# ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:          The Maze of Gaze:
The Color of Beauty in Transnational Indonesia

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What are the effects of transnational circulations of people, objects, and ideas on our understanding of skin color, as it intersects with and complicates other categories of identity such as race, gender, nationality, and sexuality, in a transnational context? This dissertation addresses this question by providing evidence for the ways in which meanings of skin color, as it intersects with race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, are constructed transnationally through people, objects, and ideas that travel across national boundaries from pre- to postcolonial Indonesia.

This dissertation uses "beauty" as an organizing trope to limit its analysis, ensuring analytical depth within each chapter. This analytical depth is further ensured by choosing specific sites of analysis to highlight particular historical periods and countries from which specific people, objects, and ideas travel. The sites I examine include Old Javanese adaptations of Indian epics (to understand the workings of "color" in precolonial times); beauty product advertisements that functioned as propaganda for Dutch and Japanese colonialism; skin-whitening ads published after 1998 in the Indonesian edition of American women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*; and an interpretive reading of the Buru Tetralogy novels (*Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa, Jejak*

*Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*) by Indonesia's best known author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Interviews with Indonesian women are also integrated in this dissertation.

This dissertation aims to help us understand the semiotics of skin color: 1) as a transnational construction; 2) as a signifier for constructing distinctions and justifying gender discrimination; 3) as it is signified *by* (rather than a signifier *for*) race, gender, sexuality, and nation; 4) as a site where women articulate their resistance to or complicity with dominant racial, color, and gender ideology; and 5) as a "boundary object" that perpetuates racial and gender hierarchy in a global context.

# THE MAZE OF GAZE:
# THE COLOR OF BEAUTY IN TRANSNATIONAL INDONESIA

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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This dissertation is dedicated to:

my daughter, who teaches me how to love

my mother, who teaches me how to let go and move on, and

my late grandmother, who taught me how to live and fight for what we love

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(m)any meaningful ways. I value her friendship for it is one of the anchors that holds my universe in its place.

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My thanks also goes to the librarians at Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia (The National Library of Indonesia) in Jakarta, Indonesia, and librarians and scholars, especially Dr. Henk Schulte Nordholt, at KITLV in Leiden, the Netherlands.  They have helped me locate and suggested many invaluable sources for my research.  Certainly, this dissertation could never be "finished" had Dr. M. Diederich not transformed the way I approach my work and my life into something more manageable and enjoyable.  His life-changing advice made it clear to me that to complete my dissertation I'd need to concentrate on my present needs and let go of unnecessary excess both in my writing and in the process of writing itself.  "Thank you" is an underrated expression that fails to capture my tremendous gratitude for the amazing ways in which his wit and wisdom have nurtured my perseverance during the final, most critical, stage of my dissertation.

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Source: http://www.map-of-asia.us/images/map-of-asia.gif

## Chapter 1

## Introduction

What are the effects of transnational circulations of people, objects, and ideas on our understanding of skin color, as it intersects with and complicates other categories of identity such as race, gender, nationality, and sexuality, in a transnational context? This is one of three questions that I am grappling with in this dissertation. It is a question that stems from my encountering theories of race, gender, skin color, and sexuality in U.S. university classrooms during my adulthood. However, it is also a question that I have been grappling with for a longer time, although at a much less theoretically sophisticated level, since I began to recognize how others "read" my body as gendered and racialized during my experiences of traveling abroad.

I was born and raised in Indonesia and came to the United States in 1999 to do my M.A. and Ph.D degrees. Going to the United States at that time, however, was not my first experience traveling abroad. During my teenage years, I had visited various countries including Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Monaco, Singapore, Malaysia, and even the United States three years earlier. While staying in these places (usually for less than a month), I had begun to be aware of my and others' social locations. For example, before I visited Australia during sixth grade, I had naively believed that "Indonesian" people were, as the textbooks I memorized so well in school suggested, known and embraced the world over for their hospitality and "high" culture. It surprised (and embarrassed) me that many people I talked to in Australia at that time did not know much about Indonesia let alone would embrace its people. I also remember that prior to going to Australia

people had been telling me how clean the country was, that people there could wear their shoes in bed! (They told me this as we watched some characters in a television show wearing their shoes in bed.) Hence, when my uncle, whose family I was staying with in Australia, suggested that I take a nap after having just arrived from Indonesia, I remember asking him with a low-tone of voice, "do I wear my shoes?" Of course I need not dwell on these early experiences of traveling abroad beyond pointing out that Australia/ns (even when the television show we were watching were Americans) were represented as "clean" while "we" were not; and that travels almost always reveal some forms of disjuncture between "representation" and "reality" and necessarily reshape our understanding of various issues.

As I traveled to more countries, I became increasingly aware of how we "read" others and were read as gendered and racialized across nations. My experiences of being followed by shopkeepers in Japan (a friend told me this was undoubtedly because I look Filipina who are gender- and racially stereotyped as shoplifters), of constantly being the "random" person whose luggage was checked at various airports, of having people raise their voices when speaking to me and even being yelled at ("fuck you") for, I thought, no apparent reason, of being told to stay away from blacks (racially stereotyped as "trouble") when my Indonesian friends caught me flirting with a black person in the U.S. context, cannot but make me realize the intricate ways people read each other's bodily characteristics and movements and attach specific meanings to them. In attempting to find explanations at that time, I remember looking at the mirror and wondering what exactly "they" saw in "me" that made them think about me in certain ways. The mirror, certainly, reflected images of my bodily presence, of my "Indonesianness," which at that

time, I had not been able to consider through the theoretical lens of skin color, race, gender, nationality, or sexuality.

It was my experience of living and studying in the United States since 1999 that made me aware of the ways in which our bodies are racialized and gendered differently in different contexts. In my case, I began to notice how my identity shifted from being a privileged Javanese ethnic woman in Indonesia to being an Indonesian and/or an Asian woman in the United States. In Indonesia, my being raised (and able to pass) as a middle-class Javanese[1] living in the capital city Jakarta (particularly during the Soeharto era) allowed me access to some (albeit limited) privileges, from getting quicker service in public spaces, being welcome in the neighborhood where we chose to live, to easier access to networks of people in high position (for they were usually Javanese, too). After living in the United States, however, I realized that this same body that I had been inhabiting was read, or "colored," differently in a U.S. context. In the United States, I became a woman of "color": not only did I lose the privilege of being Javanese in an Indonesian context, but I also had become a subordinated "person of color." I was, to borrow from sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "racialized" as the other. For example, I noticed that the person guarding the university library's entrance asked for my ID but did not ask the young white man and two white women who came before and after me. I also remember that even as my white friend was careful not to sit in front of me when the campus newspaper took a picture of both of us, the paper ended up publishing only her picture and not even mentioning my "difficult-to-pronounce" name in the article. I can also recall how people in predominantly white restaurants "looked" at me, the kind of look that made me want to hide or run, even though I was usually granted

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[1] It is only in my twenties that I learned that I have Chinese and Arab ancestors as well.

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my secret wish by being seated (or hidden?) in the back, near the restrooms or kitchen. Or, at times, they would deter me from going inside their fancy restaurants by saying that the full course menu is more than $100 per person (which I noticed was not mentioned to the people coming before us). After a year living in the United States, I experienced depression and began to avoid going to public spaces (even restaurants) dominated by whites.

At the same time, however, I also noticed that there were some similarities in how bodies in general were marked by and therefore treated differently because of their skin color (not necessarily race) across these two different nations. In the United States, I learned that dark-skinned African Americans were discriminated against even within the African American community because of their skin color. In Indonesia, dark-skinned people particularly, but not limited to people from Eastern Indonesia, were also discriminated against, or at the very least, had to bear the brunt of being the target of people's jokes. I remember, for example, when I was in the fifth grade, a teacher asked me to sit next to a very dark-skinned boy, whom students often made fun of, because nobody else would sit next to him. I also remember many other stories that began to resurface as I thought about the issue of skin color in Indonesia. In those moments (I call them my "a-ha" moments) of remembering, of making connections between the experiences I had while traveling abroad, living in Indonesia and the United States, and the readings on race, gender, and skin color in the U.S. context, I began to see the importance of thinking about skin color in a transnational context. Because it is only by making various connections within a transnational context, I argue, that one can begin to fully articulate the complexity of particular categories of identity such as skin color and

how it shapes people's everyday lives across nations.

Undeniably, these experiences piqued my intellectual curiosity and encouraged me to ponder the specific—and differing—ways encounters with others in a transnational context shape and reshape our understanding of various categories of identity.  Here, I found myself drawn to what anthropologist James Clifford called "thinking historically," "a process of locating oneself in space and time," and his further insistence that "a location…is an itinerary rather than a bounded site—a series of encounters and translations" (11).  Thus, I determined to explore how this so-called itinerary reshapes our understanding of various categories of identity.  In my dissertation, this translates into taking Indonesia's history of Indian, Chinese, and Arab migrations, Dutch and Japanese colonization, and post-Cold War U.S. "cultural imperialism" as a context that allows us to understand how the meanings of skin color, as it intersects with race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, are constructed transnationally, through "a series of encounters and translations."

This way of seeing and thinking that takes into account "encounters and translations," considers a location as an "itinerary rather than a bounded site," and renders "travel" across these locations important is what I call "the maze of gaze."  Here, I use the maze metaphor because I find the structure of the maze useful.  In this maze of gaze, "historical period" acts as the outer metaphoric wall and "countries" the metaphoric walls existing inside the maze; both define the boundaries and shapes of this maze of gaze.  Within this metaphor, "categories of identity" figure as the metaphoric "passage," the walkway that is bounded by these walls: their meanings are therefore shaped by these historical and geographical locations.  Moreover, because categories of identity constitute

the walkway of this maze of gaze, they necessarily exist in continuum and in relation to categories of identity in other places. That some walkways would lead to a dead-end suggests that categories of identity may at times seem to be alienated or disconnected from other geographical locations. Although they seem to be disconnected, they must, in some ways and simultaneously, be related to categories of identity in other locations. No space in the maze is ever totally disconnected from other spaces.

Figuring as the "passage," these categories of identity are necessarily "traveling" objects. That is, when people travel through this maze of gaze, their traveling bodies inevitably encounter, help carry, "move around," and transform the meanings of categories of identity across this maze of gaze. It even seems that these categories of identity are necessary for these travelers to help them understand their own sense of self or their social location. As traveling objects, the meanings of these categories of identity cannot be understood simply within a fragmented space (a particular country at a specific historical period). As these categories of identity travel, they acquire new meanings in new places, yet, these new meanings can not be totally detached from the old meanings because they must, in some ways, be understandable in both the old and new locations.[2] Hence the meanings of these categories of identity, I argue, lie at the threshold between the maze and its exit doors, after one has almost completed her or his travel through this maze. That is, as we metaphorically walk through (most, even if not all, parts of) this maze and find the exit door, our gaze is transformed.

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[2] As such, categories of identity can be considered "boundary objects." Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star define "boundary objects" as objects that "both inhabit several communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them" (297). Thus, as boundary objects, the meanings of categories of identity are "both plastic enough to adapt to local needs […], yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (297).

What needs to be understood in employing this maze of gaze as a way of seeing is that taken as a whole, the maze exposes the existence of fragmented or "local" spaces: a gaze within a maze is always "situated," "limited," and "partial" (Haraway). That is, when we stand in a particular space, the walls of the maze necessarily limit our vision and we therefore cannot see what lies beyond these walls. Implicit with this maze of gaze metaphor, therefore, is the emphasis on and importance of historical and geographical specificity. Simultaneously, as we travel throughout this maze before we find the exit doors, we "collect" various gazes that would allow us to make connections among these fragmented spaces, see how "things" (i.e., categories of identity) travel to other places and are related to each other, and have a better understanding of how these fragmented local spaces fit in and support the larger structure of the maze. The maze also helps us understand the complicated nature of travel that would move us beyond analyzing travel only between two countries (departure and destination countries), prevalent in transnational studies.[3] That is, the maze allows us to think of travel as neither linear nor reciprocal (from A to B and B to A), but rather, as a "scattered" and "flexible" itinerary that is full of twists and turns (from A to B to C to B and E to D to B, etc). Most importantly, this maze metaphor suggests that we can make sense of the meanings of these "things" situated in specific locales *only* when we put them in conversations with each other.

<u>Research Questions, Methods and Methodology</u>

The three central questions of my dissertation are:

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[3] See, for example, dissertations such as Micol Seigel's "The Point of Comparison: Transnational Racial Construction, Brazil and the United States, 1918-1933" and Naheed Islam's "The Space between Black and White: Coloring Bangladeshi Immigrants within the Racial Kaleidoscope of Los Angeles."

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1) What are the effects of transnational circulations of and/or encounters with people and objects[4] from other geographical locations on our understanding of skin color as it intersects with other categories of identity such as race, gender, nationality, and sexuality in past and present Indonesia;

2) why does "beauty" (usually signified by light skin color) matter in Indonesia; and

3) why do Indonesian women practice skin-whitening routines in their lives?

These questions, concerned with the intersection of categories of identity at macro and micro levels in a historically specific transnational context, are indicative of an interdisciplinary location that allows such questions to be asked in the first place. Sally Kitch argues, "integrative interdisciplinary scholarship might use research results of methodologies of several traditional disciplines to articulate new problems and questions that those disciplines alone are unable to explore. […] Interdisciplinary work can also reveal structural features of the world or experience that only an integrative process can expose" (440). Hence, an interdisciplinary approach such as this dissertation necessarily involves an "integrative process," integrating and pulling together (and in some ways transforming for each of the discrete chapters) various methods from differing disciplinary locations.

In thinking about which methods to incorporate, I constantly referred to Donna Haraway's article, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," where she asks, "How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual

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[4] I use "object" here to include both tangible materials, such as advertisements and magazines, and intangible materials, such as ideas, memories, and theories.

field?" (587).  These questions provided me with an entry point for thinking about how best to approach my research questions.  That is, I constantly asked myself, what research methods would allow me to see most of what I needed to see?  Simultaneously, I also made sure that the methods I chose reflected my feminist epistemological stance (Naples 3).  Hence, as Haraway pointed out, "vision" is always partial and limited and therefore knowledge needs always to be situated; this forced me to think about what was at stake, particularly for Indonesian women, in my making some things *visible* and not others.  Particularly because I recognize that this dissertation participates in crafting a particular way of seeing women from Indonesia, I am careful to navigate and choose a variety of methods that allow readers to see a more holistic representation of Indonesian women from various historical periods and locations.  Here, I provide only a glimpse of the methods I employ in this dissertation.  I discuss these methods in more depth in the analytical chapters.

I begin my story of transnational construction of skin color in Indonesia by focusing on circulations of people and objects from India (and to some extent China and Arabia) in the tenth- to fourteenth-century period, prior to European arrival in the sixteenth century.  This choice reflects my attempt to refrain from (re)producing a "Eurocentric" text in which the beginning of history is marked by (encounters with) Western/colonial history (Shohat and Stam *Unthinking*).  Unfortunately, materials from and about this particular period are scarce.  There are, however, limited numbers of precolonial Old Javanese *kakawin* (poems) that have been translated into modern Indonesian and English.  In reading these texts to understand the meanings of skin color in signifying an ideal of beauty during this period, I employ a textual analysis method.

For the colonial and postcolonial period, I undertook archival research and made use of excellent collections of Indonesian materials available in three countries: the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. in the United States, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (the National Archive of the Republic of Indonesia), and Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia (the National Library of Indonesia) in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the KITLV library in Leiden, the Netherlands. In gathering data particularly for the colonial period, I was well aware that colonial archives are cultural artifacts, "built on institutional structures that erased certain kinds of knowledge, secreted some, and valorized others" (Cooper and Stoler 17). In navigating this issue, I incorporated "non-traditional" historical materials as well as "other/non-institutional" sources. First, I went beyond researching only for "traditional" historical data by including a wide-range of materials including memoirs, leaflets, brochures, women's magazines, newspapers, advertisements, photographs, in addition to more traditional historical data and other secondary sources. In using these materials for different purposes in different chapters, I employed different methods. For example, although I read various beauty product advertisements in chapter three from a historical perspective, charting *when* particular advertisements appear in order to understand *why* they appeared at particular moments in history, I incorporated a semiotic analysis (Jhally *Social* 150) in chapter four to decode the meanings of various "signs," specifically in whitening advertisements.

Second, I also incorporated Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru tetralogy novels to allow "other" or non-institutional voices to be heard. His novels are particularly apt for my work not only because he is Indonesia's best-known and most-celebrated (male) author, but also because "his fiction preserves an archive of Indonesian history against

the official amnesia of" Soeharto's repressive regime (1966-1998) (GoGwilt "Pramoedya's" 3). Including fictional works that attempt to disrupt and complement the dominant history of Indonesia allows me to tell a more holistic history of Indonesia. Additionally, his novels are well-chosen for this dissertation because they allow me to address the second question of this dissertation: why beauty matters in postcolonial Indonesia. They also lend themselves as useful sites of analysis because they reflect the experiences and are products of an author who had traveled across national borders. This allows me to chart how "travel" figures in his writings and in turn shapes our understanding of various categories of identity as transnational constructions. In critically reading these novels for these purposes, I find a close textual analysis most appropriate.

The third question, why Indonesian women practice skin-whitening routines in their lives, necessitated that I interview Indonesian women. Certainly, one of the best methods to interrogate the everyday life attitudes, as media scholar Liesbet van Zoonen argues, is in-depth interviewing (135). I therefore conducted in-depth interviews mostly in Indonesia (Jakarta and Balikpapan) and to a limited extent in the United States. In addition to interviewing forty-six Indonesian women, gathered from random and snow-ball methods, I posed the interview questions to myself. I then incorporated and located my own story within their stories, exposing my complicity and struggle in this project. This will hopefully make visible the values, desires, and interests of the researcher that otherwise would have appeared as the "anonymous voice of authority" (Reinharz 9).

In exploring these questions, this dissertation aims to help us understand skin color: 1) as a transnational construction; 2) as a signifier for constructing distinctions and

justifying gender discrimination; 3) as it is signified *by* (rather than *for*) race, gender, sexuality, and nation; 4) as a site where women articulate their resistance to or complicity with dominant racial, color, and gender ideology; and 5) as a "boundary object" that perpetuates racial and gender hierarchy in a global context.

## Context: Geographies of Power

Indonesia, located in the southeast of Asia with neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, East Timor, New Guinea, and Australia, is a modern and postcolonial invention. It was established as a nation-state only after its independence in 1945. Prior to that, it was colonized by the Dutch who ruled over various kingdoms, scattered throughout this vast archipelago that consists of 17,508 islands (6,000 inhabited). Hence, the geographical boundaries of today's Indonesia are mostly a legacy of Dutch colonialism (Anderson 120). Dutch colonialism also helps explain, as Southeast Asian specialist Benedict Anderson pointed out, why Indonesians of Sumatran ethnicity would consider Malaysia's Malays, with whom they share language, religion, and ethnicity, "foreigners," yet consider the Ambonese in Eastern Indonesia, with whom they share no such commonalities, as fellow Indonesians, belonging to the same "imagined community." This is so simply because they were colonized by the same colonizer (Anderson 120-1). Even Indonesia's insistence on "integrating" Irian or West Papua into Indonesia was due partly to the fact that Irian was once a Dutch colony and thus became part of the Indonesian imaginary. In contrast, East Timor, an island that was once colonized by the Portuguese but was then "occupied" by Indonesia in 1975, is now an independent country.

Even the word itself, Indonesia, is a European invention. It was only in 1850, in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, that its co-editor, James Richardson Logan, created the name "Indonesia" (Anshory), selecting from one of the two names—"Indunesia" (Indian artichpelago) and "Malayunesia" (Malay archipelago)--that his co-editor, George Samuel Windsor Earl, had proposed in an earlier article in the same journal (Anshory). Logan chose Indunesia but changed the letter *u* to *o* to make it sound better. Then, because he persistently used the word Indonesia in his publications, the word became more and more popular. In 1884, Djerman Bastian used "Indonesia" to title a book he wrote about the archipelago (Stoddard 278). And by 1913, when one of Indonesia's twentieth-century nationalist heroes and founder of *Indonesische Pers-bureau*, Ki Hajar Dewantara, began to use the word "Indonesia" in his newspaper to refer to this geographical location, it was evident that the name had taken hold (Anshory).

The national language of Indonesia is Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*).[5] It has been acknowledged as the national language since 1928; however, it was only in 1942 with the beginning of Japanese Occupation that Indonesian achieved the "de facto status of official language"; and in 1945, following the country's independence, Indonesian officially became the country's national language (Sheddon 9). Indonesian is a language that was derived from "high" or "formal" Malay.[6] The "low" form of Malay[7] was spoken, at least until the early-twentieth century, alongside approximately 550 dialects

[5] Indonesian is touted as one of the "simplest languages in the world," not having any "tenses, grammatical gender, tones, or articles, and its few plurals are made by simply repeating the word;" it does not even have the "status markers present in the Javanese" language (Mirpuri 86).
[6] Malay is a language that was first circulated through trade routes (Sheddon 7-9); it is still spoken in Malaysia, albeit in different forms (due to different colonial histories in these two countries), evidencing its transnational circulations (Sheddon 11). Moreover, the presence of Arabs in the archipelago also imprinted its influence in Malay. Arabic constitutes approximately fifteen percent of Malay vocabularies (J. Taylor *Indonesia* 105-6).
[7] This was a common language used in the sixth- to twelfth-century Sriwijayan (Sumatra) empire (Rafferty 247).

(Sheddon 5) including the most-widely spoken dialect, Javanese, and Chinese. Certainly, circulations of people and objects from various places influenced the rich and shifting languages spoken in Indonesia. For example, the Old Javanese language, or *Kawi* (written prior to the fifteenth century), was a dominant language among the literati and people of the royal courts prior to European colonization (Phalgunadi *Bhismaparva* 5). The Dutch[8] and Portuguese then brought their languages to the archipelago in the sixteenth century adding to the variety of languages already spoken there.

Indonesia is a big country both in terms of its size (crossing three time zones)[9] and its population (it is the fourth most populous country in the world with an estimate 220 million people in 2005). The distribution of these people throughout its thousand islands, however, is unevenly balanced. More than half of the population, about 130 million people, live on the island of Java. The rest are spread out across Sumatra (46 million), Sulawesi (15 million), and Kalimantan (12 million); only 16 million live on the other (approximately 6,000) islands. That people tend to live in Java is revealing of how Java had been, even prior to the colonial period, the center of power and capital in the archipelago. During the Dutch colonial period, Java's economy became unquestionably the most developed; in contrast, in some other parts of Indonesia, especially Eastern Indonesia, the economy can best be described as a "vacuum" (Dick 24). Java-centric politics continues to the present-day, even after a policy of decentralization, implemented in 1999, began to gradually empower the other islands.

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[8] In the 1920s-1930s, it was Dutch, Malay and local dialects that were the languages of debate (Sutherland 107).
[9] Indonesia has three time zones: Indonesia Bagian Barat (Western Indonesia), Indonesia Bagian Tengah (Central Indonesia), and Indonesia Bagian Timur (Eastern Indonesia). Hence, "Western Indonesia" refers to islands located within the first time zone such as Java and Sumatra.

A long history of inequality that has privileged the islands within the western part of Indonesia has resulted in a greater degree of economic development compared to its middle and eastern counterparts. Furthermore, because some parts of Eastern Indonesia, such as West Papua, are rich in natural resources, people in this region had become "victim[s] of Indonesian imperial expansion, […] subjected to massive commercial exploitation. […] West Papua was the first country to fall victim to Jakarta's imperial ambitions" (Simons 90). It is important to keep in mind that in Indonesia "region" complicates our understanding of ethnicity, skin color, religion, and class. Some of the most exploited people in Indonesia are the inhabitants of the eastern Indonesian region: they are also poor, dark-skinned, non-Javanese, and non-Muslim—the categories of identity that matter in Indonesia.

## Difference in the Indonesian Context

Beyond region, other markers of distinction figure significantly in this dissertation. Here, I will only discuss four categories, the meanings of which are certainly shaped by transnational circulations of people and ideas to Indonesia: (1) race, skin color, and ethnicity, (2) class and status, (3) religion, and (4) gender. It is important to remember, however, that although I discuss these markers of distinction as four different categories, they necessarily overlap and intersect with each other. For example, religion is inextricably intertwined with race and ethnicity: in present-day Indonesia, Christian is often used as a euphemism for Chinese, and assaults on churches can be seen as anti-Chinese manifestations (Eliraz 35). Nonetheless, for organizational and clarity purposes, I discuss them in four separate categories.

*1. Race, Skin Color, and Ethnicity*

There are approximately 300 ethnic groups in today's Indonesia. The dominant ethnicity of almost half of the population is Javanese (Central and Eastern Javanese). The second largest ethnic population in Indonesia (14 percent) is Sundanese (Western Javanese). In addition to these ethnic groups, there are various other ethnic and racial groups including Makasar (South Sulawesi), Manado[10] (North Sulawesi), Padang (Western Sumatran), Batak (North Sumatran), Palembang (South Sumatran), Banjar (Kalimantan), Ambon (the Moluccas), and Irian (Western New Guinea). There are also people with Arab, African, Chinese,[11] European, Indian, and Malay ancestry living in Indonesia. However, due to lack of official statistics based on race and ethnicity,[12] there are no accurate data on the racial make up of today's Indonesia.[13]

Some theorists, such as the Sarasin brothers, suggest that the "original" inhabitants of Indonesia, possibly about 30-40,000 years ago, were dark-skinned people (Vlekke 8; Mirpuri 19), and that migrations of people from various locations to the archipelago have contributed to the mixture of people with diverse backgrounds in today's Indonesia (Mirpuri 54). Historian Jean Gelman Taylor, however, has suggested

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[10] Manadoans were commonly referred to as Minahasa, which only had meaning as an ethnicity in the nineteenth century. It referred to the Christian community living in North Sulawesi (Leirissa 266).

[11] Although it is estimated that Chinese people constitute 3-4 percent of the Indonesian population (Eliraz 35), the actual number is probably higher because many Chinese disavow that identity due to discrimination.

[12] Censuses taken after 1930 no longer included ethnicity for fear of posing threats to national integration (Tomagola 23).

[13] The race-based statistics of foreigners living in Indonesia is also not available. Data from Indonesia's Human Resource Ministry *Departemen Tenaga Kerja* suggested that in 2005, there were 51,000 foreign workers in Indonesia, over half of them working in the capital city Jakarta and cities across Java. This number, however, did not reflect the number of family members coming with them or undocumented foreigners. Based on 2001 data published by the *Jakarta Post*, there were approximately 3 million foreigners living in Indonesia. http://www.expat.or.id/info/howmanyexpatsinindonesia.html

that "variations observable among Indonesians today are not the result of separate migrations by different races. They are the product of a long, slow expansion within the archipelago of one ethnolinguistic group whose members adapted to various locales, mixed with existing communities, and responded in different ways and times to the influences of external civilizations. Today's large populations of the archipelago share a common origin in southern China and speak a great variety of languages in the Austronesian family" (*Indonesia* 5-7).

Early contacts between Chinese (mostly merchants) and people in Southeast Asia likely began in the early Han period, around the third century CE or possibly earlier (Irsyam; Rafferty 247), when Chinese merchants traveling by sea began to stop in the archipelago on their way to and from India (Zoetmulder *Kalangwan* 5). Although some Chinese migrants had settled in Sriwijaya (a kingdom located in Sumatra) at the end of the seventh century, historical evidence shows us that the first permanent settlement of Chinese traders on the north coast of Java dates to the thirteenth century (Qurtuby 73; Rafferty 247). The number of Chinese settling in Java grew larger at the end of thirteenth century when the defeated armies of Khubilai Khan settled there as well (Rafferty 247-50). In the fifteenth century some Chinese began to settle in Java and interchanges between Java and China became more frequent (Rafferty 250; Qurtuby 37). It wasn't until the nineteenth century, however, that large-scale migration from China (mostly Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, and Teochiu speakers coming from Fujian and Guangdong provinces of Southern China) occurred (Sidel 19-20). This large scale of migration may be related to the fact that the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) had destroyed the economy in those provinces, forcing some people to migrate (Irsyam).

In addition to the Chinese, people from India reshaped the cultural terrain of the

archipelago. This influence, according to some scholars, may have existed since the first

century CE or perhaps even earlier, although its prominent influence can be seen only

from the ninth century (Coedes 18-9; Djamaris 16; Sarkar *Some Contribution* 2-3, 20).

Various reasons, from the development of passenger ships and the development of

Buddhism to attaining gold and spices, may have led Indians to the archipelago (Coedes

20-1; Sarkar *Some Contribution* 4-5). It is generally thought that merchants and traders

in gold and spices were the first to develop ongoing contact with the islands (Phalgunadi

*Bhismaparva* 1-2; Dhoraisingam; Coedes 23); however, it was contacts with North Indian

Brahmins, the priestly caste, and in some cases with Ksatriya, the political ruler caste,

rather than the Waisya, the merchant caste, or lowest-caste Sudras, that brought Indian

culture to Indonesia (Coedes 23; Sarkar *Some Contribution* 21, 27; Vlekke 24-5; Taylor

44-5).[14] It was Brahmins, for example, who brought ideas about kingship to Java and

then occupied positions not only as priests but also as "court poets, ministers of state,

scribes, and record keepers" (Asher and Talbot 13). Scholars who argue that the Indian

influence in Indonesia is a result of "Brahmanization" rather than large-scale migration

from India point out that written evidence of Indian influence, particularly from the tenth

century, is in Sanskrit. They argue that because this language is an elite and not a

common language in India, it would have been impossible for commoners such as Indian

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[14] In discussing caste, however, it is important to first make the distinction between caste (*kasta*) and color (*varna/warna*). *Warna* (literal translation: color) in Hindu refers to categories based on the field of "work" that one chooses, such as in religion (Brahman), in politics (Ksatriya), in economy (Waisya) and in service (Sudra) (Dwipayana 118). It is therefore an "open system" where one who is born into a Brahman family can choose to be a merchant and hence *becomes* a Waisya. However, in studying Baliness society, Dwipayana argues that this warna system was manipulated to become a "closed" system. Instead of simply basing one's caste according to their work, it came to be based on ancestry (119). That is, if you are born into a Brahman family, you are automatically a Brahman.

merchants to have brought this language to Indonesia (Coedes 11-5; Zoetmulder

*Kalangwan* 8-9).

In addition to contacts with Brahmins, contacts with men of the Ksatriya caste, the ruling elite, also contributed to the Indianization of the archipelago. Kings, at least since the third century CE, bear Sanskrit names and are said to have some Indian origin or at least were Indianized (Coedes 25, 36). Indeed, these kings may have been Indians who migrated to the archipelago and founded their own small kingdoms. In other cases they may have been natives who became "Indianized" by visiting and learning from India and adopting Indian culture or marrying an Indian princess to justify their rule (Phalgunadi *Bhismaparva* 1-2; Coedes 24; Sarkar *Some Contribution* 36). Kings would sometimes also send their ambassadors to India who would then bring back Indian ideas and practices with them, complementing (however partially) the process of Indianization in the archipelago (Vlekke 24).

Another minority group in Indonesia is Arabs. There are several theories suggesting when Arabs might have first set foot on the archipelago. Some scholars use the dissemination of Islam as a point to theorize that Arabs had begun to migrate to the archipelago in the seventh century (Shahab 32). However, this forecloses the possibility that Arabs might have come into the archipelago prior to the coming of Islam[15] to seventh-century Arabia. What we do know is that during the twelfth century, there were a few Arabs who came directly from Arab lands and were recorded as living in the archipelago (Vlekke 52). In addition to these Arabs, there were also "culturally Indian

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[15] It also overlooks the idea that the spread of Islam in Indonesia may have been related to contacts with India, particularly Gujarat. For example, some scholars argue that some Islamic stories from Arab lands mostly came from India, specifically South India (Djamaris 109; Vlekke 52; Taylor 60; Yusuf 12). Other scholars credit Muslim Chinese traders for disseminating Islam broadly throughout the archipelago (Qurtuby 37).

Arabs"—Arabs who had settled in India before coming to Indonesia (Mandal 17). Large-scale migration from Hadramaut, a place in the southern Arabian peninsula where most Arabs in Indonesia had come from, however, began only in the nineteenth century (Shahab 36; Mandal 1, 13).

Another racial group that enriched the cultural and racial terrain in the archipelago was Europeans. When Europeans first arrived in the late-sixteenth century, various people including Abessynians, Ambonese, Arabs, Armenians, Bengali, Burmese, Bugis, Ceylonese, Chinese, Goans, Gujerati, Javanese, Macassarese, Malabarese, Malays, Persians, Sinhalese, Tamils, Timorese, and Vietnamese already lived there (Blussé 19; Taylor "Women" 249; Colombijn 44). These European migrants, as was the case with Chinese and Arab migrants, were mostly males. This is so particularly because when European women were first sent to the Dutch East Indies in 1620 to create a "Dutch settlement" (Locher-Scholten 265) they encountered various problems and diseases. Female migration was then discouraged if not prohibited, and European men were encouraged to keep concubines (*nyai*[16]) (Stoler *Carnal* 47). Getting free domestic and sexual service from Asian women and not having to support European family made it possible to keep the European officials' salary low (Stoler *Carnal* 48).

Children born from sexual unions between Dutch men and native women are called *Indo*. It was these Indo women who then became the most desirable marriage partners for European men in the colonial Indies (Taylor "Women as Meditators" 255). These Indo women, along with native concubines, often played the role of "mediators," introducing the language of Malay and creole Portuguese, which were commonly spoken

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[16] During the colonial period, people would address concubines as "nyai," followed by their name, i.e., in one of the Buru novels, Nyai Ontosoroh.

at that time, to their European partners (Taylor "Women as Meditators" 255; Locher-Scholten "Nyai" 266).  In some cases, however, particularly in the case of those *nyai* who came from relatively poorer Javanese families, such as most *nyai* in Deli (Sumatra), they may not have been able to function as mediators as fully as other *nyai* because they lacked the knowledge and cultural capital to begin with (Locher-Scholten "Nyai" 272-274).

Around the mid-nineteenth century, however, European women were allowed to migrate to the archipelago (Stoler *Carnal* 47).  Interestingly, around this same time (mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries), Chinese women also began to migrate to Southeast Asia (Sidel 23).[17]  Based on data from 1880, for example, there were 481 European, 620 Chinese, and 830 Arab women migrants for every 1000 male migrants coming from Europe, China, and Arab lands respectively (Riyanto 41).  By 1930, the number of European women migrants had increased significantly: for every 1000 European male migrants, there were 884 European women migrants (Riyanto 41).  The number for Chinese and Arab women migrants, however, did not change significantly: for every 1000 male migrants coming from China and Arab lands, there were 646 Chinese and 841 Arab women migrants (Riyanto 41).  With more European (and Chinese) women coming to the archipelago, concubinage began to be represented as less desirable and outdated (Stoler *Carnal* 48; Locher-Scholten *Women* 19).

In addition to race, skin color was an important marker of distinction in the Indies long before the Dutch colonial period.  As can be seen from various testimonies, poems, European and Chinese travel writings, skin color was used to provide (usually

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[17] These waves of migration around this time might perhaps be understood as a result of the fare reduction in transportation (Mulyana *Runtuhnya* 86).

stereotypical) descriptions of various people (Kumar 368-9, 379, 386; chapter 2). We often see, for example, in European testimonies throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dark-skinned natives in the Indies being stereotyped as "lazy," "ignorant," and "promiscuous" (Raben 271, 287).

