspects of previously hegemonic New Order state ideologies have been successfully challenged during the reform and post-reform periods in Indonesia, dominant ideas around *pembangunan* (development), which in turn have deep roots in colonial legacies and global capitalist structures, remain powerful. By approaching the Indonesian mediascape as a kind of 'ecology' of producers, consumers, critics, and scholars, I have been able to

[618] Jurriëns, "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited," 214.

observe more clearly this ongoing pervasiveness of keywords such as 'development' and 'modernity' in shaping worldviews, despite, or perhaps even because of, the internal contradictions contained within such terms.

Given their centrality to narratives of progress, 'modernity' and 'development' have been crucial keywords in this thesis. Following Raymond Williams, I highlighted the flexible and unstable iridescence of these keywords, a characteristic that can on the one hand function as a barrier to analytical clarity, but on the other hand can provide a productive opportunity to trace complex webs of different connotations and subtle shifts in social meanings occurring within the realm of language.[619] As indicated in the opening chapter, during the course of my fieldwork in Indonesia, I encountered these words operating in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways within stories of progress. Media debates, audience discussions, and authorial representations are all frequently summarised in scholarly accounts as 'struggles over modernity,' a vague and analytically limited phrase. I opened this thesis with a series of vignettes, in which I zoomed out from a film scene being enacted on screen, to debates among my fellow viewers, to coverage in the Indonesian media, and finally to scholarly presentations at a conference. In subsequent chapters, I delved back through these different layers and genres. In doing so, I sought to explore the lived social reality of keywords like 'modernity' and 'development,' as a way of deepening our understandings of the contradictory connotations and historical legacies contained within these deceptively familiar terms.

In order to delve deeper into the scholarly connotations of these keywords, Chapter 2 reviewed the various ways that terms like 'modernity' and 'development' have been used in academic discourse throughout many decades, their deep entanglement with processes of colonial exploitation, and their ongoing resilience in contemporary scholarly work. Focusing particularly on critical postcolonial scholarship, I highlighted different ways in which scholars have attempted to critique, deconstruct, and reconfigure dominant stories of progress in classic Western social science metanarratives. They do this variously by redefining 'modernity' as a hierarchical colonial construct (in the case of scholars like Chakrabarty, Kahn, Gaonkar, Dirlik, and others), and also by pointing out hidden agendas and disempowering impacts of

[619] Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.

the global 'development' industry (a strategy taken by scholars including Escobar, Esteva, and Sachs). Often, however, such critiques continue to operate within an overarching narrative of progress, in which these scholars either seek to expand the story to include more diverse characters, or reframe the story from a different narrative perspective. This can ultimately contribute to the resilience of the trope of progress in social science research. Then, turning specifically to Indonesia, I argued for the importance of taking into account the role of local socio-political contexts in promoting different versions of progress, and traced specific Indonesian histories of 'development' ideology via the Indonesian keyword *pembangunan*. A legacy of Dutch colonial occupation and nationalist debates during the Indonesian independence struggle, *pembangunan* was inculcated in specific ways during the New Order regime, and I revealed how this ideology has deeply shaped key sites of Indonesian identity politics well into the present day. I also examined how such sites are described in scholarly accounts about contemporary Indonesia, and the ways in which convenient keywords like 'modernity' can often limit a more complex understanding of social change. While following many conventions of a literature review chapter, the primary purpose of Chapter 2 was to treat academic scholarship as a genre of storytelling, with common narrative tropes and moral messages, just like any story.

Turning to the social and political contexts surrounding production and consumption of popular culture, Chapter 3 focused primarily on how stories of progress feature in the contemporary Indonesian mediascape. I revealed deep links between the perceived transformative power of popular texts and public anxieties over appropriate directions of societal progress. The progressive or regressive affective potential attributed to popular culture often creates impulses to proscribe or prescribe certain narrative types, and this in turn results in public debates around censorship and self-help. I proposed looking beyond 'Islam' as an exceptional explanatory factor in such cases, suggesting that more illuminating perhaps are links between pan-religious public morality discourses and broader global neoliberal developmentalist ideologies. Within these ideologies, we can trace a tension between authoritarian, paternalistic, and controlling impulses contrasted with neoliberal, individualist, self-help discourses which absolve state responsibility. As I demonstrated, this combination of interventionist and liberal rhetoric can be doubly

marginalising for those targeted for control and 'development.' I also provided several case studies of how texts can take on a life beyond the pages of a book or the cinema screen and come to symbolise broader issues around nationalism, regional 'development,' and morality, and I closed the chapter by critically engaging with the popular notion of 'Islamic modernities.' Ultimately, this chapter sought to demonstrate both the social role of popular narratives, and how attempts to promote or restrict certain fictional representations can be traced back to dominant ideas around progress and 'development.'