During the colonial period, skin color certainly signified class status, with white-skinned Europeans occupying the highest status (Raben 285). For example, we read in one Indo woman's memoir that during her childhood in the colonial Indies, students and teachers valued highly white and fair-skinned European students at schools (Veur 71). Also, in the popular Indonesian cultural context prior to the 1990s, light-skinned Westerners and Chinese were most often represented as rich (Heryanto "Years" 159). In Jakarta, the prestigious Kemang suburbs were known as the area where Westerners and other rich foreign workers lived in (Vickers 194-195). Paradoxically, in colonial society, as obvious as skin color's importance was, historian Remco Raben has pointed out that "social segmentation did not entirely follow colour lines"; Europeans and "natives" at that time had the tendency to mix and intermarry each other (287). And in the postcolonial period, while Westerners are culturally looked up to because of their perceived "superior civilization, high technology and modernity," the Chinese are considered "culturally unattractive" (Heryanto "Years" 161). Although it is evident that in Indonesia race and ethnicity intersect with class and status, a long history of interracial relationships and, in the case of the Chinese, prejudice, complicates their meanings.

*2. Class and Status*

Political scientist John Sidel argued that the "matrix of class relations" in today's

Indonesia was shaped primarily during and after the colonial era (18).  He pointed out

that Dutch colonial policies produced a distinct ethnic Chinese capitalist class (19).  This

class, however, has been rendered a "pariah capitalist class," occupying an "outsider"

(ethnic) position in Indonesia (24, 27).  The corollary of such a pariah capitalist class

whose members did not have access to political or state power was the creation of a

"political class" whose members were recruited through educational and religious

institutions (36, 42).

During the colonial period, the political class was represented by *priyayi*

(Javanese bureaucrats and aristocrats)*.*  What is particularly interesting about *priyayi* is

that this is a concept that clearly shows the intersection of class, status, religion, and to

some extent ethnicity—Chinese were not constructed as *priyayi*.  Aristocratic and

bureaucratic *priyayi,* like *abangan*, were/are non-orthodox Muslims.  What sets *abangan*

apart from *priyayi* was their class position: *abangan* were Java's peasantry, "the *priyayi*

its gentry" (Geertz 229).

*Priyayi* often claimed that they were descendants of the "semi-mythical kings of

precolonial Java," "rulers of ancient Java," or "early Islamic Saints" (Geertz 229;

Sutherland 5), and bore aristocratic titles such as R.M. (Raden Mas) or, for a wife, R.A.

(Raden Ayu).  These *priyayi*, however, usually had *selir* (subsequent wives or mistresses

who were taken to live in the palace) who might include women of Chinese, Arab, or

Indo descent (Sutherland 21).

It is worthy of note that most of these *priyayi* were not "landed gentry" or "baronial landlords" (Geertz 229). Particularly under Dutch colonial rule, *priyayi* was often used to refer to "bureaucrats, clerks, and teachers—white-collar nobles" (Geertz 229). They were the ones benefiting from Dutch colonial education and working at Dutch companies (Geertz 236). *Priyayi* were therefore Western-educated Javanese with Dutch manners and values and usually spoke Dutch instead of Javanese (Geertz 236).[18] As such, they were "pro-government" and "pro-status quo" (Sutherland 28). Their roles were particularly significant during the *Tanam Paksa* (Cultivation System)[19] period, 1830-1870, in controlling the natives and collecting taxes on behalf of the Dutch colonial government (Riyanto 30).

*Priyayi* often had sumptuous lifestyles. Europeans in the Indies, at least in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, often modeled their "houses, food, clothes, language, wives and entertainments" after these *priyayi* (Sutherland 36). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, with the first publications of fiction highlighting suffering caused by colonialism, it appears that sumptuous living was no longer admired (Sutherland 42). Nonetheless, the emphasis on and continuing desire for aristocrat or royal culture can be seen in today's Indonesia with marriage ceremonies that reenact royal weddings and brides and grooms who dress as princesses and princes (Geertz 57).

In spite of their aristocratic status and life style, however, *priyayi* did not have access to controlling the colonial economy. It was the colonial administration, unsurprisingly, who regulated the economy and capital investments (Zed 251-2). The

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[18] Not surprisingly, most people in academia, at least after 1965, came from families who had aristocratic, business, or civil servant backgrounds (MacDougall qtd. in Farid 169-170).

[19] *Tanam Paksa* was a share-cropping system that benefited the colonial government. For further explanation, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

colonial government, for example, passed the Agrarian Law in 1870, putting an end to the Cultivation System and establishing the colonial liberal politics that allowed private capital and investors from the United States and Europe to enter the archipelago (Riyanto 31). Dutch, Belgian, and French companies were then given concessions for palm oil in East Sumatra and Aceh, for example (Ismail 240).[20] In an effort to counterbalance massive investment from the United States and England, the Japanese were then allowed to invest in Indonesia in the period 1916 to 1924 (Post 303). In the early 1930s, when tariffs and quota protection were put into place, multinational companies, including Unilever, British American Tabacco (BAT), Bata, and Goodyear, began to open factories in Indonesia (Wie 326). It was during this time when people in the archipelago, particularly working class people, began to be introduced to "money" as an exchange system (Riyanto 32).

After Indonesia's independence in 1945, the Dutch continued to play a significant role in Indonesia's economy. For instance, they occupied senior positions in the Indonesian public and financial sectors (Wie 316). As a response, the Soekarno government then nationalized some businesses: Java Bank, public utilities including gas and electricity companies, the airline, and railroads, were all nationalized in 1953 (Wie 316). More private corporations were nationalized throughout 1957 and 1958 (Lindblad 212; Mackie 336); this continued until 1963 when all remaining British and American companies were nationalized, putting an end to foreign private enterprises in Indonesia (Wie 328). This policy, implemented under Soekarno, that after1958 no longer welcomed foreign private investments (Wie 328) and tended to be more socialist, or as it

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[20] Chinese and Arabs who mostly owned shipping companies (Leirissa 270) were granted concessions only after 1930 (Ismail 242).

was called, a "Guided Economy" or "Socialism à la Indonesia" (Mackie 336), shifted in 1967 when Soeharto allowed, even encouraged, foreign direct investment in Indonesia (Wie 328).

To create an image of an "investor-friendly" country and attract foreign investment, Soeharto repressed the labor movement at all cost. Repressing the labor movement was particularly important because since the fall of the international oil prices in the early 1980s, Indonesia has positioned itself as "producer of low wage, manufactured goods" (Hadiz 96). The "class-based" labor movement, however, was not the only group to experience repression; people inside and outside academia were also prohibited from discussing or analyzing class (Farid 167-9, 189). Words like *buruh* (factory workers) were replaced by euphemisms such as *karyawan* or *pekerja* (office workers) (Farid 169). This attempt to curb discussions on class was first couched within the discourse of anti-Communism at that time: it was the Indonesian Communist Party that employed class analysis in Indonesia (Farid 176). Hence this partly explains why analysis on class in Indonesia has been limited.[21]

*3. Religion*

Most Indonesians (about 90 percent) identify as Muslim, making it—as U.S. media are quick to point out—the largest Muslim country in the world. It is important, however, that we understand the particularities of Islam in Indonesia. Reflecting on circulations of people who brought different religions, including Hinduism (2 percent

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[21] It is worthy of note that analysis of class was suppressed particularly because Soeharto's family and cronies (including some key Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs) constituted a powerful capitalist group, exploiting Indonesians across the archipelago for their own profit through "forceful appropriation," rather than merely capital investments (Vickers 185-186).

today), Buddhism (1 percent), Christianity (5 percent Protestant, 3 percent Catholic), as well as Islam, to Indonesia is therefore useful.

The dominant religions and belief systems in Indonesia prior to the coming of Islam and Christianity were Hinduism, Buddhism, and various local animistic religions (Ropi 1-2). Hinduism might have existed in Java since the first century CE (Djamaris 16), although it was around the seventh century when we see evidence of not only Hinduism but also Buddhism in the archipelago (Mulyana *Runtuhnya* 84; Mulyana *Negarakertagama* 196; Zoetmulder *Kalangwan* 5).

Christianity might have existed in the archipelago, albeit insignificantly, as early as the seventh century (Ropi 7). It was in the early-sixteenth century, with the arrival of the Portuguese and the Spanish, however, that Christianity began to be introduced on a somewhat larger scale (Ropi 7-8). Christianity gained even greater popularity from the end of sixteenth century alongside the Dutch presence in the archipelago, although it never became a dominant religion (Ropi 9-10). If missionaries succeeded in converting some people in the archipelago, they did so only in remote areas, such as in North Sumatra, North Sulawesi, Irian, the Moluccas, East Nusa Tenggara, and Central Kalimantan (Suratno 22; Ropi 33). This may be related to the fact that the Dutch colonial government prohibited missionaries from entering some areas, so as not to provoke any disturbance that would hinder trade (Ropi 28-29). Moreover, some natives resisted the idea of being baptized because converting to Christianity meant serving the interests of the Dutch and losing one's cultural identity (Ropi 28).

Although when and from where Islam came to Indonesia is still an ongoing debate, teachings of Islam in Indonesia most likely came not directly from Arabs, but by

way of (mostly southern) Chinese and/or Indians (possibly Arab-Indians) who migrated

and traveled to Indonesia (Taylor *Indonesia* 78; Rafferty 250; Qurtuby 37; Mirpuri 22).[22]

Second, practices of Buddhism and Hinduism that were dominant before the

coming of Islam in the archipelago also shape the particularities of Islam in Indonesia.  In

the sixteenth century, for example, Muslims in the archipelago continued to practice

Buddhist mystic rituals while giving these practices Arabic names.  Kings that were once

referred to as "Raja" (a Hindu term) were then called "Sultans" (a Muslim term) (Geertz

125).  This tradition of imbuing rituals of Islam with pre-Islamic traditions still exists in

contemporary Indonesia.  Javanese traditional rituals such as *sekaten* or *selametan*, for

example, are carried out in celebrating Islamic holidays such as *Maulid Nabi Muhammad*

(Hadi 119).  Eating diamond-shaped rice (*ketupat*) on the holiday of Ied that is common

in present-day Indonesia is actually a practice adapted from the Javanese Hindu tradition

(Hadi 120-1).  Indeed, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz pointed out in *Religion of Java*,[23]

it was "*abangan*,"[24] (syncretizing "indigenous animism" and "Hindu-Buddhist traditions"

in the practice of Islam[25]) that people practiced the most, at least until the 1990s; only one

third of Muslisms, at the most, are orthodox or *santri*[26] Muslims (Eliraz 74).

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[22] That the practice of Islam in Indonesia tends to follow the school of Syafi'iyah, which also existed in India, provided evidence that Islam in Indonesia, at least from the thirteenth to seventeenth century, might have come from India/Gujarat (Santoso 48).

[23] Based on a fieldwork in the 1950s in Modjokuto, a small town in east central Java with a population of 20,000 people (18,000 were Javanese, 1,800 Chinese, and the rest Arabs, Indians, and other minorities), Geertz offered three categories of Javanese religious practice: *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi.*

[24] *Abangan* here refers to "religious tradition [that is] made up primarily of the ritual feast called the *slametan*, an extensive and intricate complex of spirit beliefs, and a whole set of theories and practices of curing, sorcery, and magic" (Geertz 5, 127).

[25] Some would argue that Islam was successfully disseminated in Java because Islam was made "compatible with [people's] own views" (Robson 5).

[26] People who were categorized as *santri* tended to pay more attention to Islamic doctrine and the "moral and social interpretation of it" (Geertz 127).

The third factor that contributes to the particularity of Islam in Indonesia is the

influence of neo-modernism from Egypt. Islamic modernism began to be introduced in

Indonesia at the end of the nineteenth century, although it grew rapidly only since the

1970s (Eliraz 21-23). It was Muhammadiyah, one of the two mainstream Islamic

organizations[27] in Indonesia, that helped spread Islamic modernism in Indonesia (Eliraz

24; Mulkhan 216). This Islamic modernism explains why Indonesian women can

participate in education and employment (Eliraz 21-22). It is important to remember,

however, that commitments and practices of Islam in Indonesia differ in different regions.

For example, people in Sumatra are often regarded as more "radical and fundamentalist,"

adhering to Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence), than people in Java who tend to be more

"sufistist" (Mulkhan 205).

Although Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia is not an

Islamic state. There were indeed attempts to turn Indonesia into an Islamic rather than a

nationalist state in the 1920s and again during the years directly following Indonesia's

independence; these attempts, however, failed (Eliraz 14). Consequently, in Indonesia,

laws are not based on Islam and there is a separation between religion and the state

(Santoso 54). If Islam influences the Indonesian constitution it is only as far as putting

monotheism in the constitution (Santoso 54). Nonetheless, as historian Michael Laffan

suggested, one cannot undermine the importance of Islam in establishing a sense of

nationalism in early-twentieth-century Indonesia.

If Islam had not been represented at the fore at Indonesian politics, nationalism, or

culture, at least until recently, it is perhaps because political manifestations of Islam were

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[27] The two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia are Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah
(which tends to be more modern, open, and pragmatic) (Mulkhan 216).

prohibited from the 1950s to the end of the New Order (Soeharto) era in 1998 (Eliraz 72).

Particularly under Soeharto, mass organizations could not claim Islam and instead had to

assert the state ideology, *Pancasila,* as their ideological foundation (Eliraz 79). Indeed,

Islam was the target of state "repression and stigmatization" in the 1970s and 1980s

(Heryanto "Years" 174). There was a shift in the 1990s, however, when Islam became

popular among elite groups, including politicians and entertainers, and even became an

important source of consumer-driven, "middle-class" identity[28] (Heryanto "Years" 174).

This shift was partly highlighted by Soeharto's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991, after which

he was referred to as *Haji* Soeharto.[29] It was also during this period when schoolgirls

were first allowed to wear veils[30] to schools (Heryanto "Years" 175). Manifestations of

Islam then continued to be more conspicuous as Muslims began to form organizations

based on religion after the 1998 *reformasi* era (Eliraz 72).


*4. Gender*

Women in Indonesia have occupied a disadvantaged position compared to men. During

the colonial period, this can be seen from the comparatively smaller number of women

than men who could read and/or participate in the workforce. In 1930, 10 percent of men

in Java and Madura could read, but only 1.5 percent women could read and write in either

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[28] Because (Dutch) Christian organizations introduced "material culture" that included better housing, clothing, and food, Christianity became a status symbol for people in colonial Manado (Leirissa 267).

[29] It should be noted that the title *haji* (Muslim-man pilgrim) necessarily demonstrates one's economic status because *haji* is associated with a "rich man" (Geertz 134). That religion is intertwined with status is not a new phenomena. This can be seen, for example, from the fact that because migrants from Hadrami in the past usually were merchants and had some economic power, their economic positions provided them with religious status as well (Eliraz 49-50). At that time, Arabs from Hadramaut were perceived as "upper-class" and "the elite" of the Islamic community (Eliraz 49-50). Also, because they tended to intermarry with local women (female immigration was limited at that time), they were not seen as outsiders within the community (Eliraz 50).

[30] Around this time, there was a sudden boom in the Muslim women's clothing industry. Interestingly, designers of this clothing admitted that it was the "international" or "Western" world rather than the Arab world that became their sources of inspiration (Heryanto "Years" 175).

Dutch or Indonesian (Locher-Scholten *Women* 19).[31] Only 34,000 native women,

compared to 102,000 men living in Java, could write Dutch (Locher-Scholten *Women*

19). Additionally, although girls were not legally barred from getting a basic

education—they were not allowed to attend advanced schooling (Taylor *Indonesia*

289)—only a small number of aristocratic girls were able to have access to education

when schools[32] for natives began to emerge in the late-nineteenth century (Riyanto 41).

In 1898, for example, there were only 2891 girls in school in the entire East Indies

(Kartini 13). Nonetheless, access to education was crucial in initiating a process of

modernity for native women in general at that time. These educated women, including

Raden Ayu (aristocratic title) Kartini—Indonesia's early "feminist"--then began to

demand and establish schools for girls, advocate monogamy, and participate in larger

nationalist struggles.

     During the colonial period, women's participation in the workforce, especially for

upper-class women, had also been discouraged. A comment made in 1925 suggested that

if men could afford it, they preferred to keep their wives at home because they "like[d]

pretty hands and a pretty complexion" (Locher-Scholten *Women* 50). This comment is

interesting to note because it suggests the extent to which complexion was a factor in

describing attractive women. Remaining at home, that is, out of the sun, would indicate

the importance of light skin; and that the injunction against waged or salaried work was

strongest for upper-class women would indicate a relationship to economic class.

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[31] In 1920, statistics indicated that there were 4 million people, both men and women, who could read (Locher-Scholten *Women* 19).

[32] At that time, schools were divided into four categories: European curriculum schooling for Europeans; Dutch language schooling for native elites; local language schooling for some other natives; and traditional schooling such as *pesantren* (Islamic schools) for other natives (Riyanto 42). In addition to these schools there were also schools for Chinese such as *Hollands-Chineesche* (Locher-Scholten *Women* 19).

Nonetheless, because the economic condition of most colonized men necessitated that their wives work outside the home, many women did. Based on 1930 data, women made up 25 percent of workers at sugar plantations and 45 percent of workers at other European plantations in Java (Locher-Scholten *Women* 51).

In modern Indonesia, although women's condition has improved, women continue to be second-class citizens. Even when the state constitutionally protects women's equal rights to education and employment, it has failed to implement these goodwill policies (Bianpoen 66; Wagemann 315). For example, based on 2004 data there were more women (11.71 percent) than men (5.34 percent) who were older than ten-years-old and could not read.[33] There were more women (10.9 percent) than men (4.92 percent) ten-years-old or older who had never enrolled in schools. And while both boys' and girls' particpation rate in elementary schools was high (over 90 percent), only 1.51 percent of women and 2.51 percent of men had completed a university-level education.

Women's limited access to education, coupled with the state's notion of the ideal woman as a "wife" and "mother,"[34] explains, at least in part, the gender gap in the workforce (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 12). In 2003, for example, only 50 percent of women compared to 87 percent of men (fifteen-years-old and older) participated in the workforce. From 2002 data, fewer women than men worked in the agricultural (33 percent vs. 67 percent), industrial (36 percent vs. 64 percent), and service sector (40 percent vs. 60 percent); and fewer women than men were permanent employees (31

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[33] BPS, Statistik Kesejahteraan Rakyat Tahun 2000 – 2004.

[34] During the New Order, gender relations are formulated in its *Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara* or "Broad Guidelines for State Policy" (GBHN). According to GBHN, "women's contribution to the nation was to be made in the family context and their rights were protected in that context" (Wagemann 308). In 1993, twenty years after GBHN was first formulated in 1973, women were referred to as *mitra sejajajar* (equal partner) and allowed to bear *peran ganda* (dual roles or double burden)—being both in the private and public domain—as long as they are still "in line with their essential nature" (Wagemann 311-312). The essential nature here refers to their role in the family, as a mother and wife.

percent vs. 69 percent).  When women "had to" work, they tended to choose "motherly" or "wifely" jobs (Djamal 179).  Even when they earn more money than their husbands, usually from working in the informal sector such as selling cookies, they claim that they are not really working but are simply "helping" out their husbands (Djamal 173).

This condition of women mostly working in the informal sector can also be seen in the relatively high number of Indonesian women migrant workers.  Indonesia is the third largest source of labor migrants from Asia.  Based on official 2005 data from the Ministry of Human Resources and Transmigration, Indonesia sent approximately 500,000 people, usually referred to as *Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* (TKI), to work abroad.  Women who made up about 330,000 of these migrant workers worked mostly in the informal sector.  Interestingly, almost all Indonesian men migrant workers (137,000) worked in the formal sector.

When women enter the formal sector, they often face gender discrimination. When it comes to employee development and training, for example, women are discriminated against because of the stereotypical assumption that women would prefer to attend to their family needs rather than investing their time in training workshops (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 13).  Particularly because there are fewer women who make it to senior-level positions, women are further discriminated against when they reach these positions because, unlike men who have extensive support networks, women rarely have access to support from other senior-level women (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 13).

It is not a surprise that in the workplace, women still earn less than men for comparable work.  In 2002, the ratios of female to male wages for those with the same educational background were: 51 percent (not graduated from elementary school); 61

percent (elementary school graduates); 72 percent (junior high school graduates or grade 9); 79 percent (high school graduates or grade 12); and 73 percent (above high-school levels).

Not only in education and the workplace, but also in law and politics, women are still left behind. There were only eight women supreme court judges (*hakim agung*) compared to thirty-nine men in 2000. Women made up only 26 percent of supreme court attorneys (*jaksa agung*). And at the high court level, only 20 percent of attorneys were female. In 1999-2004, out of 500 members of the house of representative (DPR) only 9 percent were women. In the Senate, out of 195 people, only 10 percent were women. In the current administration, under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, out of thirty-three ministers, only four are women. In designing various programs, the state tends to deny gender differences, claiming that their programs are gender neutral and even blaming women if they do not succeed (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 14). Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri articulated the issue clearly, "Many men are also unaware of the importance of women's equal participation in power and decision-making and of the extent of their exclusion. The socio-cultural environment is not conducive to women's full participation in politics or national decision-making, and institutional obstacles continue to restrict women's access to power" (15).

<u>Situating the Dissertation within the Existing Literatures</u>

With such complex social conditions and rich history of transnational circulations of people and ideas, Indonesia certainly merits more of our scholarly attention than it currently receives. Although there are studies that have mapped out transnational

circulations of people and ideas during the precolonial (Coedès; Creese; Robson; Sarkar, Teeuw), colonial (Blussé; Coté; Fasseur; Gouda; Locher-Scholten; Laffan; Mandal; Raben; Scholte; Stoler; Touwen-Bouwsma), and postcolonial (Diederich; Legget; Prabasmoro; Riker) periods, no study that I am aware of has brought together and made connections among these historical periods and provided a comprehensive narrative of circulations of people and ideas not only across time but also across space and charted their effects on our understanding of skin color in Indonesia. The only study that does pay attention to transnational circulations of people, specifically "mobile men," and spans the time from pre- to postcolonial Indonesia is Jean Taylor's *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories*; it does not, however, deal with skin color. Hence, this dissertation enriches the existing literatures by not only focusing on the pre- to postcolonial periods but also tracing circulations of people and ideas from India (and to a limited extent, China and Arabia), the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States and their effects on our understanding of skin color as it intersects with other categories of identity.

In doing so, I locate Indonesia both *as* a transnational space and *in* a transnational context. By locating Indonesia, a so-called Third World country, as a transnational space that is both independent and dependent upon world politics, I am addressing Amrita Basu's call to move beyond and avoid reproducing texts that represent Western/white as a "global" space and Third World as a "local" space. Positioning Indonesia as a transnational space, rather than simply as simultaneously local and global, allows me to move beyond the limiting and limited local-versus-global-binary thinking, prevalent within the globalization debate. What is implied in representing a space as a transnational space is the possibility of highlighting various relations, linkages, and

alliances not only among various nations but also among "nonstate actors of various kinds" (Khagram, Riker, Sikkink). Also implied in representing Indonesia as a transnational space is the way in which this dissertation positions Indonesia, Indonesian society and Indonesian women as participating actively in transnational processes of gendered racialization. Doing so will also allow me to move away from making an either/or argument: whether a particular discourse is rooted in Asian or Western origins (Uhlin 242; Leung, Lam, and Sze). Rather, I am interested in demonstrating that discourses in Indonesia reflect and are shaped by these rich histories of circulations of people and objects from various geographical locations (including those located in the East and the West) throughout various historical periods.

Such a task is a capacious one, but by narrowing my topic to a very specific and manageable topic I can trace such circulations of people and ideas and their effects across different times and spaces. It is for this reason that I turn to "beauty" as an organizing trope to limit my analysis, ensuring analytical depth within each chapter.

*Beauty and the B/East*

As a subject of inquiry, "beauty" lends itself as a perfect site of study in a women's studies location because it is undoubtedly a gender-specific issue (Chancer 83; Wolf). In the field of women's studies, the notion of beauty ideology as a discriminatory tool among women has been widely accepted. Some feminist scholars term this discrimination against "ugly" women as "look-ism" to expose the ways in which "beauty expectations are systemic" (Chancer 83). In her book, *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf pointed out that beauty ideology is used to keep modern women in its subordinate place.

Perpetual beauty rituals indeed "discipline" women's bodies differently from men's and even manufacture them as "docile bodies" (Bartky 69-75). This is particularly true because beauty involves "*studied imitation, a deliberate process of replication*" (Brand 1, emphasis in the original). Some would consider "beauty" or "look-ism" as more dangerous than "racism" and "sexism," the larger institutional structures upon which it hinges, because even though we are aware of discriminations based on race and sex, we are rather unaware or "unconscious" about discrimination against one's looks (Etcoff 25).

Scholars suggest that beauty becomes a discriminatory tool because of its capital form. Lynn Chancer, in working with Pierre Bordieu's "cultural capital," argues that beauty can be "*worked at* and *worked for*: looks are not merely ascribed but more and more frequently *achieved*" (118). Women are therefore invested in working at and for beauty because, as a form of capital, beauty is "transformable into other types of capital, such as economic capital or money. The amount of beauty a woman possesses may help her land a well-paying job or marry a high-status, wealthy man" (M. Hunter 5).

Not only functioning as a form of capital, beauty also functions as a survival tool. Etcoff argued that women turn to the beauty industry, including expensive cosmetic surgeries, as a "survival" method (25). Here, Etcoff literally means survival in the sense of their genes, their capacity to mate and produce offspring. Her argument is based on her view that, in this game of natural selection, the need for beauty reflects "the workings of a basic instinct" (Etcoff 7). She explains,

> We love to look at smooth skin, thick shiny hair, curved waists, and symmetrical
> bodies because in the course of evolution the people who noticed these signals
> and desired their possessors had more reproductive success. We are their

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descendants. (24)

Framed in such a way, beauty inevitably exposes the heterosexual ideology that it serves. Particularly in a patriarchal society, feminine beauty matters because it functions to uphold "masculinity" (Chancer 116). That is, "sexual access to 'beautiful' women's bodies" becomes a sign of one's masculine power (Chancer 114). Indeed, in a patriarchal society feminine beauty necessitates that women work on (or even "self-destruct") their bodies for the pleasure of heterosexual men and their fantasies (Callaghan ix; Chancer 114).

If beauty is produced as an inherently heterosexual ideology, do lesbians then have the capacity to escape from this ideology? Gayle Pitman argues that lesbians "may feel just as pressured as heterosexual women to conform to cultural ideals of beauty as well as to society's rules concerning heterosexuality to gain acceptance within society at large" (135). However, Tania Hammidi and Susan Kaiser, who argue that "*doing beauty* [is] a process of visually articulating and negotiating cultural contradictions and personal ambivalences (i.e., conflicting emotions)" (59), pointed out that in some lesbian communities, it is "inner beauty" that is considered more desirable. Here, inner beauty means being "visually 'at home' in their bodies" (Hammidi and Kaiser 60). Nonetheless, this "inner beauty" discourse, they argued, make lesbians who "do beauty" feel guilty about these practices (Hammidi and Kaiser 61).

Although doing "beauty" may make some women feel guilty and allow for discrimination based on one's looks to persist, the beauty industry is not always seen as oppressive for women. Kathy Peiss, for example, provided evidence that in the U.S. context, women saw doing beauty as providing a negotiated space for women. In her

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words, "Beauty culture, then, should be understood not only as a type of commerce but as a system of meaning that helped women navigate the changing conditions of modern social experience" (6).

Furthermore, what makes beauty even more interesting and important as a subject of inquiry is that "beauty" is not only gendered, but also "colored" and "racialized." This explains why I focus solely on one aspect of beauty: skin color. Not only does this allow me to narrow my focus to a manageable degree, but it also allows me to discuss the intersectionality of racism, colorism, and sexism. It was clear for bell hooks, for example, that "when it comes to the representation of beauty, black females can only rise so far. The standard again is different for black men" (*Rock* 48). This is why, according to her, "job discrimination and the criminalization of black manhood" are represented as "hard issues" while "the color caste system" that matters more for women, as "soft" issues (*Rock* 46). It is obvious, therefore, that standards of beauty are gendered and racialized (L. Young 70) and have been used since colonial times, some would argue, to mark the superiority of those with European facial features (Krishnaswamy 16).

Furthermore, by considering these beauty practices not only as gendered and racialized but also as "normalizing disciplines," Susan Bordo pointed out the danger of representing the uses of technology for "sculpting" the plastic body as simply embodying the postmodern paradigm of playfulness (335-6). She argues that it can conceal the racist ideology of beauty standards at work: for example, putting on blue contact lenses is not merely a playful practice; it "normalizes" not only femininity but also the pervasiveness of Caucasian beauty standards (342).

Particularly troubling is the ways in which beauty, as a sexist and racist/colorist discourse, produces the equation of beauty with "moral beauty" and the "civilized" while the ugly (usually dark skin color) is equated with "evil or depravity" (P. Taylor 58; Carroll 38).  Hence, more than simply being a standard to judge one's appearance, "the discourse of beauty shifted to being about entire 'races'" (L. Young 70).  It is not surprising, therefore, particularly in genres such as horror and humor that "specialize in nonbeauty and ugliness," we find "othered" ethnicities and races represented as ugly monsters (Carroll 42).  For example, in popular culture, Africans were often represented or equated with "simians" (Carroll 46).  An Indonesian-American, Fatimah Tobing Rony, took up this issue of representing the East: in her film *On Cannibalism*, she scrutinized the representation of (Eastern) Indonesians in a Hollywood film as the beast, the exact opposite of beauty.

Of particular interest for me here is an increasingly popular phenomena that Eve Ensler also noticed: skin-whitening cream in Asia and Africa sells "as fast as toothpaste" (xii-xiii).  I'd like to point out, however, although in the contemporary period skin-whitening products are indeed popular mostly in Asia and Africa, skin-whitening products and recipes have long existed beyond Asia and Africa.  In Europe, particularly, women during the Roman Empire used "ceruse" and "white lead" to whiten their skin (Sherrow 86; 241).  Additionally, ancient Greeks were also already concerned with whitening their skin (Dyer 48).  In the Elizabethan period (sixteenth to early-seventeenth century), ceruse was used for the same purpose (Sherrow 241).  Some other ingredients that have been used were mercury, lemon juice, egg whites, milk, vinegar, and white lead

(Etcoff 101).  Indeed, because ingredients such as lead and mercury are poisonous, women have even died because of these practices (Sherrow 86).

In the North American context, women have also practiced whitening routines. Kathy Peiss noted that during the early-nineteenth century, white women were sharing recipes for skin whiteners and until the twentieth-century were the target market for bleaching creams (9, 149).  In the mid-nineteenth century, the press began to notice the use of skin whiteners among African Americans (Peiss 41).  Until the early-twentieth century, African Americans continued to be targeted for whitening products with damaging chemicals, including mercury, which was banned in the United States only in 1974 (Sherrow 242).

Although whitening products seem to be less popular in the contemporary United States, desire or preference for white skin exists nonetheless.  In his 1995 article, "The Bleaching Syndrome: African Americans' Response to Cultural Domination vis-à-vis Skin Color," Ronald Hall argued that African Americans use bleaching products as a manifestation of their attempts to assimilate to the dominant culture.  In the Canadian context, Sarita Sahay and Niva Piran's article, "Skin-Color Preferences and Body Satisfaction among South Asian-Canadian and European-Canadian Female University Students," based on a survey of 100 South-Asian Canadian and 100 European Canadian University of Toronto undergraduate students, demonstrates that South Asian-Canadian women desire lighter than their skin color and have lower levels of body satisfaction compared to European-Canadian women.  This light skin preference, according to both scholars, can be traced to the "Aryan invasion" and British colonialism in India (162). What is interesting from their article is that even as European Canadian women desire

darker than their skin color, this "darker skin" still falls within the "white-skin-color-category" (165), evidencing that white skin is indeed still the desired norm in contemporary North America.

As stated earlier, whitening practices have historically been popular in Asia and Africa.  For example, the Egyptian queen Cleopatra would take milk baths to whiten her skin (Sherrow 35; Dyer 48).  In the ninth to twelfth century, Japan's Heian period, women used "oshiroi, made from rice flour (and later, white lead)" to whiten their skin (Etcoff 101).  In thirteenth-century China, rich women would use "Buddha's adornment" thick paste applied to their face during the winter which then was removed in spring (Sherrow 76).  In modern Zimbabwe, skin whiteners were used until they were banned in 1980 (Burke 120).

It is interesting here to note that skin whiteners were banned in Zimbabwe mostly because it ran counter to the state's racial project intended to distance itself from colonialism, its attributes and values (Burke 120).  Here, women's consumption of skin whiteners was considered a sign of (re)colonization and "selling-out" to the white regime (188-90).  This certainly further affirms that beauty is a "hegemonic" ideology, serving the interests of the dominant groups (men and the white race) and functioning as a "tool of patriarchy and racism" (M. Hunter 5).  This is particularly true during the colonial period, when those with Caucasian skin color and white facial features were preferred (L. Young 70; Krishnaswamy 16).

These examples of whitening practices that have existed in various geographical locations and historical periods provide the context for rethinking the issue of beauty and skin color in a transnational context.  That women in various nations such as in Indonesia

and Zimbabwe (Burke 182) have admitted to desiring light skin so that they can look "beautiful," plus the fact that skin-whitening products are sold in various nations such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Tanzania, Senegal, Mali, Togo, Ghana, Vietnam, Malawi, Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia (and the list goes on), provide overwhelming evidence that a beauty discourse that privileges light-skinned women circulates transnationally.

To take existing analyses a step further, I propose that while agreeing that in Indonesia "pigmentocracy" (Leeds) or a "beauty queue" (M. Hunter 28) exists, I complicate the notion that lighter is better by providing evidence of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nationality in its specific modern Indonesian context become signifiers for, rather than are signified by, skin color (see chapter 3).

Although most discussions thus far have suggested that preference for light-skinned women is related to the racist/white beauty standard, it needs to be mentioned here that there are scholars who argue for a biological basis for such a preference. Etcoff suggested that preference for lighter-skinned women may reveal the working of a "fecundity detector" (106). Possible mates detect women's fecundity by looking at their skin color: young and ovulating women have lighter skin (Etcoff 105). She also referred to works by neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran who pointed out that "light skin was sexually selected by men because light-skinned women were the least able to deceive them. What was biologically advantageous became an aesthetic preference" (Etcoff 105-6). Nonetheless, she recognized that in particular societies, such as in South Africa, women's skin-whitening practices are also related to racism (Etcoff 106). That is, in these societies, lightening one's skin is about approximating one's skin color to the

privileged light/white beauty standard. This is an attempt to avoid discrimination due to their skin color (Etcoff 106; Sherrow 242).

Moreover, because beauty is articulated not only in its local but simultaneously national and even inter- and transnational sites, it also becomes a useful site of analysis for scholars concerned with issues of globalization, transnational feminism, and global hierarchies. In the context of nation-building, it is often the case that the dominant class puts forth its women as the beauty ideal (Etcoff 117). Hence, as the ruling elite or the political outlook of a nation-state changes, the ideology of beauty may fluctuate accordingly. After the 1917 revolution in Russia, for example, because the state needed workers, it attempted to revive the "old ideal of a working female" as the beauty ideal rather than a "weak and feeble intelligentsia and thin, long-fingered women" (Moskalenko 63-64). Similarly, in China after the Communists came to power in 1949, "female beauty was displaced from external appearance to the love of labor, the party, and the nation" (Man 190). But when China allowed foreign investments to re-enter the country, beginning in the 1970s, feminine beauty was then reemphasized to model its Western counterparts, one of which was that skin should be "bright and soft" (Man 190). In a more global context, Parameswaran used the Miss World beauty contest in India as a site to demonstrate how "the global and local intersected to produce, reinforce, and challenge relations of sameness and difference, gender and power, tradition and modernity, and center and periphery" (56).

Turning the site of study to Indonesia, I find it important to render Indonesia, once again, as an important site of analysis. This is certainly because there have been very few studies on the color of beauty in Indonesia. The most fascinating and important work on

this issue is Aquarini Prabasmoro's *Becoming White: Representasi Ras, Kelas, Feminitas dan Globalitas dalam Iklan Sabun* that critically analyzes advertisements of two brands of beauty soap (not whitening creams), Lux and Giv, which used *Indo* ("mix-raced") women as their models. Although her work is important, especially in its consideration of race, class, gender, and nation, my dissertation differs from her work in significant ways. Even though she contextualizes this phenomena in a global context, she does not map out circulations of people and objects across various nations and historical periods in constructing such an ideal of beauty. Her work focuses solely on the contemporary period and she examines only the construction of Indo women as the epitome of beauty. My dissertation, which looks at various historical periods from pre to postcolonial Indonesia and charts movements of people, objects, and ideas from various countries, allows for a more comprehensive understanding that includes, but is not limited to, how and why Indo women embody an epitome of beauty in a specific moment of Indonesian history.

Nonetheless, Prabasmoro's study provides evidence that skin color is an important issue in Indonesia. Indeed, for a big corporation such as Unilever, skin whitening is not only considered an important industry but is also a "crisis-proof" industry whose sales have been consistently steady even during the 1997 Asian crisis. In Indonesia, the company spent I.D.R. 128 billion (U.S.$14.6 million) from January to October 2004 on television advertising for one of its brands (Pond's White Beauty). Moreover, this relatively large sum does not include advertising in other media such as magazines or newspapers. It also has not included advertisement for Unilever's other whitening brands, such as Citra Whitening Lotion which has recently merged with

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Hazeline Snow whitening products.  Nor does this sum included spending for whitening

brands produced by other companies.  It is not a surprise, therefore, that within the

Indonesian skincare industry, skin-whitening products are ranked first for generating the

most revenue.

Now, because skin-whitening cream has become increasingly popular in

Indonesia, a few artists and writers have begun to address its significance.  For example,

an art installation by Bunga Jeruk criticized Indonesian women's preoccupation with

light skin and skin-whitening products.  Additionally, novels categorized as "Chick lit,"

such as Upi Avianto's *Kulit Putih…, Penting ya?* (*White Skin…, Important?*) seem to

suggest to readers that white skin may not be all that women should aspire to have.

Mostly, however, general criticism of skin-whitening products in Indonesia is

couched in health terms.  Indonesia's Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan (BPOM--Food

and Drug Administration), issued a public warning on September 7, 2006, listing brands

of some whitening products that contain illegal ingredients such as mercury or

hydroquinone beyond the allowable 2 percent limit.  These ingredients are deemed

dangerous because, in the case of mercury,[35] it can cause black spots, skin irritation, and

in high dosage could cause brain and kidney damage, fetal problems, lung failure, and

cancer; in the case of hydroquinone,[36] there exists the possibility of skin irritation,

nephropathy (kidney disease), leukemia, *hepatocelluler adenoma*, and *oochronosis*

("Cermati").  The Indonesian Food and Drug Administration, BPOM, has therefore

recalled and destroyed 1002 products (produced not only in Indonesia but also imported

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[35] The use of mercury in cosmetics was banned in 1998 by "Peraturan Menteri Kesehatan RI No.445/ MENKES/ PER/V/1998 Tentang Bahan, Zat Warna, Substratum, Zat Pengawet dan Tabir Surya pada Kosmetik dan Keputusan Kepala Badan POM No. HK.00.05.4.1745 Tentang Kosmetik" ("Amankah").
[36] The use of hydroquinone will be banned starting in 2008 ("Amankah").

from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, England, Thailand) (**"**Pemutih Cina";
"Balai POM Amankah")**,** available throughout Bengkulu, Denpasar, Kendari, Lampung,
Padang, Pekanbaru, Pontianak, Samarinda, and Jayapura ("Kosmetik berbahaya"). There
were also many other cases of BPOM destroying whitening products (in Riau, Bandung,
Pekanbaru, and Mataram) for containing illegal ingredients. Regardless of these recalls,
however, whitening products containing banned ingredients continue to be marketed in
Indonesia. This may be related to the deficiency in law enforcement. For example, there
have been attempts (154 cases) to prosecute producers and sellers of these dangerous
whitening products. However, even when these producers and sellers were found guilty,
they had to pay only a I.D.R 250,000 (U.S.$ 25) fine and spend three months (with
probation) in jail ("Kosmetik Berbahaya"). These punishments certainly are not severe
enough to deter them from selling these dangerous products.

Nonetheless, discussions about the color of beauty in Indonesia that situate it
within a transnational context throughout various historical periods are virtually non-
existent. It is here that my dissertation will make its significant contribution within these
existing literatures. Not only that, by focusing on beauty, this dissertation also details
how skin color, as it hinges upon larger transnational/institutional structures of colorism,
racism, nationalism, and sexism, matters in Indonesia.

*Gender and Race in a Transnational Context*

In situating the issue of beauty as it relates to theories of skin color, gender, and race in a
transnational context, I find it important to first explore the ways in which some scholars
in the field have deployed the term "transnational." The notion "transnational" began to

gain its currency nearing the end of the 1970s as multinational corporations shifted their strategies from "the vertical-integration model of the 'multinational' firm to the horizontal dispersal of the 'transnational corporation'" (Ong *Flexible* 21).  In academia, scholars in transnational studies grapple mostly with issues of transnational mobility, of who can move, how, why, and with what effects.  For example, Aihwa Ong pointed out that in a transnational context, the ability of a migrant (in her case Asian) to convert economic capital to symbolic capital is limited by an existing racial structure.  She introduced the notion of a "limit of cultural accumulation," the (non-)working of converting economic capital to symbolic and cultural capital, and criticized Bourdieu for arguing that various capitals, i..e, economic, social, cultural, are all "mutually convertible" and for overlooking the structural limits to the accumulation of cultural capital (90-1).  Ong observed that within this "transnational racial scheme," even when upper-class Asians around the world consume European and American commodities from apparel to university degrees in their efforts to attain internationally-recognized symbolic capital, they are still seen as "second-class world citizens" nonetheless (90, 104).  This means that although some people are "flexible" in moving and accumulating capital across nations, their "flexibility" is racially bounded nonetheless.

In employing the term "transnational," I find Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan's formulation of the term most useful.  Grewal and Kaplan, who in 1994 criticized how "categories of identity and affiliation that apply to non-U.S. cultures and situations" have been left unexplored (*Scattered* 19), argue that transnational, rather than the term international, is useful, for it allows us "to trace circuits that are produced by problematic political, economic, and social phenomena" (Kaplan and Grewal "Transnational" 73).  It

is, as they eloquently articulate, an attempt to "think about gender in a world whose boundaries have changed […] and how women become 'women' (or other kinds of gendered subjects) around the world" (79). The main concern of transnational feminist practices, therefore, is not "to construct a theory of hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender" (Grewal and Kaplan *Scattered* 18). Rather, it is to understand the transnational linkages, the ways in which "various patriarchies in multiple locations" have collaborated in serving their interests (Grewal and Kaplan *Scattered* 22). A study that exemplifies such an endeavor is Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*. In it, she provides evidence for how gender hierarchies are maintained across various nations for encouraging tourism, or global markets, or military adventurism, or even diplomacy. It needs to be emphasized, however, that within a transnational context, these hierarchies across nations are maintained not only in parallel but also in relational terms. In her book *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Saskia Sassen argues that it is precisely because manufacturing jobs have been allocated to Third World countries that there is a demand in the developed countries for jobs in the service sector—janitors, restaurant workers, hospital workers—that require cheap labor (111-120). The flows of people to the United States, she added, are directly related to the U.S. role in the global economy (49). She meticulously explained the workings of foreign direct investment (FDI) as it triggers the emergence of large-scale emigration flows by arguing that FDI destroys traditional work structures and therefore creates a group of potential migrants (43). Her analysis is important in providing a framework for thinking about the inextricably related nature of labor conditions across nations, i.e, to understand that women's poor conditions in Third World countries are not only related to multinational corporations but also and

precisely to people (even women) in First World countries who want to maintain their privileged (work) conditions.  Another work that explored the relational nature of the transnational economy is Jacqui Alexander's "Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias: White Gay Capital and Transnational Tourism."  In looking specifically at (white) gay tourism in the contemporary Caribbean, Alexander argued that there is "the production of the 'queer fetishized native' who is made to remain quietly within his local economy in order to be appropriately consumed" (287).  She then criticized white gay organizations in the United States for ignoring the fact that what allows the First World consumer-citizen to maintain his/her standard of living is the continued exploitation of workers in Third World countries (285).  In other words, the gay tourist industry can only satisfy the demand for cheap tourist packages by keeping the native "other" fixed in its racial, gender, and economic locations.

Another issue that scholars in the field of transnational studies pay attention to is the way in which people's identity shifts as they travel across nations.  In *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean,* Carla Freeman pointed out that some women in Barbados would travel to other national locations, consume, and bring home commodities that help shape their "pink-collar" identities.  For Ong, transnational mobility necessarily involves "a new mode of constructing identity" (18).  This certainly is an issue that this dissertation is struggling with as well.  However, while Ong's concern is to "identify both the new modes of subject making and the new kinds of valorized subjectivity" (19), my dissertation aims to highlight the ways in which our understanding of categories of identity, particularly skin color as it intersects with race, gender, sexuality, and

nationality, are reshaped because of these transnational circulations of people and ideas, mostly through popular culture.  As such, my dissertation also differs from Naheed Islam's dissertation, "The Space between Black and White: Coloring Bangladeshi Immigrants within the Racial Kaleidoscope of Los Angeles."  In her dissertation, Islam pointed out how Bangladeshi immigrants negotiate their understandings of race prior to and after their migration to the United States, understand and construct their racial location within U.S. racial formations, and confront and participate in the U.S. politics of racism.  Islam is accurate in pointing out that discussions on racial formation in the United States need to be reflexive and inclusive of the people who *move* to (and from) the United States.  Her dissertation is important in both bringing the discussion of race in the United States into a transnational context and highlighting the "racialization" of a non-White/Black immigrant group in the U.S. context (Islam 2, 7).

Although the term "racialization" has been widely used since the publications of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* and Howard Winant's *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*, it may be useful to revisit its meaning here.  For Winant, racialization "signifies the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.  A historical example would be the consolidation of the racial category of *black* in the United States from Africans whose specific identity was Mande, Akan, Ovimbundu, or Ibo, among others" (*Racial Conditions* 59).  This process of racialization usually involved "muting the profound cultural and linguistic differences, and minimizing the significant historical antagonisms, that had existed among the distinct nationalities and ethnic groups" (*Racial*

*Conditions* 60).  Their influential works, however, neglect gender as a category of analysis.

What is interesting is that after what Winant called the global rupture (post-World War II) race has been "repackaging itself as 'color-blind,' 'pluralist, and meritocratic'" (*The World* 289).  Packaged in such a way, some scholars pointed out that racism is indeed the "magic formula" that keeps the world economy running (Wallerstein 7).  Its magic lies in that it is "constant in form and in venom, but somewhat flexible in boundary lines" (Wallerstein 8).  This flexibility and rigidity of racism, or in Stoler's term the differing "quality and […] intensity of racism" (*Carnal* 24) reminds us of the notion of categories of identity as "boundary objects" (Bowker and Star 16) I mentioned earlier.

In the Indonesian context, I found that there are very limited studies that focus on gendered racialization and/or how Indonesians are gendered and racialized within a transnational context.  Most studies that deal with encounters of Indonesians with "others" do so within the colonial context (Stoler, Gouda, Locher-Scholten, Foulcher and Day; Raben).  While these studies are certainly useful in providing a framework for thinking about race and gender in Indonesia, they do not in themselves discuss gendered racialization in contemporary transnational Indonesia.  Moreover, because in Indonesia discussions of race under Soeharto were actually prohibited—for fear of disrupting a still recently constructed national identity, skin color becomes, and has actually been, even prior to the rise of race as a discriminating category of identity, a useful category of identity that differentiates and discriminates among women.[37]

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[37] Race was part of the three issues: *Suku* (ethnicity), *Agama* (religion), and *Ras* (race) or SARA—an acronym popularized by the press in the 1970s—that were prohibited to be discussed in public space under President Suharto (1966-1998) for fear of threatening the national unity (Kipp 109).

There are, however, some remarkable exceptions. Prabasmoro's book is certainly among the very few that is concerned with the issue of race and gender in Indonesia and that situates it in a global context. Her work examines the preference for white skin color in Indonesia by showing how *Indo* women are represented to embody an ideal of beauty in the Indonesian and global context. Another one of the very few works that deal with Indonesians as gendered and racialized is Mathias Diederich's "Indonesians in Saudi Arabia." His work is exceptional in the ways in which it attends to specific historical periods (pre- and post-World War II) and to how socio-religious and politico-economic institutions that are particular to these historical periods structure movements of Indonesians to Saudi Arabia. In highlighting the tensions among "Muslims" (Arabs and Indonesians) within this transnational context, he demonstrates that nationality and ethnicity signify and complicate religion as a category of identity. A third author, William Legget, in his dissertation, "Culture, Power, Difference: Managing Ambivalence and Producing Identity in the Transnational Corporate Offices of Jakarta, Indonesia," shows that within a corporate culture in Indonesia, *pribumi* (natives) were third-class citizens. The first "class," of course, is that of European whites who receive higher salaries than both natives; and the second class, "other" Asians (such as Korean or Indian). His focus, however, is on "race" and not necessarily on skin color, let alone gender and sexuality.

Interestingly, the few texts that do focus on Indonesian women as gendered and racialized in transnational contexts are in the forms of novels. For example, Ani Sekarningsih's novel *Namaku Teweraut* carefully marks her characters in terms of their race, religion, class, nation, and gender. The novel traces the experiences of a dark-

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skinned eastern Indonesian (Asmat) woman, Teweraut, as she travels abroad (including the United States and a few European countries) as part of a dance troupe and positions herself and is positioned (racialized and gendered) as she encounters others in a transnational context.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation builds on and enriches these existing literatures by (1) focusing on issues of gendered racialization in a "non-black/white" Indonesian society and situating it in a transnational context, (2) shifting the emphasis from race to skin color, and (3) mapping out how shifts in beauty ideology are embedded in histories of transnational circulations of people and ideas from the pre- to postcolonial period.

By focusing on a "non-black/white" society, this dissertation further complicates our understanding of race and skin color and helps us understand how the color "white" has been considered desirable even in a society where Caucasians comprise only a small minority of the population and the dominant ethnic is the "non-white/non-black" Javanese ("non-white" and "non-black" in a transnational context). Focusing on a "non-black/white" society within which white-skinned women (not necessarily Caucasians) are considered beautiful also allows us to investigate the ways in which even when most Indonesians are not white-skinned, they may have "possessive investments" (Lipsitz) in other constructed categories of whiteness. Moreover, by focusing on a non-white/black society, including a period prior to European colonialism, this dissertation provides evidence that preference for light-skinned women and the particular meanings of white and black are not necessarily or solely rooted in Western cultural practices. This certainly is important particularly as some influential works, such as Timothy Burke's *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women,* Margaret Hunter's *Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin*

*Tone*, Sarita Sahay and Niva Piran's article, "Skin-Color Preferences and Body Satisfaction among South Asian-Canadian and European-Canadian Female University Students" consider desire for whiteness as mostly rooted in colonialism and/or encounters with European.[38]

Second, by shifting its emphasis from race to skin color, this dissertation points out that skin color should be considered as a useful analytical category in the Indonesian and transnational context because it allows for conversations about skin color *and* race across various nations to take place. This is particularly important because there are places across the globe where people refuse and resist (rather than simply ignore) making race central in their lives; there are also places, such as in Indonesia in the Soeharto era (1966-1998), where discussions about race are prohibited and unheard of. Even today, almost a decade after Soeharto's New Order came to an end, there remains reluctance to discuss racial and skin color hierarchies, especially in the postcolonial context. Most discussions about race in Indonesia tend to be contextualized within the colonial period. Hence it seems that "race" matters in Indonesia when European/white people dominated the archipelago, but seem to disappear alongside the disappearance of these Caucasian white colonizers in postcolonial Indonesia. If at all, discussions on "race" (not skin color) in contemporary Indonesia were often limited to the question of discrimination against Chinese Indonesians (Vatiokis). Hence, this dissertation is an attempt to bring back discussions on race by focusing on skin color in the context of postcolonial and transnational Indonesia.

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[38] In her book *Gender and Nation*, Nira Yuval-Davis mentioned that in Europe the word "black" only began to have its negative meanings since the late Middle Ages (49).

How does focusing on skin color allow us to discuss issues of race *and* skin color hierarchies? Ronald Hall, speaking from the U.S. context, argued that when we ignore or "trivialize" skin color, we "contribute to the appeal and legitimacy of race" (125). He suggested that "[r]egrettably, scholars in the world over emphasize race in the study of human social conditions. Regardless of the fact that race is increasingly irrelevant, Americans continually adhere to it and are at a severe disadvantage. Oblivious to the implications of skin color, their attempts to comprehend stereotypes, discrimination, and various issues attributed to race vis-à-vis African Americans is an exercise in futility" (116). Similarly, Hunter, also examining skin color in the U.S. context, pointed out that "skin color stratification supports the contention that racial discrimination is alive and well, and so insidious that communities of color themselves are divided into quasi-racial hierarchies. Without a larger system of institutional racism, colorism based on skin tone would not exist. Colorism is part and parcel of racism and exists because of it" (7). Both scholars emphasize the need to examine skin color because the working of racial hierarchies is integral to and can be understood only when we understand skin color hierarchies. Certainly, because racial discourses are very specific to particular locales and therefore discussions on "race" within a transnational context are limited and limiting,[39] I argue that an analysis that focuses on skin color will help bridge and enrich rather than silence discussions on race across nations.

Moreover, discussing skin color in Indonesia is even more necessary because the construction of skin color in Indonesia does not simply follow the "lighter-the-better" mantra so prevalent in the U.S. context. In contemporary Indonesia, other categories of

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[39] In Indonesia, for example, the specificity of Indonesian racial history, racial (un)consciousness, and racial make-up and the fact that most people in contemporary Indonesia do not think through the lens of "race" are often used to dismiss attempts to discuss race and color issues.

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identity, such as gender, race, and ethnicity, signify the meanings of skin color. For example, while women are expected to care for their skin color and are considered beautiful when their skin is light, men are not. Here, light skin color is associated with femininity. Also, and I discuss this more thoroughly in chapter 3, ethnicity, race, and nationality signify the meanings of skin color: while Sundanese (Western Javanese) white is desirable, Chinese white is not. This is yet more evidence that discussing skin color allows us to better understand hierarchies that are based not only on color per se but also as it intersects with race, ethnicity, and gender.

Third, this dissertation makes a significant contribution in that it demonstrates the ways in which shifts in beauty ideology are embedded in histories of transnational circulations of people and ideas from the pre- to postcolonial period. This necessitates that I pay attention to two issues. First, as I map out the specificity of ideals of beauty within specific periods, I relate them to the rich history (complex "itinerary") of Indonesia. I therefore trace the history of transnational constructions of skin color over many centuries of Indian, Chinese, and Arab migrations, Dutch and Japanese colonization, and post-Cold War U.S. "cultural imperialism" in Indonesia. Second, in charting circulations of people and ideas from particular country(ies) and their effects on beauty ideology, I pay careful attention to the issue of power and ruling elites whose interests are served by this beauty ideology. This means that because during the precolonial period India seems to have dominated the cultural terrain in Indonesia, I focus more on circulations of people and ideas from India for this period. Likewise, during the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods, I focus on circulations from the Netherlands and Japan respectively.

Lastly, the significance of this project does not lie simply in its capacity to fill in the theoretical gaps existing in this field, but particularly and most importantly because it makes visible the stakes in not articulating this issue: that injustices and inequalities based on one's skin color, gender, race, and nationality, if left unarticulated, will persist in Indonesia and beyond.

Organization of the Dissertation: Situating the Chapters

It certainly is possible to read the chapters in this dissertation in whichever order serves one's needs best.  Each chapter is indeed meant to stand on its own: it is written to represent distinct historical periods, countries, and sites of analysis.  The specific sites and historical periods that are discussed in this dissertation are meant to provide fragmentary snippets of societies that would become, are, and continue to be parts of Indonesian society at different moments in history.  However, this dissertation may best be read linearly: the chapters are organized to build on each other conceptually and, in some ways, to provide a sense of historical (not necessarily chronological) time.

In chapter two, "The Beauty of the Moon: Light-Skinned Women and the Traveling Epics and Folktales in Precolonial Java," I examine how certain Indian epics that traveled to Java, in the tenth- to fourteenth-centuries, were adapted to the local context and helped shape the image of light-skinned women as the beauty ideal.  The period chosen here signifies the "Old Javanese" literary period, which comes to an end in the late-fourteenth/early fifteenth century--the start of the "Modern Javanese" period—with the shift in power from Hindu/Buddhist kingdoms to Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago (Robson "Java" 259; Qurtuby 44).  Second, the island of Java is chosen

because, as I mentioned earlier, it has been the center of the Indonesian archipelago and Javanese culture has been and continues to be the most dominant culture in Indonesia. Providing readers with an understanding of Javanese culture is important also, because various Indonesian authors, including Pramoedya Ananta Toer, have addressed how Javanese epics and myths are evoked to maintain the status quo in modern Indonesia (Tong 483; Hellwig 95).

Focusing on precolonial Old Javanese adaptations of Indian folktales allows me to do two things. First, I am able to argue that skin color mattered in Indonesia even prior to European colonialism, and that the preference for light-skinned women in women's beauty discourse was maintained and circulated across various geographical locations such as from India to Indonesia. Second, I am able to highlight the ways in which circulations of people and objects from India help shape Javanese culture and its form of government. Various sources, including *kakawin*, for example, suggest that contacts with India influenced the creation of caste in Java and Bali (Creese 117; Mulyana *Negarakertagama* 199). This caste system, particularly during the Majapahit era in Java, might have incorporated "race" as a marker of distinction. For example, the three lowest groups who were excluded from society, as written in Negarakretagama LXXXI/4, were *candala* ("mixed" status/race)*, mleccha* (non-Aryan)*,* and *tuccha* (useless people or criminals (*penjahat*)) (Mulyana *Negarakertagama* 206-7). Additionally, although it is not certain what race/ethnicity these Brahman and Ksatriya caste were (possibly Indian or Indianized Indonesians), it has been argued that the waisya or the merchant caste, at least in precolonial Bali, were people (male) of "Chinese, Mandar and Bugis" descent (Dwipayana 110).

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From the precolonial period, I jump to the twentieth-century colonial and

postcolonial period in chapter 3: "'Indonesian White' Beauty: Building a Nation,

Constructing Women's Beauty in a Transnational Context." I discuss the shifting

meanings of skin color in the discourse of women's beauty in three specific time periods:

the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century colonial period; the years (1942-1945) of the

Japanese Occupation; and the post-independence period to 1998. In this chapter in which

I examine media representations of women in twentieth-century Indonesia, I argue that

the construction of a particular "Indonesian white" beauty (1) reveals how skin color, as

it intersects with gender, race, and nation, matters in formulating a dominant beauty

ideology; (2) suggests the existence of various nation-, race- and ethnic-based categories

of whiteness in post-independence Indonesia; (3) highlights how, unlike in the United

States where skin color is a signifier for race, in contemporary Indonesia it is "race" and

"nation" (and in the case of women's beauty, gender) that become the signifiers for skin

color; (4) is a form of resistance to "white" colonialism and imperialism; and yet (5)

reaffirms "white" as the desirable skin color across various nations.

It is worthy of note that although chapters 2 and 3 are set up as chapters that

provide historical contexts, I find it inevitable to allow "history" to seep through in

every/all other chapters. Thus in this dissertation, history is simply integrated and

interwoven with other stories in all chapters: it is always present and being retold

differently from different angles.

Chapter 4, "The *Cosmo*-Politics of Skin Color: An Analysis of Whitening Ads in

Indonesian *Cosmopolitan*," moves us to the post-reform, post-1998, period. In this

chapter, I examine contemporary skin-whitening ads published in the Indonesian version

of the American women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* to detail the ways in which various

gendered categories of whiteness (as discussed in the previous chapter) are resignified: no

longer just "Caucasian white" as in the Dutch colonial period, nor "Japanese white" as

during the Occupation, nor "Indonesian white" as in the decades following independence,

but something more complicated that I call "Cosmopolitan white."

Because analyses in previous chapters have demonstrated how light skin color has

been signified differently in different historical periods, I then shift my analysis to

exploring why beauty matters. To this end, in chapter 5, "The Female Beauty and

Displaced Manhood: Reimagining the Masculinity of the Colonized in Pramoedya

Ananta Toer's Buru Tetralogy," I critically read works by Indonesia's best-known author,

Pramoedya's Buru Tetralogy novels (*Bumi Manusia*, *Anak Semua Bangsa, Jejak*

*Langkah*, and *Rumah Kaca*) published in the 1980s, to argue that as nation is

masculinized, and therefore manhood becomes an attribute of the nation, beautiful

women become objects whose possession will increase the value of a man and whose

possession by colonized men will underwrite the emergence of a masculinized nation. As

such, I argue that women's beauty matters because it grounds the structure of masculinity

in post-independence Indonesia.

In chapter 6, I turn to Indonesian women's voices to conclude my analysis. This

chapter, "From Shame to Same: Embarassment, Conformity, and Indonesian Women's

Skin-Lightening Practices," is based on a series of interviews I undertook in Indonesia

concerning the use of skin whitening products. In this chapter, I point out how

conformity is manufactured and maintained through the gendered management of affects,

which for the purpose of this dissertation, refers to how women were made to feel

embarrassed and ashamed about themselves and then (dis)placed and articulated these feelings onto/through their skin (and its color). At the micro level, women are made to feel *malu* (embarrassed) about their skin color by comments made by family members and friends. I then situate these practices within a macro level, where women are made to feel *malu* (ashamed) of their position as women by the state's gendered construction of women as "good mothers" and "good wives," and as "Indonesians," often referring to people in their country as worse and receiving worse treatments from their own people compared to Caucasians they encounter in their daily lives.

I end this dissertation with a brief epilogue, "Beyond Moving and Moving beyond National Borders," which highlights the overall argument of the dissertation and the need to persist in rendering "itinerary," or the "moving" and "traveling" across nations, important in telling the stories of women's everyday lives in this transnational age.

**Chapter 2**

**The Beauty of the Moon:**
**Light-Skinned Women and the Traveling Epics and Folktales in Precolonial Java**

In this chapter, I aim to tell *a* history that traces transnational circulations of people and objects and how they helped shape the discourse of women's beauty during the precolonial, late tenth- to fourteenth-centuries Java. In particular, this chapter examines how objects such as Indian (and to a limited extent Arabian and Chinese) folktales that traveled to Java were adapted to the local context and helped shape the image of light-skinned women as the ideal of beauty during this period. The focus on Java reveals that even since precolonial period, Java has been one of the most developed islands and was indeed an important center for cultural production. Moreover, the importance of Java and Javanese myths and culture cannot be overestimated because even in today's Indonesia, Java continues to be the most developed and populated island in Indonesia, and Javanese culture continues to be (mis)appropriated to serve the interests of the Javanese ruling elites in Indonesia. Nonetheless, the examination in this chapter is intended to highlight the argument that the preference for light-skinned women predates European colonialism[40] and circulated across various non-European geographical locations such as from India to Indonesia.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will be discussing five texts originating from India. Although originating in India, these texts had been adapted to the Javanese context and written in the Old Javanese (*Kawi*) language in the late tenth to fourteenth centuries

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[40] For works that consider desire for whiteness as rooted in colonialism and/or encounters with European, see Timothy Burke's *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, Margaret Hunter *Race, Gender, and The Politics of Skin Tone*, and Sarita Sahay and Niva Piran's article, "Skin-Color Preferences and Body Satisfaction Among South Asian-Canadian and European-Canadian Female University Students."

by court poets.  The specific texts I examine here are the twentieth century English translation/interpolation[41] of these Old Javanese texts: *Mahābhārata, Arjunawiwaha, Bhāratayuddha, Sutasoma* and *Kresnāyana*.[42]  All of these texts, except for the *Mahābhārata*, are long epic poems (*kakawin*).  The *Mahābhārata* consists of both poems (*kakawin*) and prose (*wawachan*).

The Old Javanese (*Kawi*) version of *Mahābhārata* was written between 991 and 1016 CE and derived from the work of the Indian sage Vyasa.  However, it had been circulated orally long before that.  It is an extensive piece of work consisting of possibly ten or, like its original Indian version, eighteen *parvas* (books) (Phalgunadi *Udyogaparva* 6; *Bhismaparva* 5, 7).  Here, I only discuss the four available parvas (*Ādiparva, Virātaparva, Udyogaparva, Bhismaparva*).  In filling in what is missing in the storyline, I use more contemporary versions of the text such as the Javanese specialist Purwadi's *Mahabarata* and the Indonesian translation of an Indian writer R.K Narayan's novel of the same title, *Mahabarata*.  The text tells a story about the war between the Kaurawa and Pandawa.  It also contains many other stories on which several other Old Javanese *kakawin*, such as *Arjunawiwaha* and *Bhāratayuddha*, were based.

*Arjunawiwaha* and *Bhāratayuddha*, although adaptations of the same Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, focus on different sections of the epic and were composed for different kings at different period.  *Arjunawiwaha* (Marriage of Arjuna) was composed between 1028 and 1035 CE in East Java by *mpu* Kanwa for King Airlangga.  It focuses on Arjuna's reward of marriage to seven very beautiful nymphs who previously failed to

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[41] These texts were translated by Old Javanese scholars such as I Gusti Phalgunadi, Soewito Santoso, and S. Supomo.
[42] These texts were originally scribed on palm leaves and were repeatedly copied throughout these centuries and are now preserved in libraries in Java and Bali (Creese 13).

seduce him while he diligently meditated.  *Bhāratayuddha*  (War of the Bharatas) was composed for King Jayabhaya by *mpu* Sĕdah and Panuluh in 1157 CE East Java and focuses on the war story in books VI-X of *Mahābhārata* (Supomo vii; Teeuw *Siwarātrikalpa* 5).

Two other *kakawin* discussed in this chapter, *Kresnāyana* (Tale of Kresna) and *Sutasoma* (Tale of Sutasoma) are not adaptations from the Indian *Mahābhārata*, although they still have Indian roots.  *Kresnāyana* is possibly derived from the Sanskrit/Indian *Bhāgavata Purāna, Visnu Purāna*, and *Hariwangsa* (Santoso 33; Teeuw *Siwarātrikalpa* 5).  It is written by mpu Triguna, possibly during the twelfth or early-thirteenth century during the reign of King Varsajaya and tells a love story between Kresna and Princess Rukmini (Santoso 32; Sarkar *Some Contribution* 97).  The other *kakawin*, *Sutasoma*, may be traced to Vedic, Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina literature (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 97).  This tale was written by mpu Tantular in fourteenth-century East Java and tells the life of Sutasoma, a man whose face resembled the moon (God Soma—and hence his name Sutasoma), whose birth heals the world's diseases, and whose power defeats the evil Purusāda (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 97).

Although most of my discussions in this chapter will focus on these five texts, I will also examine four other texts: the Indian version of *Mahabharata*, a medieval Arabian tale *The Arabian Nights,* an ancient Chinese tale *Chang E Ascends to the Moon*, and an old "indigenous" Indonesian tale, *Si Pungguk*.  I study these texts in the final section of this chapter to get a better understanding of the values of the people who traveled to Java at that time and how these values, specifically on skin color and beauty

ideology, might help shape the light-skinned women as the ideal of beauty during this precolonial period.

It is obvious that my turn to these Old Javanese adaptations of Indian tales is for the practical reason that these are the texts that have been made available and accessible by Old Javanese scholars who have translated and studied them carefully. However, turning to Old Javanese adaptations of Indian epics such as the Indonesian *Mahabharata* above to understand precolonial society is useful and arguably even necessary. This chapter, although it aims to provide a history for the meanings of skin color in Indonesia, does not rely on traditional historical data. Many scholars on Indonesia have noted that traditional or archival sources for the precolonial period are practically non-existent (Creese 36; Vlekke 25; Ricklefs 10-1). These scholars have thus turned to other sources such as *kakawin* (Old Javanese poems), folktales, myths, legends, Chinese records, Arab travel writings, and even relics to understand the past (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 4). My own inclination to use Old Javanese poems (*kakawin*) as historical sources is influenced by anthropologist Helen Creese, who argues that:

> In the absence of usual tools of the historian's trade, such as narrative histories, censuses, trade records and statistics, and official administrative records, we must look beyond narrow classifications of 'historical' and 'literary' texts in order to expand our knowledge of the Indonesian past. Rather than recording political events and the historical figures who spearheaded them, this history must instead focus on textual, often literary, representations of social and cultural institutions. (36)

Because I aim to understand the meanings of skin color in precolonial period and the ways in which skin color functioned as a signifier for beauty, I chose to do a textual analysis of these texts. This method would allow me to see how "literature and criticism are collusive with ideology, that texts are sign systems rather than simple mirrors" (Lanser 196, 200). That is, I am particularly interested here in exploring how these literary texts are collusive with skin color and beauty ideology and how they help us understand meanings of and hierarchies based on skin color during precolonial Java. Additionally, because Old Javanese texts are not merely translations but "creative adaptations" of the Indian ones so that they become their own "original works" (Teeuw "Translation" 196), they may also help us understand the ways in which skin color and beauty ideology traveled from India (and were adapted) to a Javanese context.

I recognize that the period chosen here, the tenth to fourteenth century, may seem too broad to be discussed in one chapter. However, for the sole purpose of understanding skin color as it relates to the discourse of women's beauty prior to the European arrival, I contend that it is reasonable to use Old Javanese texts of this broad period for two reasons. First, as Old Javanese scholar Petrus Zoetmulder points out, "If we compare a poem from the beginning of the eleventh century, such as the *Arjunawiwāha*, with one from the end of the fifteenth century, such as the *Siwarātrikalpa* (Lubdhaka), we shall be astonished at how few changes there are" (*Kalangwan* 25). It needs to be emphasized, however, that both Zoetmulder and I specifically refer to Old Javanese *texts* and not to the political, socio-cultural environment of the tenth to fifteenth centuries,[43] during which

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[43] The tenth to fifteenth centuries are often referred to as "Old Javanese literary" period, marked by Old Javanese texts composed in East Java since the late-tenth century until the fifteenth century. However, there are other texts such as *Ramayana*, old Javanese text composed in the mid-ninth century, that because it was composed in Central and not East Java and had a rather different style than these other texts, were

changes surely took place.  Certainly, various kings ascended and descended the thrones,

and kingdoms were founded and divided during these centuries.  For example, King

Dharmawangsa, under whose direction the Indonesian *Mahābhārata* epic was composed,

ruled over East Java from 991-1007 CE (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 43; Phalgunadi

*Bhīsmaparva* 5).  His son-in-law, Airlangga, who ruled from 1019 to 1042, divided the

kingdom into two: Janggala, to the East of the Kawi Mountain, and Panjalu, also known

as Kediri, to the West (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 43; Vlekke 49).  It was during this

period, in Kediri, that *Kawi* (Old Javanese), the language of these *kakawin*, became the

dominant language in Java among elites, remaining so until the fourteenth century

(Phalgunadi, *Bhīsmaparva* 5).  In 1222, the two kingdoms were reunited as the kingdom

of Singasari (Sarkar *Some Contribution* 43).  Singasari's King Kertanegara was killed in

1292, and a year later his son-in-law, Raden Wijaya, founded the kingdom of Majapahit,

touted as one of the greatest "empires" in Indonesian history (Robson "Java" 260; Dewi

7).  During its golden period, Majapahit extended over a vast area that bears a

resemblance to the area of the modern Dutch East Indies (Furnivall 9).  By the end of the

fourteenth century, however, Majapahit began to decline, giving way to the rise of a

number of Islamic kingdoms.