In Chapter 4, I closely examined the stories told around the screen by Indonesian audiences. I demonstrated the importance of taking seriously the everyday voices and concerns of consumers, for audience studies can reveal fascinating complexities within the apparent dominance of progress narratives. I explored in particular how young urban Indonesian audiences position themselves on a linear scale of progress from modern enlightened consumer through to uneducated masses, using the example of the widely maligned Indonesian horror genre. I applied theories of taste, fandom, and anti-fandom, but also critically assessed the explanatory power of such theories, as a way of reflecting on the limits of transferring cultural studies theories into different contexts. I highlighted the central importance of historical legacies and official state discourses around '*film nasional*' in shaping contemporary consumer attitudes in Indonesia. These discourses remain powerful, but not completely unchallenged, and I explored the internal contradictions, hyperobedience, and transgressions apparent in audience discourses. At its heart, Chapter 4 aimed to demonstrate that everyday conversations can be an important site of both reproducing and subtly subverting dominant narratives of progress.

Finally, Chapter 5 closely analysed selected contemporary Indonesian novels. I proposed that detailed textual analysis can offer important insights into competing representations of ideal modern citizens and progress stories. With reference to literary theories around dominance, resistance, and co-optation, I traced how certain master narratives of progress have been challenged in fictional representations of region, gender, and history. On the other hand, despite these apparent challenges, many dominant stereotypes of regional development, ideal gender roles, and linear history have simultaneously been strengthened or reinforced. I highlighted particularly resilient discourses around rural backwardness, hierarchies between rural

and urban communities, hierarchies between men and women within normative heterosexual family structures, disempowering representations of female beauty, and idealised apoliticism in stories around the anti-communist mass killings. I drew on intersectionality theory to understand why some dominant representations can be so difficult to challenge. My case study of regional mythology, female sexuality, and histories of violence as central narrative themes in several fictional works revealed the deep connections between these sites, and the pervasive resilience of the progress narrative in co-opting apparent challenges to its central logic. Chapter 5 drew together several strands of my argument throughout this thesis, and offered detailed insights from post-reform Indonesian fiction.

Throughout these chapters, case studies, sites and approaches, I have repeatedly revealed the long shadows cast by various historical legacies and dominant ideologies. These include, but are not limited to, colonial progress frameworks, New Order cultural policy, and global developmentalist discourse. The narrative of progress that regularly emerges is difficult to ignore, but is also difficult to engage with in an effective way. For instance, in scholarly accounts, the persistence of developmentalist discourses is sometimes overlooked because our own frames are still so influenced by dominant 'common sense' ideas around progress and 'modernity,' which mean it is often taken for granted that of course 'progress' is a good thing. However, by examining how narratives of progress are deeply entwined with inequalities, hierarchies, and stereotypes, we can begin to see the specific impacts such a narrative has on everyday outlooks and social relations. In Indonesia, some of these concrete impacts include religious protests and censorships, inequalities and discrimination based on gender and region, as well as continued marginalisation of victims of state violence and their descendants. I propose that a more nuanced understanding of the baggage and legacies of current ideas around progress can lead to more diverse and inclusive understandings of progress. In this way, my thesis contributes to broader debates around inclusive and sustainable 'development.'