Second, these court-sponsored Old Javanese texts, although written for and by the

dominant male elite, were read in public performances.  As a kind of utopian literature,

they provided a way for people to imagine a world as it "should" be (Creese 5, 23, 42; J.

Taylor *Indonesia* 44).  This, as well as the fact that discourses of beauty are so prominent

not usually studied together with these other texts.  The end of Old Javanese period is marked by the
transformation to "Modern Javanese" period and transformation from Hindu/Buddhist kingdoms to Islamic
kingdoms in the archipelago after the fifteenth century (Robson "Java" 259; Qurtuby 44).  This
transformation to Islam was completed in the seventeenth century (Zoetmulder *Kalangwan* 22).

in *kakawin* (Creese 28), allows us to consider Old Javanese texts as valid sources to understand the ideal female beauty in that period.  It is important to reiterate here that these Old Javanese texts can only help us understand the *discourse* of women's beauty in the precolonial past and not necessarily the preferences of "real" people over a period of four centuries.  Moreover, because these Old Javanese texts were composed in Java, we cannot use them to claim an understanding of people across the entire Indonesian archipelago.  However, it is worthy of note that, at least in the fourteenth century, these Old Javanese *kakawin* were found in Central Sumatra, which can be viewed as evidence of wide circulation (Taylor 48).

This chapter's focus on circulations of people and objects from India, and only to a limited extent from China and Arab lands, is driven by two factors.  First, I chose India because it is one of the, if not the most, prominent influence in the Indonesian archipelago prior to European contact.  So dominant is the influence of these Indian-origin Old Javanese texts that even to the present day the Indian influence byway of these Old Javanese texts still persists and in most places in Java, heroes from popular Old Javanese texts such as the *Mahābhārata* continue to be more popular than the Islamic ones (Creese 23-4; Zoetmulder *Kalangwan* 23).  These Old Javanese texts are constantly adapted, rewritten, performed, and evoked as part of contemporary Indonesian culture; even the names of god and goddesses such as Ratih, Saraswati, Indra, and Visnu (Wisnu) or heroes and heroines, such as Rama and his wife, Shinta/Sita, who appear in these Old Javanese texts are still common names for people in Indonesia of my generation.

Second, I chose these Old Javanese adaptations of Indian tales to make visible the "transnational" nature and processes surrounding these Old Javanese texts and the

meanings they signify.  Although it may not be appropriate to use the term

"transnational" in this particular case, because the "nation"-state form did not exist then,

nonetheless, I borrow such a contemporary term to discuss something of the past both to

set the tone for the rest of my dissertation in which I discuss the effects of transnational

circulations of people and objects to and from Indonesia in a more contemporary setting

and to make visible the "transnational" (*avant la lettre*) nature of these texts.  For this

purpose of tracing transnational circulations of the moon metaphor as a signifier for light-

skinned and beautiful women, I also examine texts that originate from China and Arab in

the final section of this chapter.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, it is unclear how extensive Indianization was in the

archipelago, or even how it happened.  Nonetheless, Indian culture is certainly part and

parcel of Indonesian history.  From tangible legacies such as *candi* (temples) to intangible

ones such as values and religious systems, India imprints its culture on Indonesia.  It is

within this context that I examine Old Javanese texts to understand "transnational"

discourses of women's beauty, gender, and skin color in the past.


## The Moon as a Signifier for Women's Beauty

My first step in understanding the dominant beauty discourse in this period was to look

for the specific ways in which beautiful women are described in all of these texts.  I

noticed that in these texts women's beauty and complexion are often likened to objects

that have light and bright hues such as the moon, and sometimes, also, gold, golden-hued

or white-hued flowers.  For the purpose of this chapter, I will only focus on the most

commonly used metaphor or simile, the moon.  Examining metaphors in these texts is

indeed important, as various scholars have pointed out, because it helps us understand not only about social reality and philosophy but also the processes of meaning-making and transfer of meaning (Bernstein; Wee; Stern; Ryan). Studying metaphor is even more necessary, particularly in reading these *kakawin*, because *kakawin* are, after all, poems, and metaphor is "the most effective means of imbuing a poem with meaning" (Mack 44). Moreover, examining the moon, as it was also used as a metaphor or simile in other texts such as in the Indian version of these epics, in other ancient Arabian, Chinese, and "indigenous" folktales, allows us to understand how the moon, as it signifies women's beauty, is both historically specific and transnationally constructed. These are the two main themes that I will now turn to.

*The Moon as a Historically Specific Metaphor*

It is important to contextualize when and where these texts were written (the tenth to fourteenth centuries, in Java) and when they are read (twenty-first century, in North America). While the rest of this sub-section will explore the meanings of the moon at the time these Old Javanese texts were written, I find it necessary to first make visible the "eye"/I with which I read these texts. This is an attempt to make visible my feminist methodology that aims for "situated knowledge" and strives for the "politics and epistemology of partial perspectives" (Haraway 581-5). It is a methodology that discloses the processes involved in producing knowledge. It is therefore critical that I disclose the historical context within which I am reading the moon.

In today's world, the moon no longer holds the currency it had in precolonial Java. At that time, the moon was important, for it marked the time.[44] In today's Indonesia, the moon is rarely a focus of poetic expression except for special occasions that are related to Islamic rituals. The moon is even less popular as a signifier of women's beauty in today's Indonesia. For example, in contemporary/postcolonial/post-1998 reform Indonesia, the "snow," rather than the moon, metaphor is used to represent the desired white skin color in many skin-whitening advertisements published in the Indonesian version of American women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* (see chapter 4).

It is also important to contextualize that this study is conducted at a time when "gender" and "color" have gained currency in today's North American academia, where I read these texts. My reading the moon as both gendered and colored is necessarily shaped by these discourses of race, color, and gender in early-twenty-first-century North America. Revealing my historical location is an attempt to recognize that my "encounter" with the text is always "mediated" and "partial" (Ahmed 15). Such a recognition of my historical location, relation with the texts, and "semiotic technologies for making meanings" (Hawaray 579) is important if we are to avoid "textual fetishism," the ignoring of the texts' history of production and consumption (Ahmed 15).

I also aim to make visible the moon as a historically specific signifier in order to make clear that I am not making the argument that contemporary women's desire to lighten one's skin is rooted in their desire to look as light/bright as the moon. Nor am I trying to argue that the preference for light-skinned women is unchanged throughout time

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[44] It is common, for example, that poets would mark his story by using the moon. As in Old Javanese *Mahabharata Virataparva*, the poet writes, "we began on the fifteenth of the dark half of the lunar month, of Asuji" (197). For Hindunese, the dominant religion at that time, the moon marks the auspicious time to do their rituals (Abbi 515). This can also be seen in *Mahabarata Adiparva*, for example, when "the fourteenth day of the bright half of the lunar month" is a good time for a feast (Phalgunadi 221).

and space.  Rather, I am pointing out that the moon is a historically specific metaphor: it

was an available symbolic referent that would have been appealing for people at that

time.  It is not, however, an appealing metaphor for today's people who rarely do moon-

gazing or observe lunar rituals and instead turn to television or magazines to find or

construct their beauty ideals there.

When these texts were produced, during the late tenth- to fourteenth-century-

period, the moon was invoked as the pinnacle of beauty.  It seems that the moon stood for

beauty because, as myth and literature scholar Jules Cashford points out, "in earlier times

with nothing but stars, fires and candles to light up the night, the Moon must have been

overwhelming" (272).  It may be this overwhelming feeling of seeing the moon that was

likened to the overwhelming feeling of seeing a beautiful woman.  Particularly because in

these Old Javanese texts beautiful women are sites where love, romance, and desire take

place, the moon that in the North Indian myth "constitutes [as] the legendary source of all

interpersonal attraction, love, romance and desire" seems to make a reasonable

comparison with beauty (Abbi 512).  An explanation that only highlights "feelings" and

"desires," however, is only partial in helping us understand why the moon became an

appealing and acceptable symbolic referent for beautiful women at that time.  This is

where I find it necessary to see the moon as gendered and "colored."

The moon is oftentimes attributed with feminine gender.  In various mythologies,

the moon(s) usually figures as daughter or goddess (Bonnefoy 223; O'Hara 180-1;

Cashford 152).  The moon is constructed to be a woman in such a way that the "true"

number of days within one lunar month is believed to be the number of days of women's

typical menstrual period, which is 28 days (Graves 166; Brueton 66-7).  The moon is

frequently addressed as a "she," embodies nurturing characteristics of a female, and is objectified the way women are (Khmer qtd. in Bonnefory 151). In these Old Javanese texts, the moon is evidently feminized in cases where it is used specifically to signify beautiful women. For example, in *Bhāratayuddha*, the queen of King Salya is likened to "the moon clothed in a *kain*" (231), to represent her "perfect" feminine beauty.

Although the moon is at times also used to signify a few male characters in these Old Javanese texts, these comparisons usually function differently. For example, even though in *Arjunawiwaha* one of the seven nymphs, Suprabhaa, whose task is to distract Arjuna's meditation is described to be "truly superb, surpassing even the beauty of the Goddess Ratih[45] (the moon, goddess of love)," Arjuna is depicted as "a shining golden statue, like the brilliant full moon" (Henry 1:7d), but here, the moon is not used to signify his beauty, but rather the deep level of his meditation.

Another aspect of the moon that is notable is its cycle that manifests in different phases of brightness and darkness of the moon. Although in the present day we refer to four phases of the moon, hence the four weeks in a month, in ancient Indonesia, as well as in the ancient Hindu calendars, only two phases of the moon were recognized: the waxing or the light half of the moon, called "śukla-paksa," and the waning or the dark half of the month, called "krsna-paksa" (Cashford 62; Phalgunadi *Virataparva* 101). It is not surprising therefore that each cycle would have a different meaning. In places such as Melanesia and New Guinea, people even have two different moon gods: "one for the

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[45] It is worth mentioning that although in these *kakawin* Ratih seems to mostly be referred to as the Goddess of the Moon, in the Indian version, Rati, is the Goddess of sexual desire and pleasures *(Dictionary of Hindu Gods and Goddesses)*. In Zoetmolder's *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*, she is also referred to as Goddess of Love and the spouse of Kama. In India, the moon is usually personified by male gods: Chandra and Soma *(A Dictionary of Asian Myhthology)*.

waxing who was bright, good and lucky, and one for the waning who was dark, bad and unlucky" (Cashford 127).

Interestingly, in these Old Javanese texts, it is usually the waxing or the light half of the moon that is symbolically referred to as a beautiful woman. This is evident in *Mahābhārata*, book of *Bhīsmaparva*:

> The people who reside there [Bhadrāśva] are of fair and glowing complexion.
> […] The appearances of women have the complexion of a white lily
> (śvetakumuda). Their beauty and attraction is immense. […] Their glow equals
> the radiance of the moon, and their appearances are that of the moon. […]
> Further, their faces resemble the full-moon (pūrnamā). (59)

Here, although everyone living in *Bhadrāśva*, a fictional space in the Indonesian *Mahābhārata*, has a fair and glowing complexion, it is women whose beauty is emphasized and compared to the bright full moon (*pūrnamā*).[46] Given that at that time the phases of the moon were divided into two distinct halves (the dark and the light halves of a month), this emphasis on the "full moon" or the waxing of the moon in describing women's beauty becomes our first hint of the preference for "light" over "dark" skin in a precolonial text. Another example can be found in the *Tale of Sutasoma*, where "a girl of exceeding beauty," the king's daughter Puspawati, is described as having a complexion "like the full moon" (Ensink 25). Because the full moon represents the moon at its brightest, this suggests that "light/bright"-ness, and not darkness, is preferred and considered more beautiful. Another example is when the beautiful princess Rukmini does not wash her face: it is not the shape of the moon that is compared to her face but it

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[46] Purnama is another common name for women in Indonesia, attesting to the gendered nature of the moon and its association to female beauty.

is the level of brightness[47] or in this case the lack of brightness that is likened to "the moon on the second day" (*Kresnāyana* 11:4). Additionally, when we put "the moon" in context with other objects to which women's beauty is likened, such as "gold" or "white marble," we know that it is more than simply the "full" shape of the moon that is compared to a beautiful woman's face but the light and bright nature of the full moon that is likened to beautiful women.

Here, their choosing the light half of the moon, I argue, is a manifestation of the cultural preference for light-skinned women at that time. The moon as a symbol for women's beauty exposes the working of symbolic thinking. I use "symbolic thinking" here in the sense described by historian Mircea Eliade:

> The symbol reveals certain aspects of human reality—the deepest aspects—which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfill a function, that of bringing to light the hidden modalities of being. (qtd in. Cashford 100)

That is, the desire to use a word in capturing the essence of light-skinned beautiful women drives these poets to look for symbols that can fulfill such a desire. This is when the moon appears to be a useful symbol at that time to personify the gendered and "light"/bright characteristics embodied in these beautiful women.

The waning moon, on the contrary, is rarely used to describe women in these Old Javanese texts. This is not to suggest that there aren't any dark-skinned women in these texts. From *Kresnāyana*, for example, we learn that one of the princess' servants (the betel box bearer) is a *jĕnggi* girl (35:11). Interestingly, the word *jĕnggi* has various

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[47] The link between bright and light skin color can even be seen in the present day United States. Skin whitener such as Lumedia "Facial Brighteners" claimed that it can make women look younger by lightening their skin. Here, light skin is associated with being "bright" skin.

meanings and is used in different locations.  The *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* defines *jĕnggi* as "people from 'Zanzibar' or East African, Ethiopian, Negro, among the *watek*, or as servants or slaves" [48] (Zoetmulder 740).  Although historian Greville Freeman-Greenville suggests that prior to the thirteenth century the word "Zanj," one of several derivations of the word *jĕnggi,* simply referred to people living in that area (Zanzibar) and does not necessarily mean black or "Negro," various other texts suggest that during the tenth to twelfth centuries, the word "zenj" or "zang," other derivations of *jĕnggi*, was commonly used by Arabs to refer to "Moslem Negroes," "Swahili speaking coast peoples," or the "name of some slaves offered at the court of China in 724 and 813" (Dyen 579; Freeman-Greenville III 4).

Hence, the mentioning of *jĕnggi* in these *kakawin* seems to reflect the fact that various races such as "Negritos," "Veddas," "Australoids" and "Papuan-Melanesians" have existed in the Indonesian archipelago for a long time (Coedes 5).  The existence of African descendants in the Indonesian archipelago, for example, is confirmed with the twelfth-century *prasasti* (stone relics) in Indonesia that record the existence of zangi possibly from East Africa (Derideaux).  Although it is clear that various races existed then, it is not clear how or whether or not racial hierarchies existed.  This may have been because "race" as we refer to it today did not exist then.  As literary scholar Robert Young argues:

> We can say that explicit theorizations of race began in the late eighteenth century, were increasingly scientized in the nineteenth, and came to an official end as an ideology after 1945 with the UNESCO statements about race (which is not to say

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[48] Worth mentioning here is that in Indonesia slaves were not necessarily of African descent, as people of various races including Javanese and Chinese have also been slaves (Reid 27, 168).

that they did not continue in theory or in practice).  Racial theory cannot be

separated from its own historical moment: it was developed at a particular era of

British and European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century which ended in

the Western occupation of nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe. (91)

Thus, we must take into account that skin color during the tenth to fourteenth centuries

had not yet intersected with "race" as we know it today.  What seems to have existed then

was the preference for light-skinned women in the specific discourse of women's beauty.

This not only can be seen from how the waxing bright moon is considered more desirable

than the waning dark moon but also from other examples in these texts that reveal the

underlying structure of dark-skinned women as less desirable.  For example, when

Princess Rukmini is planning to escape from the palace, she is advised to "use ashes

sparingly on [her] cheeks to conceal [her] lovely face, so that [she] will not be

recognized" (*Kresnāyana* 39.1).  More than just simply being unrecognizable, Creese

suggests that this ash is used "to dull the brightness of her skin" (108-9).  What this

reveals is that in these Old Javanese texts, commoners, unlike the beautiful desirable

princess, don't have light and bright skin.  Hence, to look unnoticeable, the princess has

to look just like the others, meaning to have a darker complexion.

Additionally, in uncovering how skin color matters in these Old Javanese texts,

we need to investigate the ways in which different categories are marked in these texts.

In *Arjunawiwaha*, for instance, there is a moment when the seven nymphs are

considering which one of the five beauty types they want to embody in seducing Arjuna.

These four types of beauty are all marked by either gold ("pale gold" and "burnished" or

"molten gold") or flowers (*campaka* and *danda* flowers*).*  In the case when one nymph's

beauty, the "young woman of gentle birth (*adyah*)" is not likened to either gold or flower, the text describes "her skin [as] dark" (Creese 59).  That "dark" skin is simply described as such, without metaphors such as gold or flowers, hints at the ways in which this color may not evoke the imagination of the poet nor was it the desirable color.  However, it is important to acknowledge that during this period, few of the gods in these tales are dark-skinned, revealing the complex nature of skin color at this time.  It is interesting, however, to note that although both god Shiva and his wife goddess Kali are represented by the color of black, it is the female goddess, Kali, who wears a necklace made of skulls and is considered to reveal the "'black' dimension of Time," while Shiva who is also referred to as Kala, meaning the "Black One," represents eternity, exposing the gendered nature of color.[49]  Additionally, this valuing of dark skin that is related to "young woman" may suggest that dark skin is acceptable (only) when a female's very young.  This is related to the fact that when girls reach puberty, their skin will be lighter, at least until their first pregnancy when their skin will be "permanently darkened" (Etcoff 105).  Although it is also possible to use this evidence to argue that skin color did not matter at that time, I argue that this possibility is rather unlikely, because as Creese suggests, the *kakawin* world is "teeming with color" (45).  The example mentioned above actually reveals, I argue, that skin color matters in this society.

*The Moon as a Transnationally Constructed Metaphor*

Thus far I have demonstrated how light-skinned women were considered beautiful and desirable in Old Javanese adaptations of Indian epics.  I do so by arguing that beautiful women were signified by the moon metaphor and that the moon, read as gendered and

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[49] See Cashford (66) on gods and godesses.

colored, highlighted the quality of these beautiful women's light/bright skin color. In this

section, I argue that women's beauty discourse (gendered and colored) was

transnationally constructed. To do so, it is necessary that I employ the maze of gaze

metaphor. This means that I would need to travel across these various specific locales to

understand how, within each specific part of the maze, skin color and an ideal of beauty

were understood, and how the moon figured in signifying the ideal of beauty in each of

this fragmented space. The second step necessitates that I make various connections

across these various fragmented spaces to get a better understanding of the meanings of

skin color across these spaces. Hence, in what follows, I will briefly point out: (1) that

the moon is also a signifier for light-skin/ned and beautiful women in the Indian version

of these Javanese texts and in other texts that come from Arab lands, China, and

"indigenous" texts; and (2) how and why this is the case. Because the discussion in this

section encompasses four tales from four different areas, it is not intended to provide a

thorough reading of each tale or each location. Rather, it is intended to trace the use of

the moon in signifying beautiful women across various geographical locations.

- *The Indian Version of Mahābhārata*

The Indian epic *Mahābhārata* is rooted in oral tradition, and it is therefore impossible to

assign a single author to the text, let alone trace which version of the text is the

"authentic" version (van Buitenen 1: xxiii I).[50] This epic may have existed since the

eighth or ninth century B.C.E. although the preserved portions of the text may not be

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[50] In this chapter, I will only refer to the 1970s English translation by the South Asian specialist Johannes van Buitenen.

older than 400 B.C.E. when no more significant changes are added to the text (van

Buitenen 1: xxiv-xxv).

I find that the moon is also used in representing light-skinned and beautiful

women (and at times men) in the Indian epic as well.[51] Hidimba and Subhadra are

among the beautiful women whose faces are described as "shining like the full moon"

(van Buitenen 4: 37; 1: 296-7; 1: 409-10). It is also interesting to note that in this Indian

version, "complexion" is discussed not only more frequently but also more explicitly than

in the Old Javanese version. For example, some of the "gifts" that the guest, Janārdana,

presents for Subhadra are "a thousand youthful, fair, and well-complexioned women

adept at hairdressing and massaging," which explicitly suggests that fair is the desirable

complexion worthy as a gift for the bride, Subhadra (van Buitenen 1: 411). Particularly

in *Mahābhārata*, as Bhawalkar points out, it is "lustrous" and not "tawny complexion"

that represents women's beauty (63-4). If indeed there is a dark-skinned woman such as

Draupadi,[52] who is considered beautiful in this epic, it seems that she is an exception to

the rule rather than the norm.

- *A Tale From the Arab Lands, The Arabian Nights*

People from Arab lands had already made contact with people living in the Indonesian

archipelago prior to the fourteenth century. It is therefore necessary to consider also how

encounters with Arabs helped shape the image of light-skinned women as beautiful

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[51] As Bhawalkar points out that the society of *Mahabharata* is a patriarchal one, it is women more often
than men who are objectified and whose beauty is scrutinized under the male gaze (1).
[52] Draupadi is the only dark-skinned woman who is considered beautiful and also likened to the moon. It is
beyond the scope of this chapter to examine why and how she figures as an exceptional character both in
terms of her skin color and gender roles (she is the only character who is married to five heroes [Pandawas]
at the same time).

women. In constructing what the values and ideas people coming from Arab lands carried with them, I turn to folktales. As foklorist Jan Brunvand points out, analyzing folktale allows us to "reconstruct something of the unrecorded intellectual life of men [and women] of the past and present" (10). It therefore allows me to do a somewhat speculative work to understand the values and ideas particularly around women's beauty at that time in Arabia, some of which might have been brought to the archipelago.

One of the most popular tales coming from Arab lands that is circulated worldwide is the *Arabian Nights* (*The Thousand and One Nights*). It isn't clear when this tale first entered the Indonesian archipelago although theater scholar Matthew Cohen in *Komedie Stamboel* points out that this tale may have first been translated into Malay[53] or Javanese from Dutch or French versions as late as the mid-nineteenth century (47). This does not negate, however, the possibility that in its oral form, the tale may have entered the archipelago even prior to European colonialism. Nonetheless, simply for the purpose of gauging what were the views regarding women's beauty and skin color people coming from the Arab lands held, it is possible to consider this tale as a useful site of analysis.

There are many versions of the *Arabian Nights*, particularly because this tale emerged out of oral tradition and had roots not only in Arabia but also Persia and India— evidence of its transnational origins (12). The particular text that I examine here is a recent (2004) Indonesian translation of Baghdad-born English scholar Husain Haddawy's translation (1990) of the fourteenth-century Syrian *The Arabian Nights (Kisah Seribu Satu Malam)*. In verifying specific Indonesian translation, I occasionally refer to the English version from which it is translated.

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[53] In this dissertation I'm using "Malay" language to refer to the language used during colonial period and "Indonesian" language when referring to the language used after 1942.

In this version, the tale begins with a king who kills all of his wives the day after he marries them out of revenge for his first wife's infidelity (she sleeps with a dark-skinned slave). However, one bride finally outsmarts him by telling the king an "unfinished" tale on their wedding night (the first night's tale). His desire to hear the end of these never ending stories (which seem to last forever and hence the one thousand and one nights of the title) prevents him from killing her.

In this medieval Arabian tale also, the moon is used to represent beautiful women (and men). The use of the full moon for signifying beauty of both genders turns out to be a common practice for people of that time period (Nichols 156). That the moon is an acceptable signifier for handsome males in this culture may be related to the fact that in Arabic, the word moon (*badr)* is a masculine word form (Mack 46). When we read Hadawwy's version thoroughly and critically, however, we uncover subtle differences in the ways in which it it is used for each gender.

In signifying women's beauty in this tale, the moon is feminized and objectified. These beautiful women whose appearances are likened to the moon are "so lovely that none could tire of gazing on them" (*Tales* 126).[54] Here, the "lovely" women, as is the "lovely" moon, are objects of someone else's gaze. Additionally, the text feminizes the moon by coupling it with the word "lovely" (in the Indonesian translation it is translated as "cantik" (beautiful)) while it masculinizes the moon by coupling it with the word "divine" to describe handsome males (*Tales* 161, 188). Furthermore, in another example we can see how the feminized moon is contextualized within an objectifying gaze and language:

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[54] This tale in found in the Indonesian version on the 57th night, "Mereka bagaikan bulan, begitu cantik sehingga tak seorang pun akan bosan memandangi mereka" (*Kisah* 184).

Dia tercipta tanpa cacat, sebagaimana kehendaknya,

Dalam cetakan kecantikan, dengan pesona dan keanggunan sempurna

Seakan-akan tubuhnya merupakan mutiara cair,

Yang dalam setiap bagiannya tampak jejak bulan.

Tanpa tara dia berdiri, berbau harum *musk*,

Tubuhnya laksana cabang pohon, dan wajahnya bulan. (*Kisah* 115)

(She was created flawless, as she wished,

In beauty's mold, all charm and perfect grace,

As if her body was a liquid pearl,

In every part of which the moon to trace

Equaled by none she stood, the musk her scent

The bough her figure, and the moon her face.  (*Tales* 296)

In this poem, from the 170th night of the Indonesian version and the 171st night in the

English version,[55] we can once again find the moon as representing a beautiful face.  But

in this poem it isn't only her face that is likened to the moon: her light-skinned body is

also signified by the "moon" and "liquid pearl," both of which embody a rather

"translucent" shining and whitish essence.  To really understand the gender differences in

the use of "moon" in signifying beauty, it may be useful to compare it to another poem

that describes male beauty:

Dia adalah bulan yang membunuh dengan tampangnya yang memikat

Sebatang cabang pohon yang menarik hati dengan pesonanya yang langka

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[55] The difference in the numbers of the nights in the Indonesian and the English versions began on the thirtieth night which seems to be censored in the Indonesian version.  This may possibly be because during this night and the subsequent night, the English version contains words such as "penis," "dick" and "vulva."

Bagus tubuhnya, bagai tombak bentuknya

Hitam legam rambutnya, keemasan wajahnya. (*Kisah* 180)

(He is a moon who slays with charming looks,

A bough who captivates the heart with his rare grace.

Fair is his person, spearlike is his shape,

Jet black are his locks, golden is his face.) (*Tales* 347)

From these two examples, it is clear that when the moon is used to describe men's attractiveness, the moon (the man) becomes a subject "who slays" rather than an object who simply appears or whose "part" of body can be dissected and traced. The moon here is masculinized, for "the bough" is not only his "figure" as in the previous poem but it is one that "captivates."

- *A Chinese tale, Chang E Ascends to the Moon*

In addition to people from Arab lands, people from China had certainly made their way to the archipelago by the tenth century, making it useful also to discuss, however briefly, the values that people coming from China brought with them, particularly regarding the discourse on women's beauty. As in previous cases, here I also turn to folktales to hypothesize the kind of values that people from China brought with them to Indonesia. The particular tale that I examine here is an ancient and popular tale that is recited and celebrated during the "mooncake" festival, in China and across the globe. This tale is also popular in Indonesia; a modern comic version entitled *Legend of the Moon Maiden* (*Keteladanan Dewi Bulan*) is available there. There are many versions of the story. For example, in *Asian Pacific Folktales and Legend* Chang E (Moon Goddess) is represented

as an evil character who steals the elixir of immortality from her husband (78); in *Women in Chinese Folklore*, however, she is represented as a noble character.  Although it is this latter version that I refer to here, preferring a more empowering representation of women, it is important to note that all of these versions, including the Indonesian comic version, represent her as a beautiful woman or goddess.

This tale narrates a story about the God Hou Yi (an archer) who chooses to remain on earth and marry a beautiful kind-hearted woman, Chang E.[56]  Although he chooses to give up his divinity when he marries her, his love for her makes him never want to part with her and to live with her in eternity.  Driven by his desire, he travels to ask the Queen Mother for special magic powder that can turn them into immortals.  The Queen Mother grants his wish but warns him that for the powder to work, they both have to drink it at the same time during the bright full moon.  Unfortunately for them, Hou Yi is killed before drinking it.  When his killer attempts to steal and drink the special powder, Chang E chooses to drink it all and then ascends to the moon.  The story ends with "The moonlight, embodying such virtues as tenderness and sympathy with the people on earth, […] eternally soft and snow-white like Chang E" (42).

From this Chinese tale we learn that the moon, once again, is used to represent a beautiful woman.  In the Chinese literary tradition, as Michelle Yeh points out, the moon as symbolizing women's beauty is used particularly to emphasize that these women are so beautiful.  (That "it must not be of this world" kind of beauty but belongs to the "Moon Palace" (238).)  Because within this tradition the moon is at times also described as *baiyupan* ('white jade platter'), *baiyaogong* ('white *yao* palace'), it is possible to argue

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[56] Other names of Change E: Chang-o, Heng-o (Christie *Chinese Mythology* 62).

that the moon represents beautiful women who are light-skinned (238).  Preference for

light-skinned women is indeed noted in this society as can be seen from other objects

such as those found in Chinese classic literature, the "white jade" or "white lychee," that

are used to highlight the lightness of their skin (Barlow et al. 270).

- *An "Indonesian" Folktale, Si Pungguk*

In another folktale that is categorized as "indigenous" folktale, the moon is also used to

represent a beautiful woman.  This certainly complicates whether or not the use of the

moon in Old Javanese texts are merely influenced by their Indian origins.  This tale, *Si*

*Pungguk*, is of West Sumatran origin.  It is such a popular tale that a common phrase that

derives from this tale is used even in today's Indonesia: "bagaikan pungguk merindukan

bulan" (like the pungguk bird desiring the moon), which means desiring something that is

out of our reach.  Although it is unclear when this tale was first composed, it seems

almost certain that it was composed prior to European colonialism, for the tale is

organized around a love story between a "princess" and a man of "low birth," categories

of identity that matter less during the colonial era when "race" rather than caste entered

the picture.  The version that I use here is included in the *Folk Tales from Indonesia*

(Aman).

This tale is a love story about a young man of "low-birth" who loves the beautiful

Princess Purnama Bulan (Full Moon Purnama) who lives on the moon.  Although the

princess loves him too, her father has already arranged her marriage with someone else.

After their last meeting, when the princess tells him that she can never be with him again,

two strong birds accidentally attack and kill him, leaving his body to decay on the

ground.   Miraculously, mushrooms that grew on his decaying body turn into birds.

These birds then fall from the moon to the earth.  It is these birds that during a full moon

long to go back to and try to reach the moon without success.

In this tale, as in previous tales, we also have the moon representing a beautiful

woman.  Even her name reminds us of the word "purnama" (full moon) that is often used

in describing beautiful women in Old Javanese texts.  This presents the possibility that

the use of the moon in representing a beautiful woman in these Old Javanese texts may

not be mere translations from the Indian ones.  Or, it can be argued that these Old

Javanese texts also use the moon to signify beautiful women because this seems to be a

common symbolic referent at that time.  Certainly, with people coming from other

locations such as Arab lands and China also valuing beautiful women with light-skin who

are likened to the moon, the moon as a symbolic referent for beautiful women is simply

being reaffirmed as it entered the archipelago.


*The Moon as a Boundary Object*

From all of these tales, it is obvious that there is a consistency in using the moon to

signify beautiful women.  What is less obvious is the answer to the seemingly simple

question of how and why the moon is also a signifier for light-skinned and beautiful

women in these texts coming from various geographical locations.  That is, what allows

the moon to be a traveling signifier that helped reshape the preference for light-skinned

women at that time?

It is here that we need to, once again, situate the moon inside the maze of gaze.

By employing this maze of gaze metaphor we can get a better understanding of the fact

that what allows the moon to be more useful, compared to other objects, as a signifier for

women's beauty and hence to travel across this maze is that it has meanings that can be

constant and yet be changed to suit the specific locale.  I am referring here, obviously, to

the notion of "boundary objects" that philosopher and historian Geoffrey Bowker and

sociologist Susan Leigh Star put forth.  They define "boundary objects" as:

> objects that are able both to travel across borders and maintain some sort of
>
> constant identity.  They can be tailored to meet the needs of any one community
>
> (they are plastic in this sense, customizable).  At the same time, they have
>
> common identities across settings.  This is achieved by allowing the objects to be
>
> weakly structured in common use, imposing stronger structures in the individual-
>
> site tailored use.  They are thus both ambiguous and constant; they may be
>
> abstract or concrete. (16)

What I propose here is to consider skin color, and particularly for this chapter, the moon

as a signifier for light-skinned beautiful women, as a boundary object.  By framing the

moon, gendered and colored as it were, as a boundary object, an object that travels across

geographical/cultural boundaries, I point out that the metaphor of the moon was useful,

for it functioned as a "medium of communication" (Bowker and Star 298).  The "moon"

allows people coming from various locations to encounter, communicate, and

"understand" each other.  This means that when people from two geographical locations

talk to each other, they would understand the semiotics of the moon, for they have both

seen and are referring to the "same" moon.  In a sense, the moon as a metaphor became a

transnational figure, a boundary object.  Everybody is assumed to know "her" and refers

to her when they want to describe a beautiful woman.

As a boundary object, the moon has a "constant identity" that allows it to be used when people of various cultures encounter each other. One such "identity," for example, is the "light" and bright nature of the moon. It is this identity or characteristic that is used to signify beautiful women's complexion. Thus, the ways in which the moon is used as a metaphor for women's beauty throughout all of these tales and locations evidence its "constant identity" (Bowker and Star 16).

Simultaneously, as a boundary object, the moon needs to be able to be customized to individual sites. Studies in lunar mythologies, for example, indicate that "local ideas were interwoven with legends that came from India and China" (Bonnefoy 150), suggesting that the moon in local sites both acquires its local meanings and that its meaning is necessarily related to contexts that are also local. Because of its characteristic that allows the moon to be both customized to local meanings yet useful across culture, the moon becomes a common, an available, a useful referent symbol for people of various places to represent light-skinned women as beautiful. In China, where the preference for light skin color related to the ruling elite whose skin, unlike the dark-skinned peasants, was lighter, beautiful light-skinned women in Chinese classical literature were at times represented by "white jade or fresh lychee" (Barlow et al. 270). However, these two metaphors were not popular in the Indonesian archipelago or in the Arabian lands and were not used in the tales I study here, probably because these particular objects, fruits or precious stones, unlike the moon, were not common in other places.

Furthermore, referencing the moon in alluding to light-skinned beautiful women illustrates how skin color at this time had not yet intersected with "race" or "nation." The

moon is an image that, unlike contemporary figure of beauty such as "Britney Spears" or "Miss Universe," was not racialized or nationalized.  Nonetheless, as in today's society, the ideal of beauty is constructed as an impossible-to-achieve construction; in precolonial Java as well, having the moon as a signifier for beautiful women suggests an "out of this world," out-of-reach, or impossible-to-achieve beauty ideal.

It is clear now that the moon is a useful symbolic referent to signify beautiful women across various geographic locations.  This chapter, using five Old Javanese texts from the tenth to fourteenth centuries, and Indian, Arabian, and Chinese ancient folktales, demonstrates that even prior to the European arrival, there existed a preference for light-skinned women who were represented as beautiful.  I do so by revealing how the waxing moon, or the light half of the moon, was used to signify women's beauty, not only in these Old Javanese adaptation of Indian tales, but also in Chinese, Arabian, and indigenous Indonesian tales, exposing the transnational nature of such a beauty discourse.

## Chapter 3

## "Indonesian White" Beauty:
## Building a Nation, Constructing Women's Beauty in a Transnational Context

This chapter demonstrates how circulations of and encounters with people and ideas from the Netherlands during the heyday of Dutch colonialism (1900-1942) and from Japan during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) engendered particular beauty ideals in Indonesia.  I then use this historical insight to help us understand how the construction of an "Indonesian white" beauty in the second half of twentieth-century post-independence Indonesia (1945-1998) is embedded within the country's long struggle to formulate its gendered national identity against colonial and imperial power.  By doing so, this chapter points out how the construction of Indonesian white beauty (1) reveals how skin color, as it intersects with gender, race, and nation, matters in formulating a dominant beauty ideology; (2) suggests the existence of various nation-, race- and ethnic- based categories of whiteness in post-independence Indonesia; (3) highlights how, unlike in the United States where skin color is a signifier for race, in contemporary Indonesia it is "race" and "nation" (and in the case of women's beauty, gender) that become the signifiers for skin color; (4) is a form of resistance to "white" colonialism and imperialism; and yet (5) reaffirms "white" as the desirable skin color across various nations.

In understanding the meanings of skin color and its place in constructing an ideal beauty in the past, I specifically look at women's magazines and newspapers and especially advertisements relating to women's beauty and skin products in twentieth-century Indonesia.  Among the periodicals that I examine are *Bintang Hindia* (1928), *De Huisvrouw in Deli* (1933, 1935), *Keng Po* (1933, 1938), *Pewarta Arab* (1933), *De*

*Huisvrouw in Indie* (1933, 1936, 1937, 1940, 1941), *Vereniging van Huisvrouwen Cheribon* (1936), *Fu Len* (1938), *De Huisvrouw* (1938-1939, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1956), *De Huisvrouw in Nord Sumatra* (1939, 1940), *Almanak Asia Raya* (1943), *Soeara Asia* (1943-1944), *Djawa Baroe* (1943-1945), *Pantjawarna* (1948, 1957, 1958, 1959), *De Huisvrouw in Indonesie* (1949), and *Femina* (1975-1998).[57] These periodicals were published for local consumption, mostly in cities within the islands of Sumatra and Java. (An exception is the magazine *Femina* that was available throughout the archipelago.) Additionally, in order to provide a thorough historical overview and the place of skin color in constructing a specifically Indonesian discourse around women's beauty during the colonial and postcolonial periods, I also draw extensively from other sources such as memoirs, leaflets, brochures, newspapers, and many other secondary sources.

I structure this chapter by first illustrating the emergence of various categories of whiteness such as "European whiteness," "Japanese whiteness," and "Indonesian whiteness" within the context of resistance to colonialism and imperialism. This examination is intended to demonstrate the ways in which gender, nation, and race become signifiers for skin color. Then, I will end the chapter by providing a brief discussion on how, although the particular variant of Indonesian whiteness was constructed as a *resistance* to white colonialism and imperialism, it nonetheless reaffirmed white supremacy at the global level. As such, I employ the maze of gaze metaphor in this chapter by switching "country" (i.e., Indonesia) as figuring the outer metaphoric wall and different "historical periods" as the walls existing inside this maze of gaze. This allows us to travel through various time periods and see how within each

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[57] I'd like to thank librarians at Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia (The National Library of Indonesia) in Jakarta, Indonesia, and KITLV library in Leiden, the Netherlands, for helping me locate these invaluable sources containing images and advertisements for women.

fragmented time period, there is a specific meaning of skin color in Indonesia. Yet, these meanings are, as I will argue in this chapter, necessarily related to and constructed in conversations with each other.

I discuss the shifting meanings of skin color in the discourse of women's beauty in three specific time periods: the late-nineteenth- early-twentieth-century colonial period; the years (1942-1945) of the Japanese Occupation; and the post-independence period to 1998. Not surprisingly we find that colonialism not only reinforced the already existing relationship between "light" people and higher status, but also that "light" referred to white skin color. But a more important finding is that what counted as light skin color throughout this period differed significantly over time. In late tenth- to fourteenth-century precolonial Java, as evidenced in the previous chapter, light-skinned women who were considered beautiful were not necessarily whites, and most certainly were not members of the Caucasian white race. However, during the period of Dutch colonialism, particularly in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it was light-skinned Caucasian women who were considered the epitome of beauty. But then, the Caucasian white beauty ideal was challenged when the Japanese occupied Indonesia in the early 1940s. Moreover, not only did the Japanese challenge the Caucasian white beauty ideal by replacing it with an Asian one, but it also challenged the belief that Caucasians were the sole possessors of white skin by claiming that Asians could appropriate and even own white skin. This notion of Asians as white-skinned is crucial in understanding the construction of Indonesian white beauty during the third period I examine, the postcolonial. The shifting meanings of skin color in the beauty discourse

indicate how in postcolonial Indonesia gender, nation, and race became signifiers for skin color and not vice versa.

## Caucasian White as the Beauty Ideal during Dutch Colonialism (1900-1942)

It is important first to clarify that while I argue that gender, nation, and race are signifiers for skin color in late-twentieth-century Indonesia, I do not negate the argument that in mainstream debates and other contexts skin color has indeed been used to signify racial differences. This actually highlights the ways in which categories of identity such as skin color and race could be deployed, although with different meanings and functions in different contexts. For example, in late-eighteenth-century China, when Europeans felt the need to distinguish themselves from Chinese people, they used skin color to mark their racial differences. Although up to that point both Chinese and Europeans had been considered "whites," Europeans argued that their "superiority" over the Chinese must have meant that they had different skin colors. Europeans then claimed to be the sole possessor of white skin and designated yellow the Chinese skin color (Demel 36).

Prior to the heyday of Dutch colonialism, Indies society was a racially heterogenous society. In addition to Europeans, Abessynians, Armenians, Arabs, Ambonese, Bengali, Burmese, Bugis, Ceylonese, Chinese, Goans, Gujerati, Javanese, Macassarese, Malabarese, Malays, Persians, Sinhalese, Tamils, Timorese, and Vietnamese had lived there as well (Blussé 19; Taylor "Women" 249; Colombijn 44). Race and ethnicity were often used to signify places where people came from, types of merchandise they sold, kinds of dress they wore, languages they spoke, or cultural traditions they practiced (Colombijn 45-6). However, ethnic- or race-based essential

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"identity" was not yet formulated at that time. Scholars working on Indonesia have identified several factors that may explain why this is the case. One explanation is that a "cultural blending" took place among Indonesian slaves during their enslavement[58] that weakened ethnic loyalty (Raben 171). Another explanation looks back to a sixteenth-century period when, in Sumatra and Malaca, it was the attachment to the king/sultan rather than ethnicity that bound people's loyalty (Colombijn 44). Finally, another factor may have been the importance of religion rather than ethnicity that at least until the early-nineteenth century functioned as a marker of social distinction (Mandal 74; Raben 263; Blussé 5; Fasseur 32).

In a history tracing the development of "race" or race-consciousness in the Indies, the nineteenth century is significant because it was during this period that the Dutch colonial administration (Coté 116; Colombijn 46) carried out various racial projects,[59] effectively constructing "race" in the process and *as* a process. Some of these racial projects were: (1) the "pass and quarter" system, (2) the establishment of a legal system, and (3) the cultivation system. The pass and quarter system, according to historian Sumit Mandal, allowed for the emergence of race by requiring natives and "Foreign Orientals" to carry "passes" for travel (1816-1910); the "quarter" system (1866-1910) regulated "obligatory residential zones," particularly for Foreign Orientals (Mandal 57-60, 84) and raised the question of who would be counted as native or Foreign Oriental. The need to classify oneself racially therefore became important for defining where and how people should live and travel.

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[58] It was not clear when practices of slavery began in Indies society but it was legally abolished in 1860 (Reid 34).

[59] I use racial projects here as Omi and Winant define them as *"simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines"* (56 emphasis original).

Similarly, in 1854, separate civil, commerce, civil procedure, and criminal procedure legal codes were established providing different laws for Europeans and non-Europeans. Because one could not be tried under European law if she or he were not European, the need to be able to identify and be identified as a European became significant. However, in the Indies, "European" in its legal sense did not simply refer to people originally from Europe; other people could be classified as Europeans. For example, legally acknowledged children of a European father and a non-European woman married to a European male could request and usually be granted European equivalence (Gouda 163). It is true that, in these cases, their access to Europeanness was still tied to their connection to white European males; yet, when Japanese people living in the Indies received the right to have "European equivalence," the notion of Europeanness lost its "racial connotation[s]" (Fasseur 37-40). Indeed, as Ann Stoler pointed out, by the beginning of twentieth century, not only Japanese, but also "Jews, Arabs, Armenians, Filipinos, naturalized Javanese, Sundanese wives of Dutch-born bureaucrats, recognized children of mixed marriages, and Christian Africans" could legally be considered European as long as they were Christians, fluent in Dutch, Dutch-educated, "demonstrate[d] suitability for European society," or were married to or adopted by Europeans (Stoler 39). Being legally categorized as European was seen as desirable because they occupied the top position in the racial-based hierarchy; the second and third positions were occupied by Foreign Orientals (Chinese, Arabs) and natives respectively. It needs to be emphasized, though, that this European equivalence was a legal category and did not necessarily bring about significant changes in the everyday lives of most people in the Indies (Fasseur 40-1).

Still another racial project made racial differences in the Indies more visible: the

*Sistem Tanam Paksa/Cultuurstelsel* (Forced Cultivation System) enacted in 1830 and

ended in 1870 (Gouda 24; Riyanto 30). Under this agricultural system, the colonial

government forced natives to plant specific crops that were in high demand (sugar, tea,

and coffee), charged rent for land that had been natives' own land plus two-fifths of their

agricultural products (a kind of share-cropping system), and gave a colonial enterprise

*Nederlandsche Handels Maatschappij* a monopoly right to market and export these

agricultural products (Riyanto 30). Under this system, the Dutch colonial regime also

took over sugar plantations and factories, managing if not owning these factories (Knight

xvi). It certainly was during this nineteenth century period that "white" became a "racial

color" category belonging to which entitled "white" racial access to social and economic

privileges in one's everyday life (Locher-Scholten *Women* 13).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a shift in Dutch colonial

politics, marked by the implementation of a so-called ethical policy (1900-1930). This

policy, which basically attempted to cope with some of the negative effects of

colonialism, actually allowed for the development of an early nationalist movement (Coté

128; Rutherford 258). It did so by bringing about changes particularly in the realm of

education, providing limited access to education for some privileged natives. It was these

(mostly male) educated natives who then contributed to the development of various

newspapers[60] and magazines, even women's magazines, in their attempts to "imagine" a

nation. Among the newspapers and magazines that I have examined, many are published,

edited, and written by these Indonesian men and read by Indonesian women and men of

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[60] For a history of newspapers, particularly ads, from 1870-1915, see Bedjo Riyanto *Iklan Surat Kabar dan Perubahan Masyarakat di Jawa Masa Kolonial (1870-1915)*.

this class.  Others are Dutch language and were read by Dutch women and men and, likely, also Indonesians of the educated class.  I will focus on advertisements placed in these periodicals to help us understand the dominant discourse on beauty at that time.

It is worthy of note that the history of Indonesian women's magazines only began in early twentieth century.  This is not a surprise, considering that the emergence of early twentieth century newspapers for women was related to the development of women's literacy in the archipelago.  It was only in 1900, with the implementation of ethical policy, when formal education for natives, and hence literacy, began to be introduced in the Dutch East Indies.  Tamrin Amal Tomagola (1990), in his dissertation "Indonesian Women's Magazine as an Ideological Medium," traces the history of women's magazines in Indonesia back to 1906 when a Chinese woman, Liem Titie Nio, created a "special women's section" in a Malay-language newspaper (49).  That women's newspapers began as "special section" was also true in the case of Dutch-language newspapers published in the archipelago such as *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (1885-1935), *De Locomotief* (1864-1956), and *Java Bode* (1852-1957) (Locher-Scholten *Women* 136, 138, 144)*.*  At first, these women's magazines mostly discussed "domestic matters," but they then shifted their focus to political issues, a change coinciding with the development of the national movement and women's movement in particular, beginning in the 1920s (Tomagola 60).  After Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, however, women's magazines began to be commercial and more profit-oriented (64) than political.  It wasn't until after Soeharto came to power and with the development of a printing industry that women's magazines grew significantly (68).  This was the time when popular women's magazines such as *Femina* began to emerge.

Periodicals published under colonial rule, not surprisingly, provide ample evidence that Caucasian women were represented as the beauty ideal in the dominant[61] beauty discourse, and that beauty and skin products said to whiten one's skin were already being marketed. In this first half of the twentieth century, advertisements usually consisted of a few paragraphs of written text and a very few, if any, black and white drawings. Most beauty product ads, however, usually included black and white drawings of Caucasian women accompanied by text that signify them as the beauty ideal. For example, in an ad for Palmolive soap, the caption that went with the black and white drawing of a Caucasian woman suggested "how the most beautiful women in the world maintain their beauty" by using Palmolive soap (*De Huisvrouw in Indie* 1937). Not only simply inviting its women readers to use the soap, this ad also reveals and sells the idea that Caucasian women were the beauty ideal at that time. These drawings of Caucasian women were found not only in Dutch-language periodicals for Dutch women, such as *De Huisvrouw*, but also in Malay-language periodicals for natives such as *Bintang Hindia*. For example, in an ad for "Roos-perzie" poepoer (beauty mask) in *Bintang Hindia* (1928), the beautiful woman represented in this ad was a Caucasian woman. Furthermore, after the boom in American films in the 1920s and 1930s (Locher-Scholten *Women* 135), there were black and white photographic drawings of (white) American movie stars such as Irene Dunne (*De Huisvrouw* 1938), Deanna Durbin (*De Huisvrouw* 1939 and *De Huisvrouw in Nord Sumatra* 1939), Claudette Colbert (*De Huisvrouw in Indie* 1940 and *De Huisvrouw in Nord Sumatra* 1940), and Loretta Young (*De*

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[61] Here, I explicitly say "dominant" to suggest that, as I will explore later, there were also competing discourses of women's beauty even at this time.

*Huisvrouw in Indie* 1941) were used to advertise Lux beauty soap while reaffirming the Caucasian beauty ideal.

More than simply selling beauty products, the ads circulating around this time were also selling the idea of white as the desirable skin color. These products, ranging from "medicated" skin powder, such as Virgin powder and Ninon powder, to Snow cold cream, usually claimed to make people's skin white ("*putih,*" which literally means the color of and not necessarily the race of white). In some ads that did not explicitly claim to whiten one's skin, there still appeared a suggestion that these products could make one's complexion better. In an ad for Pond's, for example, "Lady Morris," a Caucasian woman wearing a tiara to signify aristocratic status, claimed that Pond's improved her complexion (*De Huisvrouw* 1939). Of course, it was understood that an improved complexion would resemble a "lady's."

Although these ads usually targeted women, there were some whitening ads that targeted men as well. For example, an ad for Bedak Dingin Extract (cold cream) published in *Keng Po* (January 6, 1934) specifically stated that this product was useful for men who wanted a smooth, shining, clean, and white face. Interestingly, although the product targeted men, the testimony, which was part of this ad, suggested that it was women who used these products:

> I, signing this letter, R.M. Soedarsono alias Koornen Reclame Toekenaar, live on
> Manggabesar No. 41A Batavia. I would like to inform you that my wife Soevijah
> used cold cream extract from Chun Lim & Co. in Batavia and six days later her
> black/dark-skinned (*hitam*) face became yellow (*kuning*) and clean. I attest that
> this cold cream extract of Chun Lim & Co. is indeed incredible

and very useful to make one's skin white, as was demonstrated by my wife.

This ad is particularly interesting because first, the one who testifies here is an elite male, signified by his R.M., short for *Raden Mas*, an aristocratic Javanese title. It therefore positions and uses his distinct social status in colonial society to market its products. Second, the fact that it was a man who wrote the letter (although this letter may be fictitious) rather than a woman who actually used the product reveals the gender order of the time when men's voices were not only considered more valuable than women's voices but also that men's narratives were needed to validate women's experience. Third, the letter does not seem to differentiate between yellow and white skin color. He even used his wife's skin transformation from black to yellow to support his argument that the cold cream could make one's skin white. Equating white and yellow may simply be the carelessness of the advertiser. However, it may also reveal the underlying skin color order at that time, which considered both "white" and "yellow" light skin color, with "white" being used to refer to the colonial race and "yellow" light-skinned natives. And finally, because in this letter it was his wife who used this product, it again suggests that it was women rather than men who mostly used the product. After all, as can be read in a memoir of one Indo woman, it was mostly women who were told to "[b]e careful that you do not tan" so that they could attract white men of good position (Veur 71).

It was evident, therefore, that during Dutch colonization the meanings of skin color shifted in the Indies. I do not, however, suggest that simply by being present, the Dutch shifted the meanings of light skin color within the beauty discourse. Rather, it was their powerful position as the colonizer that framed their encounters with other people in the Indies at that time and that allowed them to circulate the idea of Caucasian women as

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the epitome of beauty within the frame of white race supremacy.  This, however, was

challenged when Japan managed to replace the Dutch position as colonizer in the Indies.


Honorary Whites and Honoring Whites:
Japan and the New Asian White Beauty Ideal (1942-1945)


The Japanese Occupation, which began in March 1942, lasted only three years and five

months.  A Japanese presence in the Indies, however, predates the Occupation and made

a far more significant impact than the brief Occupation would suggest.  A small Japanese

community had existed in Batavia (now Jakarta) since the early-seventeenth century or

possibly earlier (Blussé 187).  Under the Dutch, it is significant to note, the Japanese

community occupied a separate and privileged position compared to native Indonesians.

Moreover, even before occupying Indonesia, the Japanese, as Asians, had inspired the

emergence of a "Javanese political consciousness" by defeating European Russia in war

in 1905 (Locher-Scholten "European Images" 10).  Undoubtedly, however, it was during

their Occupation when Japan's influence had its most significant impact on Indonesia,

reconfiguring even the meanings of skin color.

At the heart of the Japanese Occupation were various racial projects that

engendered a new racial hierarchy.  Within this new racial order, Asians were considered

superior (at the top of the hierarchy were Japanese; second were Indonesians, Chinese,

Arabs, and Indians) while "non-Asian nationalities," including European and Eurasians

who had occupied privileged positions before, now had to occupy the bottom rank

(Touwen-Bouwsma 8, 15-6).

In establishing and maintaining this hierarchy, Japan carried out various policies and projects. For example, Japan set up internment camps to isolate Europeans and Eurasians, although in practice it was Eurasians more than Europeans who ended up in these internment camps (Touwen-Bouwsma 15). The reason for this may be related to the fact that Japanese's culture valued "racial homogeneity" and "racial purity." Consequently, Indos or "mixed-blood" Eurasians were considered inferior and became the target of punitive measures (Touwen-Bouwsma 2). One of the ways in which these Eurasians could avoid being punished, however, was by proving that they had at least 50 percent Indonesian ancestry and had adopted an Indonesian life-style (Touwen-Bouwsma 9-10). Hence, it was during this Occupation that Eurasians, who had previously covered up their Indonesian origins, now claimed their Indonesian background and were even encouraged to abandon their racial ties to their European ancestors (Touwen-Bouwsma 10).

The Japanese also carried out wide-scale propaganda to instill the notion of Asian racial superiority, in part to convince Indonesians that they too had a stake in the Japanese war. (Should Indonesians assist Japan in winning the war, they would then be liberated under the "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" [*Kemakmuran Bersama Asia Timur Raya*] (Kurasawa 487).) In disseminating this propaganda, Japan recruited several highly visible nationalists, including Soekarno, who later became Indonesia's first president. It wasn't clear why Soekarno would collaborate with the Japanese, although it is assumed that he believed this an effective way to challenge the Dutch. Most likely, he expected that he could use Japan's resources in the interest of the nationalist movement (Locher-Scholten "European Images" 20-1; Kurasawa 490). Additionally, in assuring

that their propaganda reached all walks of life, the Japanese commissioned several artists

to compose pro-Japanese/pro-Asian songs, plays, dances, and speeches that were

performed live or disseminated via radio, film, and magazines (Kurasawa 488-9). Some

examples of their propaganda included well-known *wayang* (shadow-puppet)

performances that narrated a story of how Pandawa brothers (the heroes in the

*Mahabharata* epic), representing Indonesia, were being helped by the Sun God,

representing the Japanese, in winning the war (Yuliati 6). Another example was a

Western Javanese (Sundanese) traditional dance performance called "Defeating

America/England Dance" ("*Tari Meruntuhkan Amerika/Inggris*") which propagated

Asian superiority over Europeans (Yuliati 6).

Reading through various magazines and newspapers published during the

Japanese Occupation, I found that Indonesians themselves also participated in

propagating the idea that Asians and their values were superior to Western values. In

*Almanak Asia Raya*, for example, an Indonesian male nationalist, Soewandhie, wrote that

Indonesians, who had suffered under the colonialism of the white-skinned nation

("*bangsa kulit putih*"), should embrace happily this change brought about by the Japanese

presence in the Indies (Soewandhie 65). In further promoting Asian values, he then

invoked everything Asian such as "Indian philosophy," "Persian literature," and "Chinese

ethics" (Soewandhie 68). In another and more subtle article, published in *Djawa Baroe*,

one of Indonesia's best-known women journalists, H. Diah wrote that after having lived

for several years in the United States and in Japan, she noted the extent to which

"Nippon" women were different from American women. Nippon women's style and

attitude were "attractive" because they were "*jelita*" (literally "beautiful"). American

women, she wrote, were "aggressive" or "daring" (*"menantang"*) (8). She ended the article by pointing out that "East is East and West is West" (9) and that the two could never meet, suggesting however implicitly that both Eastern countries, Indonesia and Japan, could work together while Indonesia and a Western country such as the United States could not.

This racial project representing Asians as superior to Europeans was evident in women's beauty discourses as well. In magazines such as *Djawa Baroe* and *Almanak Asia Raja*, there were obvious attempts to reconstruct women's beauty ideal. If periodicals prior to the Japanese occupation, as I mentioned in the previous section, represented Caucasian women as the epitome of beauty, these Malay-language periodicals, established for the purpose of disseminating Japanese propaganda, represented Japanese and Indonesian women as the beautiful ones. *Djawa Baroe*, for example, carried various columns, such as "Nippon Girls" ("*Putri Nippon*"), "Nippon Movie Stars" ("*Bintang Film Nippon*"), and "Beautiful Indonesian Girls" ("*Putri Indonesia Yang Cantik Molek*"), where beautiful Japanese and Indonesian women were praised for their beauty. In these columns, the captions accompanying pictures of Japanese movie stars, who all wore *kimonos*, usually mentioned that these women were "beautiful" ("*cantik*") and "have elegant manners" (*"lemah lembut budi bahasanya"*) (*Djawa Baroe* 1943). In the "Beautiful Indonesian Girls" column, there were pictures of Indonesian women, mostly from Java but also from Minahasa (Sulawesi) and Minangkabau (Sumatra). Indonesian women, like the Japanese ones, wore traditional clothing and were all relatively light-skinned. In noting the consistency of traditional clothing in these pictures, I agree with historian Anton Lucas (60) who points out that in

reconstructing a new Asian beauty ideal, Japan had to revive the image of a traditional Asian beauty ideal to counter the modern European woman.

It even seems that traditional clothing was the only signifier that differentiated these Asian women from European women. Lucas notes that although Japan attempted to promote an ideal of Asian beauty, the images of these beautiful women seem to be "Western" if not "Western-influenced" and were "little different from Western images" (67, 78). For example, in *Djawa Baroe*, there was an advertisement for *Lotos* powder. In this ad, a woman wears traditional clothing, a *kebaya,* but her facial features and skin color seem to suggest that she is European or Eurasian. In another magazine, *Soeara Asia*, there was an ad for "as white as pearls" toothpaste, in which the woman also seem to be of European descent. Another ad in the same periodical, for lipstick, portrays a woman, wearing traditional *kebaya,* with European facial features. Additionally, in a column that contains pictures of radio and theatre stars, Eurasian women such as Fifi Young and Sally Young were most often represented (*Soeara Asia* 1943). All of these suggest that although in theory the Japanese could claim success in reconstructing a new Asian beauty ideal that was superior to Western beauty, in practice, the Asian women, even when wearing traditional Asian clothing, did not look that much different from Western women.

Why was this attempt to reconstruct an ideal Asian beauty successful in theory but a failure in practice? This contradiction may be explained by two factors. First, although it was Asian beauty that was being put forth, it was still white or light that was considered the desirable skin color. Certainly a distinction needs to be made here: this white skin was not necessarily "European white." Nonetheless, while it was possible to

make the distinction in theory, yet in practice it was rather difficult to make this distinction because the desirable color was still white. After all, when "white" skin color does not really exist, how can one differentiate one white skin from another? This inability to articulate the "new" color that the Japanese brought to the Indies was metaphorically represented by a 1944 ad for Club powder in *Djawa Baroe*. In this ad, a very light-skinned Japanese woman was putting a powder puff on her cheek as if she were putting powder on her face. The caption says, "when women try it once, they will understand that this powder is really good, smells nice, has a really *new color* (*warnanya baru sekali*) and makes many people happy" (emphasis mine). What is intriguing here is that it wasn't clear what this "new color" was. Although this ad could simply be read as advertising the color for a new line of cosmetics, yet, when other ads during this period such as Virgin powder or Ajer Daffodil (the ones without Japanese women models) could still name and claim to make one's skin white, this particular Japanese ad that did not specify what this new color was reveals the tension in articulating and naming a "new" color.

The second factor relates to Japanese's claim to whiteness, their ambivalent relationship to whiteness, and their being considered as honorary whites. For Japanese people who, historically, had been considered "honorary whites," and particularly in the Indies been granted "European equivalence," whiteness, let alone white skin color, was not considered the sole possession of Europeans. This conflation between white skin color and Western whiteness could be traced to the late-nineteenth century when preference for white skin in Japan, which was traditionally not about European white skin color, eventually became integrated with European whiteness (Leupp qtd. in Bonnett 92).

This shift in fusing traditional notions of whiteness with European whiteness around this time may be traced to the Meiji period (1868-1912) when the Japanese considered Europeans their "model to emulate" (Creighton 216). Hence, when the Japanese notion of skin color in the mid-twentieth century was one that was already a Western integrated notion of white skin, it became rather difficult to articulate a particular or new white Asian beauty ideal that was completely separated from Caucasian whiteness.

Interestingly, Japan was more successful in articulating a notion of Japanese whiteness that was distinct from Caucasian whiteness in the post-World War II period and even more so today. Since the post-War era, "mainstream" Japan has achieved a high level of economic development and success in the global economy and may have entered what anthropologist Millie Creighton refers to as "the *symbolic space* of 'white,' the cognitive space of prominence and ascendancy" (221). Today, at least according to Creighton, the Japanese even feel that they are superior to Westerners (220). Indeed, as Mikiko Ashikari (2005) argues in "Cultivating Japanese Whiteness," skin-whitening products are popular in contemporary Japan because Japanese women desire a Japanese whiteness that is considered better than Caucasian whiteness.

Hence, if Dutch colonialism shifted the meanings of light skin in the Indies' women's beauty discourse to mean predominantly white-skinned Caucasian women, the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia reconfigured these meanings of light skin to now include Asian whiteness as the beauty ideal. Although it was evident that during the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese were considered legally equal to—even superior to— the white race and therefore had access to and claimed their own whiteness, and that they considered themselves superior to Indonesians (and later to Caucasians), it was unclear

how Indonesians constructed themselves in relation to whiteness.  It was only after its

independence that Indonesia began to construct its own Indonesian white beauty ideal.

<u>Indonesian White Beauty:</u>
<u>Gender, Nation, and Race as Signifiers for Skin Color (1945-1998)</u>

As in modern Japan, Indonesians, following independence, have also constructed a

nationalized white identity—what I call an Indonesian white beauty.  I define Indonesian

white beauty as a modern/contemporary/postcolonial construction of an ideal of women's

beauty that emerges out of both a long process of encounters with and resistance to Dutch

colonialism, Japanese Occupation, and American cultural hegemony and attempts to

strategically represent and position Indonesian women within this global racial hierarchy.

As such, Indonesian white beauty disrupts, challenges, but simultaneously reaffirms

white as the superior and most desirable color across various nations.

First, however, I need to emphasize that the "white" in Indonesian white beauty

refers to skin color and not necessarily "race" as in the U.S. context.  My using the word

"white" here actually exposes the limitation of language in discussing the issue of race

and skin color in a transnational context.  In the language of Indonesia, "she is white"

means "she has a light skin," "she is black" means "she has a dark skin" (Prabasmoro

34).  The words black and white here do not signify race, unless it is accompanied by the

word "skin" such as in "she is a white-skinned person" ("*Ia orang kulit putih*")

(Prabasmoro 34).  Most of the time, people simply say "bule" (pronounced: boo-lay) to

refer to Caucasian whites.  Seemingly oxymoron concepts such as "black Dutch" (used to

refer to the Ambonese people of Eastern Indonesia, during the colonial period) or "*bule*

*kulit hitam*" literally meaning black Caucasians (Caucasian with tanned-skin or light-

skinned African-Americans) have at times appeared in daily conversation, examples that indicate that skin color is constructed differently in Indonesia.

I first came upon this notion of Indonesian white beauty when I interviewed forty-six Indonesian women as part of this dissertation research. A thorough discussion of the interviews' results and processes is the subject of chapter six.[62] To avoid redundancy, therefore, this chapter will simply mention one very specific finding of the interviews: that these women differentiate various categories of whiteness in Indonesia and seem to prefer Indonesian rather than Caucasian whiteness.

During the interviews I conducted, mostly in Jakarta and Balikpapan, pertaining to issues such as skin color, race, women's beauty, and beauty products, I asked my interviewees this question, "what is your ideal skin color?" This seemingly simple question turned out to generate a surprisingly complex discussion. Responses consistently stressed a preference for lighter skin than their own, but none of the women could articulate the specific hue that they preferred. I noted how one of the ways in which they attempted to articulate their ideal skin color was by constructing various categories of white skin color that was signified by race and nation with a stated preference for what they described as Indonesian, and also sometimes Japanese, white skin color. Although they did not explicitly mention gender, it was obvious that they were implicitly referring to women when making references to people of a particular race, ethnic, or nation, probably because the discussion was concerning the issue of beauty. Here, I provide only nine examples, chosen to highlight the variety of responses in addressing their ideal skin color:

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[62] Please see chapter six to learn more about the details of these interviews.

Ami:    "I like Japanese [women's] skin color […] Japanese [skin] is not pale.  Their look

is more elegant than the Chinese.  I just don't like Chinese white skin."

Dian:   "I don't like white like *Bule*.[63] […] Japanese women are so beautiful and so white,

they are yellowish.  I like Sundanese white; [it is] transparent."

Amanda: "Not like Chinese skin that is yellowish, maybe white like Japanese, or maybe a

mix of Japanese white and Caucasian white.   But not just like Caucasian white

that has brown dots, but clean white."

Yolanda:  "I don't like white like Chinese or Caucasian.  It just seems funny.  You can

see the pores of Caucasians."

Ina:    "I don't like Chinese white.  It looks funny.  I always think of pork.  It seems that

[their eating pork] affects their skin.  Caucasian white […] is nice to look at.  But

the white is kind of reddish.  So I like Indonesian white, more natural."

Vindya: "I like Indonesian white, which is kind of yellowish.  Chinese white is too white

[....] white like dead people […] too pale."

Wati:   "Sundanese or Padangnese whiteness. […] That is the most suitable for

Indonesians."

Pingkan: "I think white Indonesians are different from Caucasian white.  Caucasians have

freckles.  Indonesian white is natural. […] I personally like Indonesians.  They

[Caucasians] were born white.  But their white is different from our white.  I like

Indonesians' style better."

Tinah: "Caucasian skin is white but it is reddish like shrimp."

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[63] This is a slang term for Caucasian; hereafter I will simply use Caucasian when the interviewees use the word Bule.

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These interviews highlight that there are several methods that these women use to distinguish the particular skin color that they prefer. First, in specifying a particular skin color, these women use race and nation and at times ethnicity to signify the skin color they prefer and not vice versa. That is, the *quality* of white skin is signified by nationality and race. The whiteness of a particular skin color often becomes undesirable because of the race or nation that signifies it. This is most evident in the case of the Chinese. The long history of discrimination against Chinese people in Indonesia seems to resurface when these women discuss the ideal skin color: Chinese skin color is not preferred. For instance, it is their stereotypical pork-eating habit, prohibited in the interviewee's religion, Islam, that makes her dislike Chinese white skin color. Hence, although Chinese have light or white skin, but because it is race and nation, I argue, that signify skin color and not vice versa, their white skin color may be considered undesirable nonetheless. As such, unlike Aquarini Prabasmoro who argues in *Becoming White* that the lack of a white and black dichotomy in Indonesia, even during the Dutch colonial era, is caused by the racial plurality of Indonesia, i.e., the presence of other Asians such as Chinese, Indians, and Arabs that complicates this dichotomy (35), I argue that because it is race and nation that signify skin color and not vice versa, this construction disrupts the otherwise neat racial hierarchy of white at the top and black at the bottom. This allows us to understand that in the Indonesian context, the lighter skin color is not necessarily always the better because skin color, rather than a signifier for race, is signified by race and nation. The lighter could only be better in so far as the race and nation that accompany and signify it is the preferred race and nation. Although one could hardly tell the differences between Japanese and Chinese skin color, one may

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prefer Japanese over Chinese white skin, for example. And the fact that it is Japanese white skin that in some cases is preferred may prove that the Japanese effort in propagating Japanese beauty during its Occupation achieved its goal.

Second, in order to construct their specific white skin color as more preferable, the interviewees construct other white skin color as a non-white color. In these interviews, Caucasians, for example, are often constructed as having "red" skin color. Interestingly, Hiroshi Wagatsuma in interviewing Japanese people came up with a similar finding. Wagatsuma quoted one of the interviewees who preferred Japanese skin because it is "thicker and more resilient," better than Caucasian skin that was described as exposing "the redness of blood under the transparent skin. [...] Then it doesn't appear white but red" (qtd. in Bonnett 99). Hence, at times it seems that even while recognizing various categories of whiteness, the people that Wagatsuma interviewed in Japan—like the women I interviewed in Indonesia—in order to affirm that their whiteness, Indonesian or Japanese whiteness, was superior, constructed the other as "not white."

A distaste for Caucasian white skin color is found not only in contemporary Japan and Indonesia but also during the period of Dutch colonial rule. This leads us to suspect that resistance to white supremacy or colonialism may have played a role in formulating such a dislike. For instance, an Indo woman recounting her experience as a teenage girl during colonialism admitted that she found "the color of white people repulsive. The white thighs and bare, pinkish, upper part made me feel nauseated" (Veur 73-4). She contrasted the white bodies to native dark skin:

> I regularly saw naked Javanese and Madurese fishermen with their nets on the
> piers—and often took a furtive look at their sex organs. How black and small

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they were.  I experienced no sexual urge but I thought affectionately how

beautiful the supple, dark, naked bodies were.  They were not so repulsive as the

bodies of the Dutch. (Veur 73)

This confession was narrated by a woman recounting her teenage years who later

admitted that she was told to and therefore desired and ended up marrying a white Dutch

man.  Yet, it was precisely during her teenage years, a time when challenging authority is

expected, that she constructed the "dark, naked bodies" as beautiful while resisting white

bodies by constructing them as repulsive.