In this thesis, I have offered an alternative cultural studies approach to engaging with persistent problems of developmentalism, by examining how developmentalist ideologies permeate popular culture. Critical post-development scholars are often centrally concerned with questions of economy and political structures, and how

development ideologies permeate such structures. I have proposed that one way in which these ideologies gain power is through their circulation within popular narratives. Everyday popular culture is where 'common sense' ideas about the world tend to emerge and circulate. The popular is also a highly instructive terrain to trace the meeting and intermingling of dominant and oppositional cultural representations, and complex processes of hegemony, resistance, and co-optation.[620] In this thesis, I have closely examined such processes and demonstrated how certain understandings of 'development' and 'modernity' have attained dominance in and around Indonesian film and fiction, but never in a completely unchallenged way. Popular culture has been a particularly useful site for addressing everyday stories of progress, because the 'popular' occupies a productively ambiguous position between the 'traditions' of folk culture and the 'modernity' of high culture. Especially in postcolonial contexts such as Indonesia, popular culture is a site of anxiety around hybridity, foreign influence and the correct or incorrect adoption of 'modernity,' and this is another reason why a cultural studies approach has been so illuminating. Ultimately, popular cultural analysis offers a highly useful alternative entry point into some of the central concerns of critical development studies, and there is extensive scope for further research in this area.

While my cultural studies approach has been productive and insightful in many ways, it is important to acknowledge that, like much scholarly enquiry, the very field of cultural studies research is structured around certain ideas of progress. Cultural studies scholars often display an idealistic, libertarian, world-changing, politically transformative attitude – indeed, this field of research is self-defined as 'progressive' in outlook. According to Lawrence Grossberg: 'for cultural studies, the beginning of all political struggles must be knowledge about where we are, how we got here, and where we are going,' for only then 'can we begin to ask whether there are other possible futures' and how we can get to these futures 'in fundamentally democratic ways.'[621] He goes on to argue that 'one cannot choose not to change the world, for that choice is actually a choice to leave unexamined and unchallenged the existing relations of power – certainly a political choice.'[622] While this passion is one of the

[620] Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'."; Bennett, "The Politics of the 'Popular' and Popular Culture."
[621] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 94.
[622] Ibid., 95.

great strengths of cultural studies research, which seeks to challenge entrenched structures of power, the dominant cultural studies tone of political progressiveness reveals that progress narratives are just as central to this field of scholarly research as they are to the other kinds of stories I have examined in this thesis. There are very real limits to the possibility of speaking from outside narratives of progress, and I do not claim a privileged neutral position outside such narratives. However, cultural studies' focus on change, complexity, multiplicity, and the contingency of the present allows for high levels of nuance and self-reflexivity. What I have demonstrated with this thesis, is that despite the pervasiveness of progress narratives within cultural studies research, a cultural studies approach can still be highly useful in interrogating power structures, including the very progress narratives that the field itself reproduces.

One way in which I have sought to interrogate power structures is by carefully examining the intersections between popular cultural representations of different sites of contestation. I have proposed that such an endeavour can reveal much more about contemporary realities than reference to the amorphous forces of 'modernity,' which is a central keyword in dominant stories of progress, but also a highly unstable and iridescent container concept. Inspired by intersectionality theory's attempts to understand the multidimensional aspects of systemic injustice, I have prioritised an examination of intersections in this thesis – as well as using the theory as an analytic approach to textual analysis in Chapter 5, intersectionality has structured my approach on several additional levels.[623] In the concrete case studies, I explored intersections between different sites of contestation, and between powerful narratives of progress, morality, gender and nationhood. On a methodological level, I structured the research and writing of this thesis at the crossroads between theory, context, audience, and text, in order to offer a comprehensive sense of the Indonesian mediascape as a kind of ecology or environment. Finally, on a wider theoretical level, I have joined important scholarly conversations at the intersection between cultural studies and area studies.

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated the challenges and opportunities of working at the intersections of Asia studies and cultural studies. I have pointed to

[623] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color."

some of the limits of practicing Euro-American cultural studies in transnational contexts, and demonstrated ways in which specific situations and contexts within Indonesia can be used to intervene in global and regional cultural studies conversations. Religion is a significant blind-spot in much cultural studies research, and this is therefore a key area where specific area studies in places like Indonesia can be highly illuminating. While much classic cultural studies research tends to characterise religion and morality as conservative and antithetical to 'progressive' youth or feminist movements, Indonesia's popular piety culture, which links Islam with fun and fashion, significantly complicates such a view.[624] I have proposed that religion and morality need to be taken seriously, not as a strange exception, but as an everyday lived reality and source of identity for millions of people worldwide. This is an important area where 'intimacies' between area studies and cultural studies can be productive and enlightening.[625] Many of my case studies also reinforce how, conversely – despite persistent blind-spots around issues like religion – cultural studies approaches can fruitfully intervene in analysis of contemporary Indonesian realities. I have found cultural studies' commitment to critical reflexivity and nuanced theorising around the nature of production, consumption, and textuality highly useful in capturing the complexity of the contemporary Indonesian mediascape, and in tracing the ideological power structures at work within it. As noted in Chapter 1, cultural studies and area studies need each other, and I have fully embraced the chance to join a small but growing community working in the productive space between these two fields of study.