Indeed, history recorded that even during the colonial period there was already

early resistance to white as the preferred skin color.  In a serial story, "Nyai Ratna,"

published in *Medan Prijaji* in 1909, for example, Tirto Adhi Soerjo, an important

Indonesian nationalist who later became the prototype of Pramoedya's *Buru* novels'

character Minke (which I will discuss in chapter 5), described the beautiful Nyai Ratna as

"true, not white, but yellow" (Pramoedya *Sang Pemula* 301).  In describing Nyai Ratna

as "not white," the text posits white as the dominant skin color that it attempts to

challenge.  "Yellow" then became a "colored" space to resist this dominant color, a

refusal of the text to define beauty as was defined by the colonizer.  Yet, yellow was

nonetheless another light skin color, which makes the text still complicit with the light-

skinned beauty ideal.  This resistance towards the colonial ideal of beauty, which

nonetheless reaffirmed an ideal light-skinned beauty, could also be found in periodicals

such as *Bintang Hindia* (1928) whose images of "beautiful Javanese girls" ("*Nona Jawa

yang cantik manis*") were never images of dark-skinned women from Eastern Indonesia.

Beyond these examples of a resistance to racialized whiteness in these fictional or popular accounts, one could also find examples of resistance within nationalist discourse. Early Indonesian nationalists had envisioned the creation of an Indonesian nation that was not racialized.  In the mid-1930s, for example, Indonesian nationalists attempted to formulate "a non-racial concept of an Indonesian nation," arguing that nation and state were not related to race and that race was not a satisfying category in itself because no race was a "pure" race (Suryadinata *Peranakan* 159).  This is not at all to suggest that Indonesians did not recognize "race."  For example, an article appearing in the January 1921 edition of *Soenting Melajoe*, a West Sumatran magazine for women categorized five races on earth: Mongolian with their slanted eyes such as in Japan and China; Caucasians, such as Europeans and Arabs with a high nose; Africans, with black skin and curly hair; red-skinned Indians, the "true American children"; and Malays, including people from Madagascar, the Phillippines, and Taiwan with yellow and brown skin (14). Nonetheless, these nationalists' choice to formulate a non-racial concept of national identity may suggest that it was resistance to rather than the ignoring of the pervasiveness of race in late- colonial lives that stimulated this particular formulation of nationality.

Although during the colonial period, resistance seemed to engender either a refusal to be engaged with race or the construction of some other color as desirable, following Indonesia's independence, this resistance was articulated in more complex and oftentimes contradictory ways.  Indonesia's first president Soekarno (1945-1965) is characterized as predominantly anti-Western and genuinely concerned with the issue of race and nation (not necessarily gender).  Unlike his successor, President Soeharto, Soekarno permitted public discussion of race, ethnicity, and religion.  He even requested

that Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color against White-World Supremacy,* published in 1920, be translated into Indonesian out of his concern that Indonesians needed to know more about race.  In the chapter specifically on Indonesia that was an addition to the original version of the book, as was consistent with his speeches under the Japanese Occupation, resentment against the white race was obvious.  Soekarno was indeed open about his anti-Western stance and nearing the end of his presidency in 1964 he even told Western countries to "go to hell with your aid" (Mackie and MacIntyre 36).

This may explain why under Soekarno's presidency, there were fewer products advertised for whitening one's skin than during the colonial period.  One of the very few ads that advertised whitening or bleaching cream was an ad published in a 1955 Dutch women's magazine, *De Huisvrouw*, although the caption itself was written in French ("*incomparable pour blanchir et adoucir la peau*").  Most other beauty ads simply used words such as "radiant" and "bright" (*bersinar terang* or *bercahaya terang*) to describe the desirable end result of these products.  For example, an ad for Bi Yong Hoen powder in *Pantjawarna* (1948) claimed to make one's face "sweet, smooth, young, and bright" ("*manis, haluskan kulit, dan awet muda bercahaya terang*").  Similarly, an ad published in *Pantjawarna* (1958) for Djamu Galian Putri claimed that this traditional herbal beverage could make one's face "radiantly bright" ("*bersinar terang*").  Interestingly, instead of bleaching, an article published in *Warta* (1959) advised women to do a soft bleaching to "improve" their skin color, hinting at the white but not too white ideal. Nonetheless, all of these obviously suggest that bright/light skin color was still preferable during the Soekarno era.  Refusing to use the word "white" and instead using other words to signify light skin color nonetheless reminds us of the strategy used during the colonial

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period when, in resisting white as the dominant color, Indonesians used "yellow" to reaffirm the light-skinned beauty ideal.

Paradoxically, although Soekarno's policy was one that was anti-western and there were fewer products that claimed to "whiten" one's skin, the images of women in magazines such as *Pantjawarna* and *De Huisvrouw* were once again mostly European-descent Indo and Caucasian. This becomes all the more evident in this period because, unlike under colonialism when there were mostly texts and drawings of women in ads, there were more photographic images in these ads, making it easier for us to "see" who were considered truly beautiful. For example, Lux still used Hollywood movie stars such as Joan Caulfield (1949), Jeanne Crain (1951), Ruth Roman (1956), and Belinda Lee (1957) to advertise their beauty soap. Other beauty ads such as Vinolia talcum powder or Pond's cold cream also used Caucasian women as their models. It wasn't until 1959 when we see an Indonesian movie star, Dhiana (1959), advertising for Lux.

When Soekarno's presidency ended in the mid-1960s, changes began to occur. His successor, Soeharto, came to power in 1966 after a military coup a year earlier backed by the United States's CIA and remained president until 1998. That his coup was backed by a Western country signaled one of the most significant changes taking place: the reentry of the West, particularly the United States, into Indonesian affairs. How did this change manifest itself within the beauty ads published in women's magazines under Soeharto's presidency? To examine this question, I will turn to the most popular women's magazine in Indonesia from 1973 when it was first published to the present, *Femina*. The most significant change that one notices over time is that Caucasian women in beauty products ads became less and less prevalent. Here, it is

important that I clarify that I refer specifically to the change of images in beauty product ads published in women's magazines. Caucasian women still appeared in other public spaces in Indonesia, for example, in American films, which are widely available in Indonesia, American magazines such as the Indonesian version of *Cosmopolitan*, and at beauty counters at shopping malls.

During its first year of publication, *Femina* commonly represented Indonesian women alongside American women. Images even included women with stereotypical Indonesian facial features and a darker complexion; by the late 1990s, however, such images appeared less often. Moreover, Indo women and Caucasian American women were usually the models for major brand beauty products. In 1975, for example, Indo women such as Widyawati and Debbie Cynthia Dewi were models for Pond's ads and Caucasian women such as Jill St. John, Debbie Reynolds, and Jane Seymour modeled for Lux beauty soap ads.

Similar to the colonial period and the immediate post-independence years, under Soeharto Europe and the United States were still represented not only as the land of the beautiful, but also as the land where authentic beauty comes from. Captions such as "Stendhal from Paris" (1978) and "Made in England" for Yardley ads (1979) or "Swedish Formula Cosmetics" (1980), "Lancome Paris" (1980), "Palmolive USA" (1984) were typical. In an ad for Lux beauty soap, the Indonesian movie star Widyawati was represented standing in front of the Eiffel Tower (1978). The caption that accompanies the ad reads, "Every time I go to Paris, I always get excellent advice on the secret of beauty treatment. […] The New Lux is now available also in Indonesia." Not only is France invoked to authenticate a beauty treatment, but simultaneously, Lux is

constructed as a transnational object that travels from Paris that is "now available also in Indonesia." Its status as a desirable object derives from its European origin.

That Indonesia becomes a site for signifying white beauty only comes later. Advertisements for whitening skin products allow us to trace how and when this shift occurs. In the 1970s, ads for whitening products, including Tolino Pearl Cream (1975), Hinds Whitening Cream (1975), Kelly Pearl Cream (1976), Castella Soap (1977), Gizi Super Cream (1977), Vaeron Pearl Cream (1978), Fair Lady Cosmetic (1980), Juve Honey and Lemon Peeling Cream (1980), and Revlon Golden Pearl Skin Lightening Cream (1980), claimed only to diminish black spots rather than whiten the hue of the whole face or body. And some products, such as Tolino Pearl Cream, were advertised for men as well. Yet, because the images in these ads were varied, an Asian man (Tolino Pearl Cream), a light-skinned Indian woman (Hinds Whitening Cream), a Caucasian woman (Vaeron Pearl Cream, Fair Lady Cosmetic, Revlon Golden Pearl Skin Lightening Cream), an Indo woman (Juve Peeling Cream, Castella), the "white" that these ads suggested was not yet Indonesian and the promised result was not yet white female beauty. Even in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the marketing language used in these whitening products ads seemed to suggest that these products were useful to counter the sun's damaging effects rather than to transform oneself to be more beautifully white. There were products such as sunblock creams (Pabanox (1989) and Oil of Ulan Beauty Fluid) whose ads included captions like that for Oil of Ulan "Who is not afraid of ultra-violet rays?" (1989) making visible that the "enemy" one needs to confront was simply the sun and not necessarily the beauty of "other" women.

This, however, soon changed. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the language used in these ads became more explicit that color transformation could make a woman beautiful. Because whitening products now entered the discourse of female beauty, it was women who were represented and invited to use whitening creams. Men were no longer considered a target market. If men appeared at all in these ads, they functioned simply to admire the beauty of these now-whitened women or to suggest that the now-transformed woman could achieve this "trophy." Indonesian white beauty had become a specifically gendered concept. Ads for Pond's Fair and Lovely (1995+) even used different images of the same woman with different shades of skin color: from darker skin in the first week to a lighter skin shade after six weeks. Although ads still incorporated claims that their product could prevent sun damage, they became more and more about women's self-improvement and achievement. For example, another ad for Pond's Fair and Lovely insinuated that by using this product one can, as the ad's title suggests, "prepare [herself] in the best possible manner to pursue [her] career" ("*Persiapan Jitu Memburu Karier*").

I relate this change to world politics, particularly the end of the cold war in 1989. The supposed triumph of American capitalism contributed to two developments that occurred in Indonesia at this time: (1) the dissemination of an ideology of "rugged individualism" through and because of (2) the emergence of private television stations and television advertising in Indonesia. Indonesia's first private television station, RCTI (*Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia*), was founded in 1989 by a group that included one of Soeharto's sons, Bambang Triatmojo. It first aired only regionally but then, in 1990, began to air nationally. Another private television station, SCTV (*Surya Citra Televisi*), whose owners included one of Soeharto's daughters, began broadcasting in several cities

in East Java in 1990 and then nationally in 1993.  Other private television stations started up at the turn of the twenty-first century.

One could argue that the notion of "rugged individualism," that is the idea that even people of color could attain their dreams if only they work really hard, did not necessarily have any "color."  Yet, the very popular U.S. films and TV series that traveled to Indonesia were usually, with the exception of "The Cosby Show" (*Keluarga Pak Huxtable*), about middle-class white families.  As in Japan, after the 1950s when many families began to own private television sets and could watch stories about white middle-class Americans, "images of Whites on screen [became] 'natural'" (Creighton 216-7), in Indonesia, after the cold war, whiteness was also naturalized and became the "norm" on television.  Certainly, even prior to 1989, Indonesia's public TV station already aired American films and TV series, but American shows were fewer then compared to what the new space provided by the new private TV stations made possible.  And because having only one TV station limited the development of Indonesian films and TV series prior to 1989, these new spaces were first filled with mostly American and to a limited extent Indian films and Spanish telenovelas.  All of these, including Indian films with their light-skinned movie stars as well as (whitening) advertisements on television, served to reinforce white/light as the most desirable skin color.  At the same time, these films, shows, and advertisements oftentimes narrated stories about love and families, implicitly reinforcing the idea that the individual was responsible for her own happiness, with "happiness" equated with looking good and being loved.  Moreover, with the language of self-transformation that presumes that beauty is a personal/individual responsibility, ugliness then becomes the fault of the individual.  Compare this to the

ideology of the Japanese Occupation when beauty was represented as "women's duty" for the nation and her husband; after the cold war, beauty becomes a responsibility which would help women achieve some self-interest such as a career or love.

Not only that, in a society where polygamy[64] is legal such as in Indonesia, women's fear of having her husband take another wife cannot simply be dismissed. Even not yet in a marriage situation, an interviewee, Riana, made similar comments, "if I'm dark, my boyfriend would go to another [woman]." Women's feeling of fear is therefore cultivated not only to control women and ensure their submissive roles but also to keep, among other things, the whitening-cream industry running.

At the same time, during this period when the world seemed to become more open and accessible through the medium of television, the need to define oneself against others became more important. That is, while whiteness became the norm, there was a growing feeling that Indonesians should define their own whiteness. For companies selling products in Indonesia, certainly, the need to distinguish "Indonesian women" against "other" women was to convince targeted women that their products are for them, the Indonesian women. Whitening ads, for example, were specific in invoking the Indonesianness of white skin color. Ads such as Sari Ayu-Martha Tilaar's Pelembab Putri Matari (1995), Mustika Ratu's Masker Bengkoang (1996+), and Citra White Lotion (1996+) used signifiers such as flowers, traditional clothing, or a tropical setting to highlight their (traditional) Indonesianness. Signifying their products as "Indonesian" was particularly important for Citra White Lotion, which in 1989 used the word "yellow" (*kuning langsat*) instead of "white" ("*putih"*) to name the desirable skin color in

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[64] In Muslim Indonesia, polygamy is legal insofar as, mandated by the government policy, husbands, particularly those who work at the government offices, have asked their wives for and been granted a permission to take another wife (Parawansa 71).

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advertising another one of their beauty products, Citra Beauty Lotion. This "Indonesian" (nation as) signifier was an attempt to assure its target market that the company's move from producing lotions that can make one's skin "yellow" (lighter) to produce "whitening" products was still within the boundaries of creating an Indonesian white beauty for Indonesian women. Indeed, one of the ways in which these ads assured Indonesian women that these products were for them was by using Indonesian, mostly Indo, women as models in their ads, instead of Caucasian women who previously had been used to advertise various beauty products including whitening cream.

It is here that Indo women in particular seem to lend themselves as a perfect beauty ideal to represent Indonesian white beauty. Although light-skinned Sundanese, Javanese, or Manadonese women have also represented Indonesian white beauty, Indo women are more common in these ads. This is the case also in films, where Indo women, such as Anni Krohn and Fifi Young had become popular. One Indonesian feminist scholar, Aquarini Prabasmoro, who has examined how Indo women and their bodies have come to represent an ideal beauty emphasizes that the Indo woman "could only be white in a non-white culture."[65] She writes,

> In the case of Indo celebrities in soap ads, I find that white skin color is
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> emphasized in such a way that their whiteness hides their other colors (non-white
>
> color) while simultaneously reaffirming their partial whiteness. […] Hence, in the

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[65] Prabasmoro calls Indonesia a "non-white" (*bukan putih*) society. She explicitly says that she is willing to take the risk of claiming Indonesia as a "non-white" culture by arguing that "because Indonesians don't think of themselves as white or black as is understood within the dichotomy of white/black races, [she] argues that it is more accurate to say that Indonesian culture and bodies are not white and not black rather than to affirm that it is part of either one (Prabasmoro 35). However, her argument overlooks the fact that people of races that in the global context are considered White, or Black are also Indonesian citizens and that Indonesians do, particularly in regards to skin color, desire whiteness, albeit an Indonesian whiteness.

local context, the representation of this non-white body is accepted to be white enough, although it is not white enough to be white in the global context. (91)

Her argument supports my proposition that it is race and nation that signify these Indo women's skin color. Their being perceived as not embodying white skin color in a global context is signified by their race and nation—Asian and Indonesian. Simultaneously, their being accepted as representing an Indonesian white beauty ideal in the local context is driven by the fact that they are indeed Indonesians, by race or nationality.

To further build on Prabasmoro's argument, I would point out that it is precisely the ability of these Indo women to be simultaneously white and non-white that functions as a subversive power. Whiteness, as Alastair Bonnett points out, can be "redeployed" to be "subversive" (98). The presence of these white-but-not-white female bodies on television shows in magazines, and in ads challenge and interrupt the Caucasian American white beauty ideal narratives that are also present in these same media. Particularly because "white people are who white people say are white […] [and] [t]his has a profoundly controlling effect" (Dyer *White* 48), to claim that Indonesian women are white and yet their whiteness is different from or even better than Caucasians, as is evident from the interviews I referred to at the start of this section, is powerful, for it rejects the control of whites to claim that they are the only whites there are.

From these previous discussions, it is obvious that Indonesian white beauty stems from the larger racial and gendered project of the formation of "Indonesian" national identity. Hence, the process of constructing a beauty ideal that is used not only for the commercial purpose of selling beauty products but also for the purpose of constructing a gender-based national identity necessitates that one examine who among its citizens can

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be the "face of the nation" (Barnes). This means, as Barnes points out, "beauty is not 'natural' but ideological: it has a certain kind of face, certain features, hair texture, eye color, shape of nose and lips" (361). Indeed, as national formation involves questioning who can be included and excluded from this formation (Wessel 39), framing a discourse of beauty within a discourse of nation consequently involves the question of whose faces have been included and excluded from this construction of Indonesian white beauty ideal. It is here that the invisible dark-skinned women particularly from Eastern Indonesia are excluded—visibly—from this formation.

Why are women from Eastern Indonesia or Indonesian women of African descent omitted from this beauty ideal that stems from the larger national narrative? There are several possible explanations that I will discuss here. First, women from Eastern Indonesia and/or of African descent are rarely incorporated into Indonesian history. Even one of the most comprehensive books on Indonesia, such as Jean Gelman Taylor's *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories*, overlooks the presence of people of African origin in Indonesian history. Or, if the presence of people (not necessarily women) of African descent appears at all, such as in the book *Pasang Naik*, they are represented as "primitives" (276-7). It is particularly striking that European men living in colonial Batavia rarely married African women, although they were "abundantly present at that time" (Raben 283-4), but did marry dark-skinned Portuguese-speaking women of Indian origin (Blussé 156)—an obvious example that the issue is not skin color per se, but rather the ways in which race made meanings of this particular skin color.

Second, because Indonesian white beauty is constructed as part of the nation's attempt to construct its women's beauty ideal, it is undoubtedly related to the issue of

nationalism and the representation of the national culture.  Particularly under Soeharto,

Indonesia's nationalism could be described as "state nationalism" (Wessel 36).  Inggrid

Wessel defined it as nationalism "that aims to [hold] the state together by claiming the

unity of the nation to be the highest value for all Indonesians which all other values have

to be subordinated to" (36).  Consequently, within state nationalism, what is deemed

national culture works to subordinate all other cultures.  Indeed, the formation of nation

necessitates that there be a superior culture and the exclusion of the inferior culture

(Lenhart 98).  Lenhart further elaborates this:

> The national identification of all people living in the state is understood as the
>
> crucial component of national development.  National identity should develop on
>
> the basis of a national Indonesian culture as already conceptualized in the
>
> Constitution of 1945.  This national culture should represent a synthesis of
>
> elements of various regional cultures, namely those which are regarded as
>
> *superior/superordinate*, i.e, Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Buginese-
>
> Macassarese and Malayan. (95 emphasis mine)

Thus, a beauty ideal that stems from the larger project of national identity reflects the

ways in which Sundanese and Javanese women, for example, have represented

Indonesian white beauty alongside Indo women while women of the subordinate culture

such as women from Eastern Indonesia were omitted from the national narrative of

beauty ideal.  Not only that, as William R. Liddle in *Leadership and Culture in*

*Indonesian Politics* argues, because the Indonesian national culture is one that values

both native and modernized Western culture, it is Indo women—both native and

Western—who became the perfect embodiment of beauty.

Lastly, within the narrative of nationalism, a dominant beauty ideal does the work of serving the interests of its ruling elites. Inggrid Wessel points out that nationalism works to "stabil[ize] and justi[fy] the ruling elite" (39). The ruling elites, I propose, have an interest in maintaining the omission and controlling the representations of women (and men) from Eastern Indonesia and/or African descent in Indonesia. This seems to be what Ani Sekarningsih in her novel *Namaku Teweraut* attempts to address: how Javanese elites have benefited financially from representing Eastern Indonesia (in her novel, people from *Asmat*) as "primitive."

Thus far, I have pointed out how circulations of and encounters with people from other nations engendered various categories of nationality- and race-based whiteness within the discourse of feminine beauty. That in the Indonesian context whiteness refers to skin color and not necessarily race may also in some ways reflect the history of resistance that refuses (rather than simply ignores) to make race central. This chapter therefore serves as an attempt to formulate a language that reflects such a history and permits us to discuss whiteness in a transnational context. Whiteness need not be Caucasian only, but rather can, and has, referred specifically to skin color, rather than, even if partly signified by, race.

<u>Why White after All?</u>

In this chapter I have focused on the conceptualization of an Indonesian white beauty as a form of resistance to Dutch colonialism, the Japanese Occupation, and post-cold war American cultural domination. This section shifts the focus to consider how the construction of Indonesian white beauty nonetheless reaffirms global white supremacy.

Before doing so, I will first take a step back and state the obvious: the relationship

between skin color and race is arbitrarily and ambiguously constructed.  White, white-

skinned, and white race are concepts whose meanings are constantly shifting and whose

relationships with each other are mostly arbitrary.  A group of people may claim that they

belong to the same white race, for example, yet they may have different hues of skin

color.  For instance, white men are oftentimes represented as darker than white women

and working-class whites have been represented as darker than middle- or upper-class

whites (Dyer 57).  Arthur G. Abbott even went as far as proposing that whites should be

called "colored," for they could appear "nearly white from fright, loss of blood, etc.;

grayish from pain; red from exertion, anger, etc.; greenish from biliousness and

introduced poisons; yellow from jaundice; blue from cold, poor circulation, and lack of

oxygen; brown from sun tan; purple from strangulation; and black from decay," while

proposing blacks should be referred to as "not colored" because black represents "an

absence of color" (qtd. in Birren 113).  Indeed, as the interviews I discussed above and

will discuss in chapter six suggest, the skin color of Caucasians is sometimes referred to

as red rather than white.

Nonetheless, how do we explain the persistence in claiming the "self" (Caucasian,

Japanese, or Indonesian) as embodying whiteness?  Might it be related to the fact that the

color of white has good connotative meanings?  Psychologist John Williams has

suggested that people transfer the connotative meanings of white as "good" to the white-

coded race and the meanings of black as "bad" to the black-coded race (238). Might

people consequently prefer to understand themselves to be white of whatever race or

nation in order to be considered "good"?  Indeed, during the pre-Civil War period in the

United States people may have assigned themselves the category of white because of its connotative meanings as "not slaves" rather than simply to use it as an "accurate term to describe [their] skin color" (Dyer 50). Because whiteness is indeed an ambiguous and arbitrary construction, it allows for the possibility to claim whiteness even if one does not have "white" skin color. After all, who literally has white skin color? It is precisely this ambiguity that gives whiteness its strength. Richard Dyer argues,

> white as skin colour is just as unstable, unbounded a category as white as a hue, and therein lies its strength. It enables whiteness to be presented as an apparently attainable, flexible, varied category, while setting up an always movable criterion of inclusion, the ascribed whiteness of your skin. (57)

This imagined possibility of attaining whiteness allows people of various nations to claim their own and give new meanings to whiteness. Nonetheless, as it is whiteness that is being claimed, it merely strengthens rather than challenges whiteness as the dominant color across nations.

If claiming whiteness actually strengthens the position of whiteness in a global racial hierarchy, why construct an ideal beauty that is represented by white-skinned or light-skinned women? The answer seems to lie within the argument that modernity is often conflated with Western/whiteness. As Bonnett pointed out, the "white" race actually benefits from the conflation Western/whiteness/modernity because to achieve modernity one needs to adapt "racial whiteness" (69-70). In the specific Venezuelan case that Bonnett discussed, he pointed out that to achieve "national advancement" requires that the nation take the "route towards whiteness" (Bonnett 77). In the Indonesian context, I argue that because Indonesian white beauty is a beauty ideal that is constructed

to represent Indonesian modernness, it therefore has to embody a particular kind of whiteness (that is Indonesian whiteness) that modernity itself embodies.

The second answer may relate to the fact that it is white that is internationally recognized as having a currency within a global context. This certainly reminds us of the maze of gaze metaphor. That is, for the maze to exist, there needs to be some sort of structure that holds this maze together. Here, it seems, the capacity of whiteness of whatever categories to maintain its currency and desirability across various spaces seems to hold the structure of this maze. For example, even Japan adopts whiteness to validate its power over other Asian nations (Bonnett 94). What this means in terms of Indonesia is that although it is possible to represent darker-skinned women such as ones from Eastern Indonesia as the beauty standard, yet, because national identity is about representing the self not only to Indonesians but also to other nations, these dark-skinned women would not be internationally recognized as beautiful. This actually exposes how the construction of light-skinned women as beautiful cannot be guarded by only one nation. Even the United States, however powerful it is, cannot impose this idea alone. Particularly because people and objects move across nations, there needs to be some kinds of reinforcement not only in the country of departure but also in the country of destination. After all, in this maze of gaze, categories of identity that figure as the passage or the walkway of this maze necessarily exist in continuum with other categories of identity in other fragmented spaces.

That people and objects constantly travel across nations necessitates that we investigate the meanings of skin color beyond our national border. Once again, I am referring here to the maze of gaze metaphor: being in a specific part of the maze limits

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our vision to see what happens beyond these walls. We therefore need to walk through this maze to be able to see what lies beyond these walls and to make sense that what happens in this part of the maze is related to what happens in other parts of this same maze. Indeed, as Donaldo Macedo and Panayota Gounari pointed out, "[p]ower is no longer tied to any geographical location and is not contained within nation-states. On the contrary, power is extraterritorial; it flows" (14). We therefore need to follow this flow of power beyond one nation-state to thoroughly understand the power of whiteness. Discussing this issue in a transnational context allows us to move away from arguing that a specific beauty culture is rooted in a national/traditional practice (Leung, Lam, and Sze), or from centering the discussion around American and European whiteness alone. On the contrary, it allows us to contextualize what dominant discourse the Indonesian white beauty ideal is responding to while simultaneously allowing us to unreveal the normalization of white skin color as the standard of beauty across various nations. As the postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha argues, "colonial mimicry" where the colonized are always "almost the same, *but not quite*" merely strengthens the position of the colonizer (153).

While it is true that the majority and dominant people in Indonesia are not Caucasian and that the dominant beauty discourse in Indonesian is one that values a specifically Indonesian whiteness, one should not easily dimiss the relationship between Indonesian white beauty and global "white supremacy." Here, borrowing from Winant, I use "white supremacy" in its "mutated" form. This means that the "white" in white supremacy does not always mean Caucasian; nor is it always the interests of Caucasians that are being privileged across these nations. Within this mutated white supremacy,

whoever claims to have possessive investment in (whatever categories of) whiteness and benefits from it are the ones who maintain this supremacy.  Therefore, as one claims to embody, desire, or benefit from Indonesian white beauty as the beauty standard, one needs to be cautious in examining her or his own complicity within this global white supremacy.

**Chapter 4**

**The *Cosmo*-Politics of Skin Color:**
**An Analysis of Whitening Ads in Indonesian *Cosmopolitan***

As I have argued in previous chapters, although the preference for light-skinned women precedes European colonialism and continued after Indonesia's independence, the meanings of light skin color throughout these different historical periods varied significantly. In this chapter, I look at post-Soeharto (post-1998) Indonesia to demonstrate a further shift in meaning. Unlike in the late-1980 and 1990, when the preference for light skin color was visually represented by "Indonesian white" women, in our contemporary moment, light-skinned women are resignified: no longer just "Caucasian white" as in the Dutch colonial period, nor "Japanese white" as during the Occupation, nor "Indonesian white" as in the decades following independence, but something more complicated that I call "Cosmopolitan white."

The argument in this chapter is drawn from a critical reading of advertisements for skin-whitening products published in the Indonesian version of the U.S. women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* (hereafter referred to as *Cosmo*). This particular site of analysis is chosen because it allows me to trace circulations of popular culture from the United States to Indonesia. I do so by examining the U.S. edition of *Cosmo* for specific dates and for charting which images and articles "travel" from the United States to reappear in the Indonesian version of *Cosmo*. Simultaneously, I will argue that because articles that contextualize these ads are the prerogative, in the Indonesian version, of an Indonesian editor, this chapter also makes visible the voices and agencies of Indonesians in

circulating images and narratives pertinent to issues of skin color, gender, race, and sexuality in a transnational context.

The four issues that I examine in this chapter are June, July, August, and September 2006. These particular months were chosen because, in addition to ads for skin-whitening products, I wanted also to consider tanning lotion ads in the U.S. edition (usually published during these months), which I use as an invisible frame of reference that allows me to further complicate my analysis of whitening ads in the Indonesian context. Additionally, for comparative purposes, this chapter also makes reference to whitening ads published in other issues of Indonesian *Cosmo* between 1997 and 2006 and with ads published during the same years in Indonesia's most popular women's magazine, the home-grown *Femina*. By focusing on only twenty-eight[66] whitening ads in just four issues of the Indonesian *Cosmo,* I am able to read these ads closely. But I enrich my analysis by reading these ads against tanning lotion ads in the U.S. edition of *Cosmo* in the same months and in comparison to skin-whitening ads in other issues of the Indonesian edition of *Cosmo,* and with similar ads in *Femina*.

Comparing ads for the same products in a U.S. magazine and its Indonesian version also allows me to shift my analysis from Dutch and Japanese influences to the United States. Of course, Japanese popular culture still penetrates contemporary Indonesian culture, making the United States simply "one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (Appadurai 31); however, the United States today has become one of the most powerful influences in contemporary Indonesia. From U.S. films, television shows, and magazines, to consumer products, U.S. popular

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[66] In fourteen other cases such as in Pond's White Beauty Detox, Kanebo Blanchir, DiorSnow Pure, Nivea Whitening Face, and others, where ads were published more than once during this period, I only counted them once.

culture shapes the terrain of contemporary Indonesian popular culture. Of further

significance to my analysis is that the United States, as home to people from various

nations and racial backgrounds, has different histories of race, gender, skin color, and

sexuality from Indonesia's. This makes objects coming from the United States

interesting sites of analysis for they allow us to investigate the ways in which politics of

gender, race, skin color, and sexuality, which underpin the very production of U.S.

*Cosmo,* travels to and helps reconfigure the politics represented in the Indonesian *Cosmo*.

Also, adding the United States as yet another site from which whiteness is articulated as

"desirable," this analysis makes visible how transnational circulations of whiteness

depend on the ways in which whiteness is capable of maintaining its currency across the

globe.

Moreover, it is important to remember that the United States has played a

significant role in Indonesian politics, particularly after Indonesia's formation as a nation-

state in 1945. However, the political relations between these two countries, especially in

the years immediately following Indonesia's independence, can be described as

precarious at best. Indonesia certainly had every reason to distance itself from the United

States, particularly because the United States provided weapons, trucks, planes, and

financial support to the Dutch to recolonize Indonesia after World-War II (Kahin and

Kahin 30). And when the Dutch failed to reestablish its power in Indonesia, the United

States, whose foreign policy at that time was fixated on eradicating communism,

attempted to undermine Soekarno's communist-leaning government. Hence, in the late

1950s the Eisenhower administration launched a covert effort to support various

Indonesian separatist movements. Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles,

even expressed that in order for the United States to eliminate communism in Indonesia,

it was in the United States's best interest to have Indonesia "disintegrated" rather than

"united" (Kahin and Kahin 75). However, following the "Allen Pope" incident,[67] the

United States shifted its policy to support a compromise between the central government

and "rebel" groups (Kahin and Kahin 203-4) –at least until another strategy to eliminate

communism in Indonesia was devised.

In 1965, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency finally succeeded in ending the

communist influence in Indonesia. The United States supported a pro-Western, pro-U.S.

military general, Soeharto, in a coup that toppled Soekarno (La Botz 41). Soeharto then

cooled Indonesia's relations with communist countries and banned the Indonesian

Communist Party (Cooper 28). Soeharto remained Indonesia's president for 32 years: his

decision to voluntarily step down in 1998 following large-scale protests and the collapse

of the economy was influenced in part because he lost the U.S. government's support.

Since 1998, Indonesia has had four presidents and has been undergoing a democratization

process.

<u>The Politics of Skin Color, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in *Cosmo*</u>

*Cosmopolitan* magazine, which was first published in the United States in 1886 as a

literary/fiction magazine, underwent a significant transformation in 1965 when its new

editor, Helen Gurley Brown, then the well-known author of *Sex and the Single Girl*, took

a daring step by shifting the focus of the magazine to women's sexuality *and,* as well as

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[67] Allen Pope was a U.S. air force pilot whose aircraft was shot down while flying over Eastern Indonesia as part of this covert operation that supported rebels in Indonesia. He was then captured by Indonesians in May 19, 1958 and sentenced to death. After pressures from the U.S. administration, the Indonesian government let him go (Kahin and Kahin 182).

*in,* the workplace (Spooner 299; McMachon 381-2).  With its slogan, "fun… fearless… female," her strategy of marketing to and advocating for sexually independent women saved U.S. *Cosmo* from almost certain bankruptcy.  Prior to 1965, sexuality was rarely discussed in women's magazines, which at that time were focusing more on women's place in the home (Nelson and Paek 372).  In Indonesia as well, when *Cosmo* (originally called *Kosmopolitan Higina*) first began publication in September 1997, presenting, and promoting sexually assertive women was breaking new ground.  Although some Muslim groups in Indonesia sent letters to the editor protesting that the magazine was "helping Indonesian women love sex too much" (Carr), nonetheless, the strategy of putting forth women's independence and/in sexuality was what made *Cosmo* one of the most successful magazines in Indonesia, currently published in approximately 45 countries throughout the world.  It is undoubtedly the most successful transnational women's magazine.  In the Indonesian context, marketing specialist Hermawan Kartajaya applauded its marketing strategy, arguing that *Cosmo,* by carefully formulating and consistently encouraging women to adopt a "cosmopolitan woman" identity, provided a space for Indonesian women who rejected the masculine domination of society (*Marketing* 129-30).  Although I would agree with him that *Cosmo* has been consistent in putting forth a "cosmopolitan woman" identity, I find that his argument needs to be questioned further: some scholars would argue, as I will point out in this chapter, that *Cosmo* further reaffirms rather than challenges male-domination in both Indonesian and U.S. societies.

After closely examining eight issues of both the Indonesian and U.S. *Cosmo*, I found that most articles and images in the two versions were different, although they

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seemed to be similarly structured and drew from similar sources.  For example, when both versions featured Brittany Murphy on their cover (in different months), she was photographed wearing different outfits, both of which were similarly sexy.  Hence, although at first impression the two covers seem the same and even connect to articles on the same topic, Indonesian *Cosmo* is not simply a direct translation of U.S. *Cosmo*.  In the case of articles, for example, names are changed from American to Indonesian.  In many other cases, articles are changed even more by inserting local examples or commentary by local experts.  According to David Machin and Joanna Thornborrow, Michelle Nelson and Hye-Jin Paek, and Jui-Shan Chang who have examined *Cosmo* in a number of countries around the globe, this is not unique to the Indonesian case.  From her work on Taiwan, for example, Chang concludes that the production of *Cosmo*

> is both centralized and localized: the various editions can borrow materials from the "central bank"—that is the New York headquarters—or from 'sister' issues in other countries, as well as producing their own articles.  Consequently, each issue of *Cosmopolitan,* in Taiwan and in its sister countries, contains a unique blend of global and local cultural ingredients on topics concerning modern womanhood. (363)

It is important to remember, however, that because Indonesian *Cosmo* is a transnational magazine, the local editors need to abide by the "private 50-page manual, which dictates criteria in selection of cover models and editorial focus" nonetheless (Nelson and Paek 372).  It is not a surprise, therefore that there are similarities in contents and images in *Cosmo* across the globe.

And yet, as progressive as *Cosmo* has been in subverting traditional gender roles by asserting female independence and their sexuality, it reinscribes these roles nonetheless. One example to point to is the column entitled "Why are Men Becoming So Sensitive Lately" in "Man Manual: Cosmo for your Guy," a special section for men—presumably for the reader's partners—that appeared in the September 2006 issue of Indonesian *Cosmo*. The column itself is interesting for its suggestion that men should not expect women's position to be as it used to be, when men were more dominant (106). Yet, at the bottom right of the same page, a green box entitled "Make Him More of a Man" urges women to "give him a manly nickname," "tell him he's your hero," and "let him lead," so his masculinity would stay intact (106). Indeed, preserving traditional notions of masculinity is an ongoing theme, although rarely presented forcefully, in Indonesian *Cosmo*. Images of bare-chested men in its "Man Manual" section portray men with big bodies—at times with bulging muscles—in a "manly" pose that highlights their big, well sculpted, masculine bodies. Further, in images that are set in workplaces, men are usually represented as the "boss" or as having more authority than women. In *Cosmo,* men therefore are still considered the center around which women's world revolves. It is their voices, usually in testimonial form, that are used to validate *Cosmo'*s attempt to reconstruct an ideal women's beauty—replacing breast and hip with "brain and behavior,"—for example (Leilayanti 79-80). This suggests that *Cosmo* can subvert traditional notions of femininity as long as men approve it.

Furthermore, various ads, articles, and beauty tips in *Cosmo* contribute to the creation of gender-specific docile bodies. Sandra Bartky, in criticizing Foucault's gender neutral notion of "docile bodies," argues,

Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. […] Women, like men, are subject to many of the same disciplinary practices Foucault describes. But he is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine. (65)

Moreover, Bartky suggests that disciplinary practices for women are different in that they are "perpetual and exhaustive—a regulation of the body's size and contours, its appetite, posture, gesture, and general comportment in space and the appearance of each of its visible parts" (80). Hence, using my examples from Indonesian *Cosmo*, women's bodies are disciplined in that they have to use various products from whitening cleansing milk and toner, whitening masks, or whitening cream, every night and day. And these examples, obviously requiring one's "discipline," are only practices for one specific part of women's body, their facial skin; there are numerous other examples of "care" products for other parts of women's face and body—eyebrows, legs, hair, breast, if women were to look beautifully feminine. The production of "feminine docile bodies," therefore, is inevitable if the readers were to follow all beauty advice, buy advertised products, and even have sex the way the magazine instructs them.

What is interesting, however, is the ways in which *Cosmo* represents these practices not as burdens for women, rather, as expressions of women having (self) control. It is understandable that representing women as possessors of control is important and necessary, even for *Cosmo,* particularly at a time when women's equality

and empowerment are acknowledged globally.  Robert Goldman, from a U.S. location, addresses the issue of control in ads:

> women are […] advised that the path to control [...] is available via the route of pleasure. [...]  At still another level of meaning, women's traditional task of controlling their figures, so long achieved by means of patriarchally enforced self-torture (girdles, corsets), has now become a supposedly pleasurable activity. However, the cultural shift in locus of control from externally motivated methods (corsets) to internally motivated methods (the "will-power" to diet and exercise) creates a new potential for self-abuse.  The current scenario makes women morally accountable for making their bodies comply with an idealized image trumpeted and managed by the mass media.  A new form of oppression emerges as women go to war with their recalcitrant bodies.  Failure to exercise appropriate self-restraint becomes internalized as a character flaw.  (*Reading Ads* 111)

Goldman's point is important, for it highlights how ads invoke the notion of and attract the *"liberated woman"* by focusing on the issue of self-control and "internal" motivation. In the case of Indonesian *Cosmo*, it participates in what Goldman suggests is a "new form of oppression" because, although *Cosmo* positions women as having control (over their own body), women are simultaneously told the "Six Deadly Weapons to Arouse His Love," which includes changing their image "to fit the man's taste," for example (June 2006, 146).

This representation of seemingly independent women, yet dependent-on-men, is not unique in the Indonesian case.  Machin and Thornborrow in examining fourty-four different versions of *Cosmo* across the globe pointed out how, although *Cosmo*

encourages its female readers to seek pleasure and control through sex, the magazine

nonetheless frames these pleasures and controls as derived from pleasing men (463).

Men and their reactions are the all important source for women's "self-image and sense

of power" (Machin and Thornborrow 463).  This is what Catherine Spooner calls a

"pseudo-liberated lifestyle," allowing women to fulfill their personal needs through "sex

and shopping" yet simultaneously conserving more traditional notions of heterosexual

femininity (299).

The problem is that the pseudo-liberated lifestyle may actually hurt women.  As

Susan Douglas argues in "Narcissism as Liberation," when advertisers and/or women

claim that these various (beauty) products are used for their own interests (not necessarily

*for* men, for example), chances are problems in their lives will then be read as "personal

failures," rather than contextualizing them within the larger patriarchal society (280).

Applying this to my argument, I note that when women cannot climb up the corporate

ladder, they blame themselves, their office clothing style, or how they have not used sex

in the office the way *Cosmo* advises them, rather than questioning why women are

having these problems to begin with.  Put simply, this consumerism, for improving the

self—from putting on lipstick to performing cosmetic surgeries, even when perceived as

for women's own satisfaction, further empowers men.

Beyond problems with gender representations, Indonesian *Cosmo,* like U.S.

*Cosmo*, also circulates biased representations of skin color and race in their magazines.

Interestingly, *Cosmo* was one of the first Indonesian magazines to have Caucasian

females on its magazine cover.  (All eight editions that I analyzed have Caucasian women

on their magazines' cover.)  Moreover, though no Indonesians or women with

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stereotypical Southeast Asian features appear in U.S. *Cosmo,* Caucasian women dominate advertisements and images that accompany editorial content in both U.S. and Indonesian editions. Indeed, in analyzing thirty-eight issues of U.S. *Cosmo* from 1976-1988, Kathryn McMachon pointed out how models, "if third-world, which is not often the case, are represented in codes which signify difference as the culturally exotic. Paradoxically, actual differences between third-world or minority women and white women in the United States are denied, while racial and ethnic stereotypes are exploited" (383). Simultaneously, having Caucasian white women dominate Indonesian *Cosmo* highlights the ways in which, within a transnational setting, not only do U.S. citizens travel elsewhere more freely, compared to Indonesian citizens, but also their images (mostly Caucasian Americans) are circulated more frequently across the globe and therefore are thought to have more value than Indonesians.

Although some images of African Americans appear in U.S. *Cosmo,* their images rarely appear in ads published in Indonesian *Cosmo.* One might assume this indicates the extent to which ads are localized; however, not only are white Americans common in Indonesian *Cosmo* ads, but so too are Indian, Japanese, and South Korean white-skinned women. The use of foreign women in *Cosmo* ads, I argue, are intended to evoke a cosmopolitan or transnational excitement; yet, obviously African Americans have less "transfer" value for marketing beauty products, at least in Indonesia.

There are, however, very limited numbers of African American images accompanying some articles, if not ads, in Indonesian *Cosmo.* They are usually coupled with another African American. In one case where there is a black couple and another white-skinned woman in the same photograph, the skin color plays out rather

interestingly. This photo accompanies the June 2006 Indonesian *Cosmo*'s article, "Ten Things You Shouldn't Do on a First Date." One of the ten things was that women were advised not to take someone like Paris Hilton or Carmen Electra with them if they do not want their man to turn to the other woman. The image that accompanies this article shows how a light-skinned African American woman looks frustrated when her darker-skinned African American guy flirts with a white-skinned woman, supposedly the more beautiful woman. Both women in this photo are actually quite beautiful. What marks their difference in this particular case is simply their skin color. I cannot but argue that within the context of Indonesian *Cosmo*, lighter-skinned women are still considered more beautiful and have more currency than darker-skinned women.

Even when African Americans' images appeared in both U.S. and Indonesian *Cosmo*, their numbers were significantly outnumbered by other races, especially Caucasians. For example, out of 292 pages in the July Indonesian *Cosmo,* only 13 pages have images of African Americans (fewer than 5%). Even fewer images are included in the August Indonesian *Cosmo:* out of 308 pages, only 4 pages have images of African Americans (1.5%). In comparison, out of 242 pages in the August U.S. *Cosmo,* there are 23 pages (10%) containing images of African Americans. Although for Asian Americans in the U.S. *Cosmo*, the numbers are significantly lower.

Not only African American but also dark-skinned Indonesian women rarely appear in Indonesian *Cosmo*. There are, however, a few cases when rather dark-skinned women model for the fashion column in this magazine. In the "Sporty Chick" fashion column in the June 2006 edition of Indonesian *Cosmo,* dark-skinned women, albeit with "European" facial features such as a pointy nose, were posed as energetic and active

women.  Interestingly, in the Brazil edition of *Cosmo*, there seems to be similar phenomena with dark-skinned women posed for "sports glossies" (Etcoff 115). However, this is not necessarily the case when "race" enters the picture.  For example, in an ad for tanning lotions published in U.S. *Cosmo*, when the-now-darker-or-tanned Caucasian women are represented in a beach setting, they are represented as leisurely lying on a beach lounge, rather than are represented in doing sports activities such as swimming.

In addition to the rather biased representations of race, skin color, and gender in *Cosmo*, women's sexuality is also represented from a position that values and normalizes heterosexuality.  Although U.S. *Cosmo* does incorporate some lesbian-themed and pro-lesbian articles (Spooner 125), nonetheless the magazine seems to have "the ability to make heterosexuality look like the natural and most significant referent toward which even homoerotic depictions point" (Rand 135).  These attempts to be inclusive of lesbians actually create what Erica Rand calls "two-doored closet" (129).  She uses this metaphor to point out how "*Cosmo* shows that queer visibility and queer power may not go hand in hand.  When *Cosmo* opens the opaque closet door, visibility increases, but another door, perhaps stronger, locks behind it.  And the benefits of increased lesbian visibility accrue primarily to *Cosmo* and to heterosexuals, not to lesbians" (Rand 129). Furthermore, Machin and Thornborrow point out that women's sexuality in *Cosmo* across the globe is represented as "the source of their power over men and of their success in the work-place" (460).  As such, sexuality in this magazine is explicitly and unapologetically heterosexual.

Moreover, women's sexuality in *Cosmo*, although everywhere heterosexual, is not articulated in the same manner throughout the globe. In Indonesia, for example, sexual acts are represented as acts between husbands and wives. This is evident from various articles that refer to male sexual partners as the readers' "husbands" (*suami*). This is not the case in U.S. *Cosmo.* Further, Nelson and Paek, in reading 935 ads in various editions of 2002-2003 *Cosmo* across the globe point out how local "cultural values" and "political/economic systems" explain why "Western (or nondomestic models) are more likely to be portrayed sexually than are domestic models," except in the case of the edition of Thai *Cosmo* where the ads were very sexualized regardless (379). This certainly is not the case in other Asian countries such as Indonesia, India, or China, where sex and sexuality are exposed to a much lesser extent compared to other countries.

Heterosexism, race, and skin color are also joined in Indonesian *Cosmo* in the ways in which Caucasian white men become and appear as the desirable man for these heterosexual *Cosmo* women, even in Indonesian *Cosmo*. An ad for hair shampoo, for example, portrays a teenage girl's excitement for a soccer game as due to the fact that she loves the Caucasian white soccer player, not the game per se. Additionally, in fashion columns, Caucasian men are represented as sexually desirable and romantically involved with Indonesian women. It seems that within the context of transnational Indonesian *Cosmo,* the rather hazy boundaries that mark where "Americanness" ends and "Indonesianness" begins is reimagined through their (sexual) relationships. Encounters such as these are represented as "normal" and even become signifiers for the "cosmopolitanness" of these light-skinned Indonesian women. That is, their cosmopolitan status is validated through their relationship with the Caucasian white male.

This in and of itself implies the ways in which whiteness is yet again represented as embodying cosmopolitanness and has more currency in this transnational setting.

It appears that these "approved" encounters between Caucasian men and Indonesian women do not invoke anxiety over the possibility of racial hybridity, unlike encounters with other races or colors. Indeed, Indo women models whose bodies are living proof of those very encounters (usually of Caucasian men and Indonesian women) are represented and evoked as the ideal of beauty. Additionally, in the "Man Manual" column in July edition of Indonesian *Cosmo*, four sexy bare-chested men are featured: three Caucasian American men and one African American man. Interestingly, the African American man is the only one whose gaze shies away from the camera. It is intriguing to see that in the September U.S. *Cosmo* there was a similar pattern where three Caucasian Americans were smiling at the camera, while the one African American man is represented as sleeping on his stomach, with his eyes closed. This averting of black man's gaze in these particular examples may hint at the underlying fear of miscegenation between *Cosmo* women who in the United States context are predominantly white heterosexual female readers and the black man. That is, in some ways, although these dark-skinned men are allowed to be present in this magazine, their sexuality is contained by pairing them mostly with other black women, or by representing them with their gaze shying away from readers. This pattern, of course, reflects U.S. racial history.

The gender, racial, skin color, and sexuality politics of *Cosmo* provide the context for reading closely whitening ads published in the Indonesian *Cosmo*. Here I shall be employing semiotic analysis, acknowledging that "the meaning of an ad does not float on

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the surface just waiting to be internalized by the viewer, but is built up out of the ways that different signs are organized and related to each other, both within the ad and through external references to wider belief systems" (Jhally *Social* 153), but beyond this, my decoding of these ads is unconventional, for using the magazine itself, including articles and other advertisements published within them, as context in decoding these signs. I will explain this further in the following section.

<div align="center">Whitening Ads in Indonesian <em>Cosmo</em></div>

In magazines, ads and editorial content are inevitably intertwined. Gloria Steinem (1990), in showing how *Ms.* magazine had struggled to exist despite lack of revenue from ads, pointed out that the existence of the magazine was constantly threatened because she, as editor, would not publish ads that were demeaning to women and failed to persuade potential advertisers to produce ads that highlight women's agency. Moreover, she refused to provide "complimentary" articles to please advertisers. Pleasing advertisers, to her chagrin, includes having magazines' editorial contents highlight and support their advertised products (Crane 316). For example, recipes need to be written to highlight various food products advertised in the magazine in the same way fashion columns need to feature clothing that are advertised there (Steinem 223-224).

This relationship between ads and editorial content is certainly evident in *Cosmo*. Some have even noted that in U.S. *Cosmo,* the boundary that marks where editorial content ends and advertisements begin is unclear (Case). This also holds true in the case of Indonesian *Cosmo.* For example, its July issue featured an article entitled "Does Whiter Mean Better?" Ironically, while the article itself can be considered progressive in

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its questioning of the light-skinned beauty norm, the images accompanying this article were pictures of L'Oreal's whitening products and their model, Michelle Reis, a Hong-Kong supermodel of Portuguese and Chinese descent. Consequently, the article that in some ways can be read as challenging the product advertised in this magazine is subverted by the ad itself.

Reading ads within the context of the magazine requires a particular reading method for which the "maze of gaze" metaphor that appears in the title of my dissertation serves best. The structure of the maze as metaphor helps us craft a way of seeing that takes into account various tensions existing in the production of magazines and ads published in them. Hence, while in previous chapters I view "historical periods" and "countries" as the metaphoric walls, and categories of identity as the passage, in this chapter, a magazine's content acts as metaphoric walls defining the boundaries and shapes of this maze of gaze. Bounded by the "walls," whitening ads become the metaphoric passage, the walkway, that literally occupies the space in between the magazines' content. The meanings of these ads, therefore, cannot lie within its fragmented spaces but at the threshold between the maze and its exit doors, after one has almost completed her travel through this maze. Particularly because the meaning of the ads "works not *at* us but *through* us" (Jhally *Social* 155 emphasis mine), it is the way in which our body metaphorically walks *through* this maze that allows a particular gaze. Hence, because "for advertising to create meaning, the reader or the viewer has to do some 'work'" (Jhally *Social* 153), I argue that it is the readers' familiarity with and ability to navigate this maze that define their experiences in and that can lead their way out of, this maze of gaze. Taken as a whole, the maze exposes the existence of

fragmented or "local" spaces, while simultaneously allowing us to see how these fragmented local spaces fit in and support the larger structure of the maze.

I argue in this chapter that whiteness is represented as or equated with "cosmopolitanness," embodying transnational mobility. As images and texts in these ads and magazines suggest, white-skinned women, unlike women of "other" color, can travel more frequently with easier access across nations because in this global setting, white has more currency than other skin colors. Certainly, my argument in this chapter lies specifically in the sense of their pictorial travels and not necessarily in their literal bodily travels. Furthermore, by reading not only images but also texts in these ads within the context of the magazine, I also argue that whiteness, although not necessarily Caucasian whiteness, functions as a signifier for playful, "innocent," yet sexual "cosmopolitan" women.

*Cosmopolitan Whiteness*

"Cosmopolitan," of course, is the term the magazine uses in addressing its reader, the "cosmo" woman. But its genealogy is useful for this study. Historically, I can trace the term at least to eighteenth-century French philosophers who used it to highlight "an intellectual ethic, a universal humanism that transcends regional particularism" (Cheah 22). Rooted in the Greek "*kosmo*," which means "world," and "*polites*," meaning "citizen" (Cheah 22). It conveys the aura of a "citizen of the world." We should keep this meaning in mind while also noting that it does not fully capture the spirit of Indonesian *Cosmo*, where Indonesianness and other cultures are negotiated and simultaneously invoked. In other words, in Indonesian *Cosmo* particularities still appear

to come first, before universalities. But when we expand the eighteenth-century usage to understand "cosmopolitan" in its broadest and most popular sense, we find its aptness for the magazine. As Bruce Robbins suggests, "the word *cosmopolitan* […] evokes the image of a privileged person: someone who can claim to be a 'citizen of the world' by virtue of independent means, expensive tastes, and a globe-trotting lifestyle" (248). Indeed, Indonesian *Cosmo*, in constructing an imaginary *Cosmo* woman, often suggests that readers should buy expensive gourmet cakes at elite hotel pastry shops (advertised in the September 2006 issue) and invite readers to travel abroad (advertised in the same issue). It is therefore safe to use this concept the way Indonesian *Cosmo* seems to deploy it, which is as embodying the possibility of transnational mobility (the "fearless"/adventurous aspect of the slogan), leisure, and pleasure through consumptions of these advertised products (the "fun" aspect of the slogan), and certainly "female"-ness—the essence of *Cosmo*, a magazine for women.

Compared to ads in the late 1990s, whitening ads in 2006 were surprisingly more "transnational" and "cosmopolitan" in nature. First, almost all of the whitening ads published in four consecutive issues of *Cosmo* advertised transnational brands. Except for Unilever's "local-jewel" brand, Citra, that is now also available in a few other Asian countries (and therefore becoming transnational) and one other product, AXL, all brands were transnational. Advertised brands originated in France (Dior, Biotherm, L'Oreal), the United States (Estée Lauder and Clinique), Japan (Biore, Kosé, Kanebo, and SK-II), South Korea (Laneige), Philippines (SkinWhite), Germany (Nivea), and the Netherlands (Pond's). In contrast, advertised brands magazines such as *Femina* were more likely national, although some transnational brands were also included.

The cosmopolitanness of these ads was further emphasized by featuring models who are not Indonesian. In 2006, unlike only a few years prior when whitening ads typically featured local light-skinned Indonesian women, ads feature international models such as Choi Ji Woo (a South Korean actress/celebrity) advertising for the France-based DiorSnow Pure White, Sammi Cheng (a Hong Kong actress/singer) modeling for Japanese SK-II Whitening Source Skin Brightener, Michele Reis (a Hong-Kong supermodel) advertising for L'Oréal Paris White Perfect and White Perfect Eye, Gong Li (a Chinese movie star) posing for L'Oréal Paris Revitalift White, and even a few Caucasian white models, (interestingly, without their names printed on the ads). Moreover, because these models are hired to advertise their products in several countries, this in and of itself constructs these women as "cosmopolitan," whose images travel transnationally. The meanings of these "cosmopolitan" models are, then, transferred to the product that is now embodying the cosmopolitanness of the model. This is done to invite the reader, positioned as a cosmopolitan woman, to consume a product that has been staged and coded as cosmopolitan. Additionally, (think here of the "maze of gaze"), I argue that these ads, published in *Cosmo*, are actually also capitalizing on and relying on the cosmopolitanness of the magazine's editorial contents to provide a cosmopolitan meaning to advertised products. That is, using a Japanese model in these whitening ads does not necessarily suggest that they are selling or relying on Japanese-ness to sell their (at times non-Japanese) products; rather, it is these international models' cosmopolitanness, their ability to be popular beyond their local boundaries, as well as the meanings provided by the editorial contents of *Cosmo* magazine—representing whiteness as a desirable color across the globe—that encode these products as cosmopolitan.

The staging of these foreign, transnational models in specific whitening ads, as well as in the editorial contents in Indonesian *Cosmo*, hints at the ways in which whiteness is represented to have more currency in the transnational setting. First, the link between whiteness and value can be seen from an exemplary ad, the AXL whitening product. In a page divided into three columns, each column representing one product, AXL positions "antiseptic" soap in front of a pair of dumbbells (fitness equipment), "whitening" body foam in front of a woman's briefcase, and "aloe vera" soap in front of a college backpack. Here, soap (antiseptic or aloe vera) is linked to cleanliness, but the "whitening" foam is linked to "money," suggesting that for women to do well in the workplace and therefore earn more, they need to whiten their body. Second, whiteness is positioned as having more value, or currency, across the globe simply because white-skinned women (whether Indonesians or other Asians or Caucasians) are used more often than models with darker skin color both in various advertisements or to illustrate fashion columns. All of these images and ads, as a whole, suggest that white is indeed the preferred color, the color that has more currency across the globe, not just in Indonesia. In other words, traveling to Japan, Germany, or France, by way of looking at various images and reading various (particularly travel-related) articles in these magazines, the readers will see that the preferred color across these geographical locations is white.

*English: Cosmopolitan or Imperial Language?*

The cosmopolitanness in these ads is also signified by the use of English. All of these ads use English although in varying degrees. At the very least, English is used in the products' labels. I recognize, however, that English may be used in ads as well as in

magazines to flatter the superior status of its audience: fluency in English signifies the reader's educated and middle/upper-class position in Indonesian society.  English may also be used to signify that the magazine and its women are part of the "in-crowd," worldly *Cosmopolitan* women.  Hence, English functions as a signifier for cosmopolitanness.  Yet, it is important to examine, particularly because language often becomes a site of political struggle in the global context, another function of English in these magazines: as a force of imperialism.

It is worthy of note that when *Cosmo* was first published, the cover titles were all written in the Indonesian language.  The title of the magazine was even written with a *K* and not a *C*, to mark its Indonesianness.  In current editions of Indonesian *Cosmo*, however, English is used in conjunction with Indonesian for cover titles; it is English rather than Indonesian that is used for headlines, typed in bold and bigger fonts than the Indonesian throughout, including the cover.

The most obvious response is undoubtedly that English has more currency in the global context simply because it is today's international language.  This means, the decision to use English for these labels may reflect a choice-less choice when to be marketable, to survive the market, English must be used.  The use of English in that case can be read as a method for surviving the market.  In Sandoval's words:  "this process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront, or speak to power—and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary—is a method for survival" (Sandoval 29).  In some ways, therefore, the use of English in these ads reflects the global hierarchy in which English, a signifier for

cosmopolitanness, has more currency than Indonesian and has to be used even at the expense of perpetuating the global supremacy of the United States.

But in using English, the West maintains, however resignified, its *imperial* power. Not only is European culture announced as the superior culture but also English usage here works simultaneously to subjugate other(s) or in this case the Indonesian-self. As Albert Memmi suggests, "if he wants to obtain a job, make a place for himself, exist in the community and the world, he must first bow to the language of his masters. In the linguistic conflict within the colonized, his mother tongue is that which is crushed" (qtd. in Ebo 72). In the case of these whitening ads, when "important" information, i.e., labels, are written in English and in bigger, bolder, and more eye-catching fonts, while "other" information written in Indonesian is in smaller, regular, and tedious fonts, it suggests that English has more value in global hierarchy; the local language is simultaneously crushed and otherized.

And, if not Indonesian, why English? Remember, it was Dutch, not English, that was the colonizer's language in Indonesia. It is English, however, that has become the dominant foreign language in today's Indonesia. And it is in English that whitening products' brands/labels are displayed in whitening ads. With two exceptions only—the French Laneige and the Japanese (Sekkisei)—all others are in English: Alexander "Whitening Body Foam," Bioré "Whitening Scrub," Clinique "Derma White," Nivea "Face Sun Block Whitening Cream," Citra "White Milk Bath," L'ORÉAL "White Perfect" and "Revitalift White," SK-II Whitening Source Skin Brightener," and Pond's "White Beauty Detox," "Complete Care Whitening," and "SkinWhite."[68] That English is

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[68] This phenomena of using English in these brands is not new. Few advertisements (not necessarily whitening cream) in the 1950s already used English as well.

used in almost all whitening labels raises the question: why does English become an appealing language to market these whitening products in a postcolonial country and what are the consequences of such a strategy?

But finally, within the discourse of postcolonialism, as Ngugi Wa Thiong' O points out, English functions as a carrier of culture and a means of spiritual subjugation (9, 17). As a carrier of culture, English in these labels therefore represents Western culture. This means, English, as it carries the culture of the Western white empire, is embedded within the racist structure of its own society and its own color symbolism. "White" in the U.S. is not simply a color in a box of Crayola crayons. The word "white" in English represents a racist ideology at work. The word *putih*, which is the Indonesian translation of the word, can not fully capture this. Nor does *putih cantik* invoke the cultural meaning of that which in the West is imbricated in a history of racialized color: "white beauty" is not "putih cantik." This is to say that English is effective in signifying racial categories that are embedded in this language. Moreover, taking an example from a whitening ad, Pond's detox, I argue that non-whiteness is even constructed as "toxic" something that needs to be "detoxed."

*"Skin of Innocence": Cosmopolitan Whiteness and Playful Innocent Sexuality*

Looking at language in these ads also helps us understand why in a magazine that is considered *avant-garde* about sex, these whitening ads represent women in sexually timid poses. Here, I will work around one of the ads' slogan, "Skin of Innocence," to explain this apparent timid sexuality of women in whitening ads.

First, I argue that these ads position women as sexually timid, or in the word of one of the ads, as "innocence," as a strategy to invite the gaze of the readers. For the ads to attract the readers' gaze, they need to embody some form of "oppositional elements" in their ads (Goldman qtd. in Crane 316). Therefore, women's elegant and classy pose, a pose that disrupts sexually provocative poses prevalent in *Cosmo*, may be intended to catch the readers' attention. That is, in the pervasiveness of articles that discuss how to increase women's sexual pleasures, and amid images of the seductively sexy "fun fearless female" throughout the magazine, these ads disrupt this order by representing women as sexual yet innocent beings.

Their innocence is marked, first, by the ways in which they pose. Because almost all of these ads feature very close-up shots of these women's faces, and to some extent their shoulders, I will first discuss their facial expressions. Women's expressions range from the most common, looking (shyly) at the camera with a rather reserved smile, to a vacant gaze, or in Goffman's words "licensed withdrawal" (57). In one of the two versions of Kosé two-page ads that markets its product with the "Skin of Innocence" headline, a woman's face is seen from two angles: from the side and the front. In both pictures, she smiles with her lips closed, seemingly without even moving them, signifying her delicate face. Her thin and small face, especially with her hair combed in an elegant ponytail (suggesting her childlike purity), makes her appear even more dainty and feminine. Even the font in these ads are feminine, tall and thin, the kind of font which media scholars Pat Kirkham and Alex Weller tell us is considered "feminine" (272). Her lightly tilted head and her timid gaze further highlights her innocence. In this example, her pose, which is typical of these ads, reflects the ways in which women's

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bodily movement, for it to represent its femininity, needs to be carried out not only in a different manner from men but also in a more restricted manner. Bartky suggests,

> there are significant gender differences in gesture, posture, movement, and general bodily comportment: Women are far more restricted than men in their manner of movement and in their lived spatiality. […] Iris Young observes that a space seems to surround women in imagination which they are hesitant to move beyond: this manifests itself both in a reluctance to reach, stretch, and extend the body to meet resistances of matter in motion—as in sport or in the performance of physical tasks—and in a typically constricted posture and general style of movement. (67-68)

Bartky's point above is also useful to further understand that a headline such as "skin of innocence," equating whiteness with innocence, only works without its power to racially offend the not-necessarily-white readers, because the gendered gesture of the model and the context of the magazine that emphasizes women's sexuality, provide the meanings for her pose and of the slogan "skin of innocence" itself. That is, "innocence" in these ads is signified as gendered "sexual" innocence and therefore, white-skinned femininity is coded as femininity with innocent sexuality.

The concept of "innocent" is useful for these ads because the consequence of positioning women (and their skin) as innocent is that they need protection, which in these ads is eagerly offered by the advertised products. Further, unlike earlier ads that highlight women's transformation from dark to light skin, these cosmopolitan women are represented as already perfect, no longer in need of transformation, only protection. In a DiorSnow Pure ad, for example, the caption suggests, "Protect the bright purity of first

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snow," which suggests that, first, whiteness is likened to "the purity of first snow," the delicate, soft, pure, and "innocent," an already white object, yet incapable of protecting itself, and second, that the product is therefore needed to protect such "pure" (embodied in the label itself) whiteness.

What is troubling, however, in equating "white skin" with "skin of innocence" is the racist ideology that underpins the very production of such an ad headline. Why is white represented as an innocent color? Why is there a need to protect whiteness (of the skin)? Certainly in the U.S. context, white has indeed been seen as the color of the innocence. The racial profiling that occurs everyday in the street of the U.S. cities which stereotypes blacks as "those who commit crimes" and whites as "those who don't," certainly proves this (Holbert and Rose 5). Even the color of white in white wedding gowns, so prevalent in the United States symbolizes "purity, virginity, innocence, and promise, as well as power and privilege" (Ingraham 34). Furthermore, in the specific context of children's sexuality, various scholars such as Henry Giroux and Jessica Fields have suggested that the debate surrounding the need to protect innocent children's sexuality is actually about giving protection to "white, middle class, and privileged" children (Giroux 62). Housed in such a racist and sexist debate, the public discourse surrounding children, their innocence and sexuality, actually forces black girls to face the dilemma of being positioned either as "hypersexual or asexual—voracious women or chaste children" (Fields 568). White-skinned women, unlike the black girls Fields described, however, can be both: in ads in which, for example, their so-called "spaghetti-strap" clothing exposes their bare shoulder and their use of modern but "natural" make-up, they become both sexual and innocent at the same time. This contradiction, of being

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both innocent and sexual, is evident not only in these ads but also (and simultaneously shaped by) the magazines' contents. As Machin and Thornborrow write, the magazine constructs its "fun, fearless female" reader as "having agency, power and the confidence to get what she wants, but on the other hand, constructing her as naïve, in need of basic instruction and driven by the need to please a man" (463).

Positioning women as simultaneously sexual and innocent is related to the ways in which whiteness can exhibit and inhabit what Dennis Hall terms the "play of innocence" (1031). Hall, in looking at the phenomena of Britney Spears who successfully marketed herself as an innocent "virgin" yet exposed her sexy body, danced seductively on stage, and even sang "I'm Not That Innocent," suggests that this phenomena represents "a postmodernist sense of sexual chastity, one defined in the play within the liminal ground between innocence and experience" (1031). Yet, the problem with this playful innocence, as I mentioned earlier, is that only white-skinned girls can play. This is because whiteness occupies that space of "ambiguity and incompleteness, giving whites the space to construct their identities in very contradictory ways" (Calhoun 272). Thus, this playful innocence, the playing of and with "innocence," the locating and dislocating of innocence, represented in ads (in) and *Cosmo*, is permissible and possible only for white-skinned women.

If these women are sexual, albeit innocently, what are their sexual orientations? Unlike whitening ads a few years earlier that explicitly suggested that these products would make them look attractive to men and portray them as being kissed or engaged with a man, exposing the heterosexual norm of these ads, almost all of these ads, except for one version of a SkinWhite ad, show women posing alone and do not explicitly

suggest any (hetero)sexual relations in them.  Yet, locating these ads within the context of Indonesian *Cosmo*, again employing the maze of gaze metaphor, I argue that because readers are constantly told and encouraged to use beauty products to better themselves in getting men's attention, the readers are expected to understand that this product, too, can attract men to them.  As I mentioned earlier, because the politics of sexuality in *Cosmo* is unapologetically heterosexual, these ads can be read as having heterosexuality as the distant norm.

Nonetheless, it is also possible that featuring these women alone and not making explicit references to heterosexuality is a strategy to widen their market, to include everyone of whatever sexuality.  Certainly, these ads were published at a time when films such as *Arisan* and *Berbagi Suami*, which undermined heterosexual norms, have gained popular attention in recent Indonesia.  Furthermore, unlike a few years ago when an ad such as lipstick Dior Addict, showing two women about to kiss each other, would probably not make it to the pages of Indonesian *Cosmo*, this ad exists there today. Hence, by letting these women's sexuality be open to possible interpretations, these ads may be read to invite a wider market.

Before ending this chapter, however, I would like to make the connection between the metaphor of "snow" so prevalent in these whitening ads to the "Snow White" fairy-tale character, to highlight why, unlike in the tenth- to fourteenth-century Java when the moon seemed to be a useful metaphor in describing beautiful women (chapter 2), snow becomes an appealing metaphor in today's whitening ads.  First, however, it is interesting to note that the snow metaphor, evident in their labels such as Laneige (in French, La Neige means snow), Nivea (rooted in Latin words "Nivius" meaning snow white),

DiorSnow, as well as in the ads' texts and images, is employed in a country where it never snows. Of course, it is possible to argue that the "snow" metaphor works to signify the cosmopolitanness of readers: those who have seen the snow can relate to this ad—but I wish to point to another possible explanation, and that is in connection to the character Snow White. True, these ads do not explicitly invoke Snow White, perhaps because Snow White—now represented by the Disney Princess icon—may be considered too passive for the fun fearless cosmopolitan woman. I argue, however, that this connection needs to be made to make sense of its use in whitening ads published in today's Indonesia.

First, I find the Snow White tale useful because it perfectly captures the narrative of women's rivalry in beauty. After all, Snow White's "problem" begins when the evil Queen gets an answer to her question, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" that it isn't she who is the prettiest anymore. Here, obviously, the "fairest" stands in for the prettiest woman. That is, beauty isn't simply about competition in having the most beautiful face, but about being the fairest of them all. Furthermore, the competition between women usually figures in the construction of the "angel-woman" (Snow White) versus the "monster-woman" (evil Queen) (Gilbert and Gubar 36). In this story, both women, the evil Queen and Snow White, can be beautiful. However, it is their angelic state, their "innocence" and purity that distinguish one from the other. Looking at these ads, I am intrigued by the ways in which the models, mostly with white clothing (even if in some ads this can be seen only from the straps on their shoulders) are represented as "angelic" figures. In an exemplary ad, the SkinWhite ad, a woman is

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literally represented as an angel complete with her wings and white radiance, embodying the innocence, the "angel-woman," that Snow White represents.