In the opening chapter, I introduced Mimi White and James Schwoch's visual representation of cultural studies methodologies and theoretical approaches occupying a kind of matrix or spreadsheet.[626] Such a matrix has provided opportunities to explore intersections between different themes and approaches, and activate the relevant cells that are best suited to the specifics of a particular case study. This image is also useful for envisaging future projects, which can examine many other cells and intersections of the matrix, covering different clusters of forces, different sites of contestation, different media technologies, different genres of

[624] Baulch and Millie, "Introduction: Studying Indonesian Media Worlds at the Intersection of Area and Cultural Studies."
[625] Heryanto, "The Intimacies of Cultural and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia."
[626] White and Schwoch, *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*.

storytelling, and different points of conjunction between these. Given limitations of scope, I have restricted my focus in this thesis to the 'spreadsheet columns' of film and literature, but there are many other forms of popular culture through which similar questions can be examined. Music, performance, art, radio, fashion, and television are all highly important media types, with varied genre conventions, authoritative connotations, and audience behaviours. These forms are each worthy of future studies in their own right, and such studies would undoubtedly add further depth, and provide subtly different answers to my central research questions about where, how, and why certain narratives of progress attain dominance, or are challenged. My project has zoomed in on several key formations in the post-reform Indonesian mediascape, including: the logics of self-help and censorship; tropes of inspiration, upward mobility, and Islamic modernity; audience othering of the Indonesian horror genre; as well as fictional intersections of gender, violence, and mythology. There is always scope for more detailed analysis of any one of these conjunctions. In my quest to map out an inclusive ecological system of the Indonesian mediascape, I have necessarily excluded some of the more extended and lengthy analyses of texts, audience discussions, and media debates that I conducted during the course of my research. I hope to return in more detail to these in future projects, as well as investigating how dominant narratives of progress and 'development' serve to structure and limit discussions of other important issues in contemporary Indonesia, including issues around sustainability and environmental degradation, which will no doubt become increasingly important during the twenty-first century. The strength of the matrix or spreadsheet metaphor is that it is not bounded, and therefore gives a tangible sense of being an ongoing intellectual project, which can take exciting and sometimes unexpected directions. Ultimately, continued scholarly work at different spaces and cells in this spreadsheet can help contribute to building a comprehensive ecology of the Indonesian mediascape.[627] This needs to be a collaborative and continued effort by scholars working across a diverse range of disciplines, both within and beyond the fields we have typically designated 'Indonesian studies' and 'cultural studies.'

[627] Jurriëns, "A Call for Media Ecology: The Study of Indonesian Popular Culture Revisited," 215.

This thesis is directed towards cultural studies, Indonesian studies, and critical development studies, but has broader interest and implications for many areas of the humanities and social sciences in general, given the deep influence of stories of progress and keywords like 'modernity' and 'development' across so many disciplines of knowledge production. I have highlighted how vital it is to maintain constant vigilance about the underlying assumptions of such keywords, and to engage in continued critiques of the hidden power relations and inequalities underpinning the stories we tell about progress and social change. As a study of stories, this thesis has revealed the pervasive power of stories, but has also acknowledged limits in scholarly storytelling: there can never be a perfect, complete, or finished story, which is why it is important to constantly reflect on how our narrative frameworks can restrict our ability to effectively analyse complex realities.[628] My own account has sought to engage critically with the idea of 'progress' as a narrative framework across several different levels of storytelling in the context of post-reform Indonesia, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of both the pervasiveness and internal contradictions of this narrative framework. I hope that such an understanding can prompt broad reflections on representational inequalities, and lay the groundwork for future projects that continue to question how and why particular versions of 'modernity,' 'development,' and progress come to shape and limit the stories we tell.

[628] Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 98, 118.

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