Second, Snow White allows us to understand beauty as something that is produced under and for the (heterosexual) male gaze. Indeed, in the Disney version of Snow White, as Thomas Inge argues, the voice of the mirror is embodied by a male voice (141). Read metaphorically, the queen's act of constantly questioning this magic mirror may represent the ways in which women, in the world of *Cosmo,* seek the approval of men whose gaze is needed to validate their beauty. Indeed, in the Snow White fairy-tale, it was the heterosexual prince's gaze who saved Snow White from her death and therefore brought her back to life. Hence, even when these ads do not explicitly evoke the Snow White fairy tale, I argue that some elements of the fairy tale nonetheless provide meanings to decode these ads. This suggests that the usefulness of the snow metaphor, when linked to the Snow White character, makes sense in that it not only highlights women's rivalry in beauty but also suggests that the purpose of being as white as snow is, to be swept away by the prince after all.

I have argued, that whiteness, in Indonesian *Cosmo,* conveys multiple meanings. Surrounded by English words and within a magazine originating in the United States, white-skinned models in ads for whitening skin products can signify imperial domination and carry the meanings of racial hierarchy embedded in Western localities. Whiteness can also embody cosmopolitanness, given its currency in the transnational context. Whiteness "travels": it can be modeled by women from Asia to Europe to the Americas. Whiteness can even be Indonesian. An example of this is an ad for a Citra whitening product. Here, a white-skinned Indonesian woman wearing *batik* fabric is shown taking a

bath while seated in front of a traditional-looking wooden panel.  Her whiteness therefore is encoded as "traditional" Indonesian whiteness.  Although published in *Cosmo*, the ad disrupts not only the style of other whitening ads that usually have plain white or blue background and represent women as "modern" and "cosmopolitan," but also constructions of the fun fearless female.  Nonetheless, to allow this ad to fit into the cosmopolitan world, to make its presence seem "normal" in *Cosmo*, the ad is placed next to a "Cosmo Eco" column about "Borneo's Secrets, "Visiting the Heaven of Birds," and "Let's Conserve our Beach," all of which invoke an Indonesia that would excite a fun fearless female cosmopolitan traveler.

As a whole, attempts to localize whiteness can be seen as a negotiation, a "survival" method, in articulating a distinct Indonesian white beauty.  That is, Indonesian *Cosmo*, in its attempts to counter various images of white-skinned women from the Japan, Hong Kong, France, the United States, and other countries "has to" include Indonesian white beauty in its magazine by casting Indonesian models with white-skin and resignifying them as "cosmopolitan" women.  Thus, Indonesia becomes accepted into a global context and becomes, as its title suggests, "cosmopolitan."

## Chapter 5
## Female Beauty and Displaced Manhood: Reimagining the Masculinity of the Colonized in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru Tetralogy

In previous chapters, I have pointed out that light-skinned women have been preferred because they represent an ideal of beauty during various periods from tenth- through fourteenth-century Java, to twentieth- and early twenty-first century Indonesia. However, because in these chapters the emphasis was on the ways in which skin color in women's beauty discourse is (re)signified differently in different periods, this chapter shifts the analysis to exploring the question that attempts to understand the root of the problem: why beauty matters.

To answer this question, I conduct a close textual analysis of Indonesia's best-known writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's most-famous Buru Tetralogy novels (*Bumi Manusia/This Earth of Mankind, Anak Semua Bangsa/The Child of All Nations, Jejak Langkah/Footsteps,* and *Rumah Kaca/House of Glass*). I need to clarify, however, that while I closely read both the English and Indonesian versions of these novels, this chapter uses the English version when quoting specific passages from the texts. Only when they pertain to skin color, do I accompany them with the Indonesian translation of the texts.

I chose these novels by this particular author for several reasons. First, I am interested in Pramoedya's literary works not only for the obvious reason that even a year after his death in 2006, he remains Indonesia's most celebrated writer, his novels considered Indonesia's most significant canonical literary work, but also because he had traveled abroad,[69] read books that were transnationally circulated, and incorporated them

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[69] It needs to be mentioned, however, that from the early 1960s to the late 1990s (GoGwilt "The Voice" 218), he was not able to travel abroad, at first because he was under house arrest but then because he feared the possibility of not being permitted to reenter Indonesia.

in his writings.  Thus, I am interested in his works, particularly these Buru novels,

because they are engaged with issues of transnational circulations of ideas and people and

the ways in which these circulations reshape our understanding of race (and to a limited

extent color), gender, sexuality, and nation.  For example, his novels highlight the ways

in which the presence or circulations of Dutch, Chinese, and Arabs in colonial Indonesia

alter the racial landscape and hierarchies there.  His novels also delineate the ways in

which "Filipinos, Chinese and other Asians came to form their own senses of national

identity" (Vickers 4).  That is, and I am referring back to my maze of gaze metaphor here,

his novels are important for this dissertation for they suggest that national, racial, and

class formation in specific locales are necessarily linked to these circulations of people,

ideas, and objects from other geographical locations.  Additionally, they allow us to

understand how the author's own transnational travels shaped the contour and content of

the texts.  Pramoedya's works are particularly apt for this kind of endeavor because his

works have indeed "very strong autobiographical strain and his books are his personal

experiences molded into literature" (Oemarjati qtd. in Liu 134).  His novels therefore

help us grapple with issues of how travel across national boundaries reshaped various

meanings of skin color, race, sexuality, and gender identities.

Second, I am interested in these novels because they make the connection

between the past and the present and transgress the boundaries between fact/"history" and

(historical) fiction.  This means that while the novels are set in the colonial period, their

meanings and significance resonate beyond the confined fictional space and colonial time

period.  First of all, this notion of the past as connected to the present is evident from

Pramoedya's testimony.  He admitted that discussing the past allowed him to get at "the

roots of […] history," the answer to the question: "why did my people get to be like this, like that?" (Pramoedya "My Apologies").  It seems that in the Buru novels, some of the factors that he identified as explaining why "my people get to be like this" are not only colonialism but also Javanism, particularly in the ways in which Javanese epic and myth of the past are invoked in the "present" to maintain the status quo (Tong 483; Hellwig 95).

Moreover, I am intrigued by Pramoedya's works because they allow us to rethink the meanings of "history."  Pramoedya's writings, particularly those written in Buru island, reflects his view of how "History became liable to be coded.  Occurrences of history could be clipped off and pasted in.  Time could be ordered" (Mrázek 70).  This notion of history as something that one could "code" and reorder is evident in the Buru novels: the narrator mentions how he "clips off" from and "pastes in" his "notes" to tell his story or history.  The texts further highlight the importance of the "notes" in reconstructing or reordering history through one of its episodes where the narrator's notes are confiscated by the native police officer.  This particular incident exposes us to the issue of "struggle over archival memory," a "struggle over the manipulation, distortion, and destruction of historical documents" (Gogwilt "The Voice" 229).  Particularly as one discusses a country where history, if not totally "repressed," had at least been manipulated to fit the interests of the elites, one needs to consider critically how history and one's sources and "other" memory have been constructed.  Pramoedya's novels serve both as one among many varied historical constructions, and also to expose that history and memory are indeed constructions.

Third, and this is the issue that I will discuss most in this chapter, I turn to these novels because they lend themselves as useful sites of analysis for understanding constructions of gendered and racialized concepts of beauty. Pramoedya uses "beauty" in developing not only his female characters that become the protagonist's wives but also, I argue, in reclaiming the emasculated masculinity in the postcolonial context. This argument follows a point that Ann Stoler made about the colonial Dutch East Indies: that processes of "demasculinization of colonized men and the hypermasculinity of European males" were embedded in the process of asserting white supremacy (46). Colonialism reordered the structure of masculinity of both colonized men and male colonizers by feminizing colonized men because of their race (Krishnaswamy 3). However, once the "civilized white men" boarded their ships to return to their country after colonialism ended, manhood in the postcolonial space was remade.

In the postcolonial era, this imagined manhood is reworked in various media, among which are literary texts. It is therefore crucial to look at how postcolonial texts articulate imagined manhood in postcolonial space and at where women are placed in this reordering. Additionally, and particularly related to the larger topic of this dissertation is that Pramoedya's novels also attempt to challenge the notion of beauty as solely related to light-skinned women, and yet simultaneously they reinscribe race and gender hierarchies, a phenomenon we have witnessed in the media examined in prior chapters.

*Historical Contexts*

Pramoedya's novels, particularly the Buru Tetralogy novels that I discuss in this chapter, both reveal and are interestingly situated in the trajectories of Indonesian history. Written

in prison in 1975 (spoken in 1973),[70] the events they narrate take place in 1898 to 1918

during the period of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.  These novels' time setting reflects

an important political period in Indonesian history because it represents a time when

colonialism reached its "full-fledged" state (Locher-Scholten 16).  This era was also

important because it was around the time when Dutch implemented its "Ethical Policy"

(Hellwig 71): a policy that allowed (elite) natives access to education and paved the way

for the emergence of a nationalist movement (Coté 128; Rutherford 258).  For example,

in 1908 *Budi Utomo*, an organization for bettering natives' education, was founded.

*Sarekat Islam*, the Islamic Association, was established around 1912 (Scholte 196).

Particularly important to note in reading these novels was the fact that Raden (aristocratic

title) Tirto Adhi Soerjo, who was the model for the narrator's character in the Buru

Tetralogy novels, lived during these years.  Pramoedya, who also wrote Tirto's

biography, *Sang Pemula,* both in his novels and in the biography pointed out that Tirto

led the way in founding these movements, including women's movements.  Yet, by the

time Pramoedya wrote the Buru novels, he had been forgotten, if not erased from history.

For this reason, Pramoedya argued, his contribution in history needs to be resurrected.

Particularly important to be noted here is that Tirto, hence the fictional character

Minke that is based on his life, was a writer, journalist, and founder of native newspapers.

In this sense, Pramoedya's choice of character could not be more historically appropriate.

As Anderson pointed out in his book *Imagined Communities*, technology of print-

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[70] Prior to being imprisoned, Pramoedya had already done his research for these novels (Hellwig 70; Foulcher "Bumi" 5; Maier 77).  Being imprisoned, however, did not deter him from writing.  He first narrated these stories orally to his fellow prisoners.  In 1975 when he was allowed to have a pen and a paper, Pramoedya then began to write this story (Lev 134).  When he was freed from the prison, however, the authority seized his works, making it "a complete surprise" that the book ever made its way to the public (Hellwig 70).

capitalism that allow for (re)production and dissemination of newspapers provided the material basis for the emergence of national consciousness and to the ways in which community is imagined. This means that at this particular moment in history, the end of nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when early nationalists began to formulate their national identities, writers and newspapers played a significant role.

The choice to develop a character who is a writer and whose life hinges upon the institutional structures of early-twentieth century colonialism, racism, and early nationalism, therefore allows Pramoedya to enter into historically specific and thorough discussions about categories of identity, including racial and national formation. For example, he was able to narrate the tensions and problems that early nationalists had to address in their attempts to create a nation that consists of people living in vast areas who were physically separated by body of water, whose physical appearance do not necessarily resemble one another, and who because of their own (economic, political, social, and/or national) interests discriminate against each other. This is certainly evident in the ways in which Pramoedya's novels illustrate and call for an end to discrimination against Chinese people and domination of Javanese culture in Indonesia. Again, going back to how Pramoedya sees the past as being present in the present moment, I argue that although his novels focus on the colonial period, the issue of discrimination against Chinese people and domination of Javanese culture in Indonesia were prevalent during the time he wrote these novels and arguably, and to some extent, even today.

Hence, it is not only the novelistic time that is important in Indonesian history, but also the era in which Pramoedya produced his novels. When Pramoedya produced his novels in the mid-1970s, Indonesia's second president Soeharto had already established

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an economic strategy that opened up Indonesia to the West. The massive and rapid flow of Western capital and ideologies to Indonesia marked the beginning of President Soeharto's New Order in the late 1960s. The tie to the West that had been lost, represented by Indonesia's first president Soekarno's famous expression addressed to the United States in 1964, "go to hell with your aid" (Mackie and MacIntyre 36) was soon reestablished. Foreign aid from the United States and the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI)[71] (11-2) was reestablished in 1967 and reconnected Indonesia to Western countries through a link of dependency.

Soon after, Western ideologies began to dominate Indonesia's culture through various media. Foreign films, particularly from the United States, banned under Sukarno era, reentered the market, threatening local production (Hatley 220). Women's magazines displayed glamorous global fashions (241) surveying Western ideals of beauty. Changes in the economic sector were conspicuous. Foreign investment laws were shaped to accommodate, attract, and bring back foreign capital (Mackie and MacIntyre 35). Concessions were made between the Indonesian government and transnational companies. The 1970 oil boom gave way to "higher foreign exchange earnings and government revenues than Indonesia had ever experienced" (11-2).

But this "development" came at a price. The use of military power and force was justified through the rhetoric of political stabilization. Military power guarded the ever-increasing economic "growth." The military sided with the state in protecting companies—multinational and local—from the people whose lands and resources were

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[71] IGGI is a group of donor countries including the United States, Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, and New Zealand, and organizations such as Asian Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which existed until 1992.

confiscated.  Gradually, the state became stronger while non-governmental forces became weaker.  They had very limited, if any, access to power that would affect any policies.

Fierce censorship was also the characteristic of this New Order.  During this era the mass media could not post articles that were considered subversive by the state (Saunders).  Marxist or communist writings were considered among the most subversive.  Press publication licenses were denied or revoked if they criticized Soeharto or his government (Saunders), among them *Tempo*, *Editor, DeTik* and *Sinar Harapan*.  Journalists had to be members of Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (The Unity of Indonesian Journalists), Serikat Penerbit Surat Kabar (The Union of Newspapers Publishers), or Serikat Grafika Pers (The Union of Pers Grafika).  Being members implied their obeisance to the rules and the rulers.  It is within this broader context that we understand Pramoedya's banned novels, which the regime at that time saw as a "disguised critique of modern Indonesia" (Schwarz 235).

The first and second of Pramoedya's Buru Tetralogy novels, *Bumi Manusia (This Earth of Mankind)*[72] and *Anak Semua Bangsa (Child of All Nations*) were both published in 1980.  *Bumi Manusia*, written for popular consumption and especially "young Indonesian readers," was indeed popular; 10,000 copies were sold within two weeks (Foulcher 1 "Bumi").  In May 1981, however, these novels were banned.  The stated reason for their banning was that: they "contained elements of 'class conflict'" (Foulcher 9 "Bumi") and were "surreptitiously spreading Marxism-Leninism—surreptitious because, [the government] claimed the author's great literary dexterity made it impossible to identify actual examples of this Marxism-Leninism" (Lane, "Afterword," *This Earth of*

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[72] For an excellent discussion on racism and sexism in *Bumi Manusia* see Tineke Hellwig's *In the Shadow of Change: Women in Indonesian Literature*, particularly chapter 4, "Two Historical Novels by Pramoedya Ananta Toer."

*Mankind* 363).  This is ironic because these novels were published a year after

Pramoedya was freed from prison, yet he did not have any freedom to "speak" outside

these prisons.


*Pramoedya's Life and Work*

Being imprisoned because of his work was not new to Pramoedya.  Born February 6,

1925, in Java, Pramoedya was active in Indonesia's independence movement; he joined

Badan Keamanan Rakyat, a militia, and became a reporter and editor for *Sadar*

Magazine, the Indonesian section of the Voice of Free Indonesia.  Because of his

activities, Pramoedya was imprisoned by the Dutch from 1947 to 1949 (Pramoedya *The*

*Mute's*).

    After he was released from prison, he traveled abroad.  In 1953, Pramoedya went

to Amsterdam, the Netherlands.  Accompanied by his family, he stayed for six months at

Sticusa (Dutch Foundation for Cultural Cooperation), which he later criticized as a

"colonial brain trust" (Liu 123).  For Pramoedya, his visit to Europe made him aware of

his inferiority complex.[73]  However, his encounter with a young Dutch woman seemed to

have given him back his sense of manhood (Mrázek 58).  It may not even be a

coincidence that his first marriage ended soon after he returned to Indonesia (Mrázek 58).

One may suspect that in some ways, the character of Annelies, the mixed-race Eurasian

in these Buru novels, may be inspired by his encounters with young Dutch women while

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[73] http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Biography/BiographyPramoedyaAna.htm

he was in Europe.  However, it was his neighbor, a little girl named Annelies, whose name he then used for the protagonist's first wife in the Buru novels.[74]

A trip to China seemed also to have resulted in a character in Buru novels.  His first trip to China was in 1956 (Liu 120).  So influential was this trip on his work that Pramoedya then incorporated China's "literary doctrines" into his work (120).  It was, however, his second trip in 1958, when he stopped in China on his way home from a conference on the "Asian and African Writers" in the Soviet Union (Liu 131), that was influential on his Buru novels.  During this second trip, he had a love affair with his Chinese interpreter, Chen Xiaru (Liu 133), the woman who seems to have inspired the character of Ang San Mei, the protagonist Minke's second wife in the Buru novels (Liu 134).  It was obvious, therefore, that Pramoedya's traveling abroad was important in shaping the contour of his Buru novels.  To relate this to the maze of gaze metaphor, we can see how Pramoedya's gaze is transformed after he traveled to these fragmented spaces.  Hong Liu even argued that the years between 1956-1959, when Pramoedya made his visits to China, were significant in "the evolution of Pramoedya's cultural and political thinking" (119).

A couple of years after he came back from his trip, however, he was once again imprisoned, this time, by the Indonesian military under Soekarno from 1960 to 1961 for publishing *Hoa Kiau di Indonesia* that documented his opposition to the 1960 "government decree against Chinese retailers" (Abel 22).  This book was considered "an overly sympathetic history of the Chinese in Indonesia" (*This Earth* xvi).

Being imprisoned did not stop Pramoedya from being an activist; in 1962 after he was released from prison, he became an editor of "Lentera," the literary column in a

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[74] http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Biography/BiographyPramoedyaAna.htm

newspaper supported by the Indonesian Nationalist Party.  This newspaper is not to be mistaken with the similar-sounding Lekra, the Institute for People's Culture, the cultural wing of the Indonesian Communist Party, in which he had been an honorary governing board member since 1958 (*The Mute's* xvi).  Then, in 1965, the Indonesian military under Soeharto arrested him again and put him in prison until 1979.  Because no legal charges were lodged against him, one can only surmise that this imprisonment was also a response to his critical work.  After he was released from prison, although local publishers were restricted from publishing any of his works, he managed to publish several novels, memoirs, and biographical work by founding his own publishing house, Hasta Mitra, with two other former political prisoners, Hasyim Rachman and Joesoef Isak (Hellwig 69; Foulcher "Bumi" 1).  Although Pramoedya's Buru Tetralogy novels (as well as his other novels) were banned during Soeharto's regime in Indonesia, they were circulated underground (GoGwilt "Pramoedya's"), published in twenty languages, including English, and awarded the PEN Freedom-to-Write Award and the Ramon Magsaysay Award, demonstrating their world-wide circulation.

The Buru Tetralogy novels narrate stories of colonialism in the Dutch East Indies at the turn-of-the-century largely from the perspective of their protagonist, Minke.  The first three novels, *Bumi Manusia (This Earth of Mankind), Anak Semua Bangsa (The Child of All Nation)*, and *Jejak Langkah (Footsteps)* are Minke's notes of events he experiences from when he is eighteen years old to the day he is arrested.  Minke is a son of a Javanese aristocratic family.  Aristocracy (*Bupati*[75]) provides him with a Dutch education, which is his access to European legal status, and explains his love of Europe expressed in the beginning of the novels.  As the story develops, however, Minke

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[75] *Bupati* is a governmental position, a level under governor.

gradually comes to love his native culture. Europe and European law let him down: he believes that these laws cost him his wife. Having married a woman with an Indonesian mother and a Dutch father, he loses her when she is forcibly deported under her Dutch stepbrother's custody. This event is the beginning point for his critical gaze, a gaze which allows him to see things he has not seen before. This critical gaze then enables him to wholeheartedly accept his expulsion from Stovia medical school for "major breaches of the rules": writing a prescription for his wife when he is not yet a doctor and missing classes during the time his wife is sick. He takes this decision as a blessing in disguise and becomes "independent" as he wishes. He establishes an anti-colonial newspaper, *Medan*, and anti-colonial organizations, Sarekat Priyayi and Sarekat Dagang Islam.

In the last novel *Rumah Kaca (House of Glass)* (4), another Western-educated native, Pangemanann, replaces Minke as narrator. Pangemanann is a police commissioner who works for the Dutch colonial government. His job is to analyze "natives" and their movements and provide the Governor General with suggestions for repressing these movements. His "achievement," which is to arrest Minke and send him into exile, brings him a promotion as a General Secretariat of the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies. From the last novel, ostensibly based on Pangemanann's notes, we learn that the first three novels (that both the readers and Pangemanann read) are Minke's fictional texts. Pangemanann questions,

> I still had doubts as to whether what he had written in *This Earth of Mankind* was
> true or not. So I watched his countenance closely. Was it true that he had once
> known somebody called Annelies Mellema? Was it true that he had married her?

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Was it true that he had been on very close terms with Nyai Ontosoroh?  Were

these writings nothing more than his fantasies?  Or did he know about them from

other people?  (*House* 302).

When he undertakes an investigation to find answers to his questions, he finds out that at

least some of the names in Minke's texts are fictional.  For example, Jean Marais's "real"

name is Antoine Barbuse Jambitte, who, however, identifies himself as Jean Le Boucq

(*House* 192).  This "writing [which] [i]s a world unto itself, floating halfway between

reality and a dream world" is hinted at in the first novel, when Minke writes that "thirteen

years later I read and studied these short notes over again.  I merged them together with

dreams, imaginings.  Naturally they became different from the original.  Different?  But

that doesn't matter!" (*This Earth* 15).  These complex layers of "truth" and fiction place

Pramoedya's history in a postmodern and international literary context.


## The "Philogynist"[76] Minke and Postcolonial Manhood


Pramoedya's fiction is powerful and largely progressive, documenting the injustices and

psychic consequences of colonialism and intimating the processes of resistance.  But it

also shows a vexed and ambivalent attitude toward gender relations, privileging feminine

beauty in disconcerting ways.  In his review of Pramoedya's first two novels, "*Bumi

Manusia* and *Anak Semua Bangsa*: Pramoedya Ananta Toer enters the 1980s," Keith

Foulcher proposes that Pramoedya's motivation in having a "pop flavor" male

protagonist who is "super and good looking" and "a female one who is pretty and

intelligent" is Pramoedya's attempt to reach as wide audience as possible (2).  Unlike

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[76] The Indonesian version also uses this term, "philogynik," to suggest Minke's love and adoration for
women, particularly in these novels, for beautiful women.

Foulcher who does not question further what these characters represent and how these characterizations function to support sexist ideology, I argue that developing female characters who are beautiful in order to attract a wide audience, exposes the investments of the heterosexual male author in reproducing this narrative of female beauty. First, the author is invested in this narrative because it serves his purpose to attract a wide audience. Second, his investment lies in the ways in which the structure of the texts hinges on the working of this narrative of female beauty, particularly, as I will argue later, in reclaiming the masculinity of the protagonist. Thus, in what follows, I will provide an analysis of the emphasis in Pramoedya's novels on female beauty and explore the functioning of these beautiful female characters in relation to Pramoedya's construction of Minke's manhood as a colonized man.

It is worthy of note that the novel begins with Minke at eighteen. His age signals a crucial moment: it represents the culturally important age when a boy becomes a man. In his mother's words, "You're a man now. Your mustache is beginning to come through" (*This Earth* 127). One of the early scenes shows Minke encountering a challenge from his schoolmate, Robert Surhoof: "if you are a real man, a true philogynist, come with me there. I want to see what you do, whether you're indeed as manly as you say you are" (*This Earth* 20). This scene provides readers with a frame for understanding how one comes to manhood in Indonesia at this moment. In this particular scene, being a "true philogynist," a lover of women—particularly in these novels, a lover of beautiful women, is crucial. Robert's challenge is to conquer the heart of a beautiful Eurasian woman, Annelies Mellema. Meeting Annelies and winning her acceptance becomes proof of Minke's manhood. This eighteen-year-old boy is now a man. But Pramoedya is

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also ironic and perhaps ambivalent. First, Minke isn't yet a man, because he is still immature. Second, Annelies's European background complicates the issue. Pramoedya seems both to accept and to critique the notion that an Indonesian man can assert his masculinity through the conquest of a woman partly European.

In a larger historical context, however, manhood and colonized man are neither synonymous nor a plausible combination. Anne McClintock argues in her book *Imperial Leather* that colonized subjects and territorial lands are feminized by their subjugation to masculinized colonial power (23). Male explorers speak about nature (in this context, meaning "land") in feminine terms, as something to be mastered and possessed (24). In this way, the possessors of land and people are constructed to be masculine. Masculinity is not the possession of the colonized.

This, however, is not to suggest that colonized man's masculinity during colonial era was in a crisis. Gail Bederman puts it convincingly:

> […] to imply that masculinity was in crisis suggests that manhood is a
> transhistorical category or fixed essence that has its good moments as well as its
> bad, rather than an ideological construct which is constantly being remade. (11)

Using Bederman's point as the basis of my analysis, I too see manhood as an ideological construct that is made and remade within particular time and space. This means that in the nineteenth-century during "full-fledged colonialism" in Indonesia, as ideologies of colonialism restructured the day-to-day lives of colonized people, notions of colonized manhood are also remade. For example, colonized men became "politically impotent" after Java was defeated by the Dutch in the Diponegoro War in 1830. Then gradually,

male native rulers' authority was displaced by that of male Dutch officials and administrators.

In these texts, the displacement of power from the native rulers by and to the Dutch administrators is represented by the trafficking of daughters. Minke observes that the older generation of Javanese men gave their beautiful daughters to Dutch men and therefore lost their honor as the men of the family. *Nyai* Ontosoroh—Minke's mother–in-law—is sold by her father to a Dutch man, *Tuan Besar Kuasa* (meaning "The Powerful Master") Herman Mellema, for "twenty-five guilders" and a promise that *Nyai*'s father, Clerk Sastrotomo, will become a paymaster (*This Earth* 84). With this arrangement, Sastrotomo loses the respect of his family and the people around him. Even *Nyai* does not ever speak to or see him again. Another example in these texts occurs when Surati's father, who is *Nyai*'s brother, sells Surati to *Tuan Besar Kuasa* Mijnheer Frits Homerus Vlekkenbaaij who replaces *Tuan* Mellema. After he sells his daughter, his wife calls him, "a man without a backbone," one of the most de-masculinizing epithets to this day. This trafficking in daughters exemplifies Revathi Krishnaswamy's point that colonized women became the "circuitry through which colonial desire flows, the conduit through which collusions and collisions between colonizing and colonized men are conducted" (Krishnaswamy 47). In this way, native fathers and Dutch colonialists collude in trading the native daughters to the Dutch colonialists.[77] At the same time, however, the surrendering of native daughters to Dutch colonialists and the condemnation that native fathers experience after giving away their beautiful daughters represents and

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[77] Literary scholar on Indonesia, Tineke Hellwig, in discussing a particular form of trafficking of women, "woman stealing," in *Bumi Manusia* made a similar argument that "male solidarity is stronger than color. […] Colonial relationships take second place when it comes to men exercising their common power over women" (80).

constitutes the low status of native fathers, whose manhood is displaced through not being able to protect their own daughters against Dutch men. Particularly because women are considered "the nation's most valuable possessions," the inability to protect their own women's respectability (Enloe 42-4, 54) is what made these colonized men "effeminate."[78]

It is only logical, then, that because what feminized these colonized men was the loss of their most valuable possessions, i.e., women, that they would reclaim their manhood through reclaiming their possession of these women. One of the ways in which later nineteenth-century Indonesian aristocrats regained their potency was through their sexuality. This, at least, seems to be the focal point in Minke's manhood. Moreover, Pramoedya's text seems to endorse this notion. Not only in his text, but also in his own life, Pramoedya, who admitted to having an "inferiority complex" vis a vis Europeans, their literature and culture (GoGwilt "The Voice" 238; LSSB 189 qtd. in Mrázek 56), suggested that it was "the contact with [his] friend, the [Dutch] young woman, [that] gave [him] back the self-confidence that [he] had almost believed was lost forever" (LSSB 201 qtd. in Mrázek 58). Indeed, in one of his last interviews with Rheinhard Sirait (forthcoming), Pramoedya admitted that it was his sleeping with a Caucasian white woman that provided him an access to his masculinity.

Yet, it is not sufficient to reclaim manhood through sexual access to *any* women. It is the attachment of the notion of women's beauty to the discourse of male's sexual potency and manhood that is particularly interesting in these texts. Nyai suggests:

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[78] Sinha uses this term to explore the feminization of colonized men in British India during late-nineteenth century colonialism. See, Mrinalini Sinha's *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Similarly, Krishnawasmy uses the term "effeminism" to suggest "a racialized pathologization" of "femininity-in-masculinity" and pointed out that this notion was used to maintain British hegemonic rule in India around the same period.

My father was a handsome man. My mother—I never knew her name—was a

pretty woman and knew how to look after her body. Actually my father should

properly have had two or three wives, especially as he owned land that was rented

by the factory and other land worked by tenants. But he didn't. He felt it was

enough to have one wife who was beautiful. (*This Earth* 81)

The idea of a beautiful wife as desirable and a source of man's pride consistently runs

through the texts. In this particular scene, for example, having one beautiful wife seems

to help constitute *Nyai*'s father's manhood and becomes a matter of pride even for Nyai.

Manhood is not about possessing a rich or a good woman, but a beautiful woman.

## The Buru Tetralogy as Masculinist Texts: The Tetralogy Women

Analyzing the character of Minke and his beautiful women is important because it

elucidates *how* his relationships to these beautiful women inscribe his masculinity.

Hence, analyzing Minke's relationships with his beautiful wives highlights the ways in

which articulating manhood in these texts as an ideological process reveals how they

resist or are complicit with dominant gender ideologies. Analyses of how these texts

articulate manhood carry my argument that the Buru Tetralogy novels must be considered

as "masculinist" texts, that is, narratives privileging the perspectives and experiences of

men.

Although I argue that the Buru Tetralogy novels are masculinist texts, they cannot

be oversimplified as blatantly sexist. While complicit with some dimensions of sexist

ideology, they also find ways to resist other dimensions of sexism. For example, these

texts rewrite the role of the concubine in colonial history. While most texts write the

figure of *nyai*, or concubine, as shaming, or a negative characteristic, of Indonesian culture, Pramoedya rewrites the *nyai* as positive and powerful. Placing the concubine as an important character whose help, wisdom, and shrewdness ensures Minke's survival, challenges the dominant idea that the Indonesian *nyai* is marginal, even invisible. Still, the concubine exists in the novel primarily to support Minke's relationship with Annelies, a connection that the concubine sees as beneficial for both her daughter Annelies and Minke.

Also, Minke is not simply a sexist character. He occasionally questions gender injustices. For example, he asks, "why wasn't a special [bicycle] version made for [women] so that the wind couldn't be made the scapegoat? Did people think the world belonged only to men?" (*Child* 284). He also says to his third wife, "You are not a doll, Princess, […] You are my wife, whom I respect fully, as I do myself. I need your argument" (*Footsteps* 454). After this generous phrase, however, he says, "No, that's not the kind of answer I want, even though I am grateful for such a selfless statement. I need your answer as an individual in your own right" (*Footsteps* 454). This suggests that Minke encourages his wife to speak out as an individual, although even in his encouragement, we notice, he remains in control.

Another example is that these texts do not merely portray all of his wives simply as passive, submissive women.[79] His wives have public roles; however, when they are married to Minke, these roles are altered. In Hellwig's words,

> Quite unlike Prince Charming, Minke's kiss does not bring Annelies to life, but
>
> imposes passivity and dependence upon her. Later her silence turns into total

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[79] Although Minke has relationships to women who do not become his wives; for the purpose of this paper, I will only limit my discussion to his wives from whom, I argue, Minke's masculinity emanate.

lethargy.  She puts herself in Minke's hands and gives up her independence.

Minke thinks she is beauty and sweetness personified, and this keeps her from

being a self-sufficient, independent woman who is his equal.  Minke frequently

calls her "my fragile doll."  She allows herself to be his doll, his toy.   From the

moment Minke enters her life, Annelies becomes an apathetic figure without any

will of her own.  Whenever Minke is gone, she is sick with longing (BM: 51, 142,

159, 176).  She turns into Minke's shadow, without whom she does not exist.  In

no way does she resemble her decisive and assertive mother. (78)

Her argument holds true not only with Annelies, Minke's first wife, but also Mei,

Minke's second wife, and Princess Kasiruta, Minke's third wife, who are all strong

women before marrying him but become weak and dependent in their relationship to him.

Prior to being married to Minke, Annelies Mellema is a manager of a farm, who

in Minke's note is a "beautiful childlike girl [who] was also a supervisor who must be

paid heed to by her workers, male and female" (*This Earth* 35).  She strikes Minke as an

"extraordinary character: Not only is she such an efficient manager, but she can [also]

ride horses and get more milk from her cows than any of the other workers" (*This Earth*

37-8).  Thus, Annelies has superior character and ability.  Being able to get more milk

than any other workers is a domestic skill, which shows her strength as a woman worker.

However, all of this changes when she falls in love with Minke on their first meeting.

She is so madly in love with him that when Minke goes home after their first meeting and

does not come back to visit her, she becomes ill.  Her mother has to write Minke a letter

inviting him to come and visit Annelies (*This Earth* 63).  When Minke comes and decides

to stay with her and her family, Annelies feels better.  But every time Minke is away

from her, she falls sick, Minke is her only cure.  The condition worsens when, after their

marriage, the colonial court orders her under the custody of Maurits Mellema (her step

brother), and therefore she has to go to the Netherlands.  She dies after a few days in the

Netherlands, demonstrating that "she will not be able to live without [Minke].  [He is] the

only thing to which she clings" (*This Earth* 351).  Annelies's inability to live without

Minke shows how the texts construct Minke's masculinity through his possession of

women and not necessarily through his status in the face of colonial law.  In these

masculinist texts, Annelies's deportation and death function to further show Annelies's

dependence on Minke and therefore Minke's masculinity.

Minke's second wife, Ang San Mei, whom he meets after Annelies dies, is a

teacher who graduated from Shanghai Teachers' College (*Footsteps* 78).  She is also a

member of the underground Chinese movement, Young Generation, which "fights

against the rule of the Empress Tz'u-his, who is propped up by the Western powers"

(*Footsteps* 79).  Minke admires her beauty when he enters a "filthy and dirty alley" and

sees her: "slim, almost skinny, pretty, slit-eyed, and pale" (*Footsteps* 71).  He goes there

looking for Ang San Mei, not knowing who she is.  Her beauty, "backed up by character

and knowledge," (*Footsteps* 81) attracts Minke.  In this case, Mei's character represents

the equation of beauty with intelligence.  When she marries Minke, however, things

change.  Although she is still active in the movement when she is married to Minke, she

becomes ill from these activities.  Her illness, I argue, comes as a punishment for her

involvement in an activist group, whose members are predominantly males.  Mei's

activities that involve "go[ing] out so much" and wearing "men's clothes" challenge

Minke's masculinity.  The texts use her illness as a way to bring her back to her position

as a passive woman.  When Mei is sick, she allows only Minke to treat her and does not

want to be taken to the hospital (*Child* 149).  It is Minke who decides to take her to the

hospital anyway, but promises her that he will be with her all the time (*Footsteps* 149).

Mei finally gives in by saying, "as long as I am with you" (*Footsteps* 149).  But after two

months in the hospital, she dies "without leaving behind a word" (*Footsteps* 151),

attesting to her own passivity.

Minke's last wife, Princess Kasiruta, is a "well-educated" (*Footsteps* 320)

daughter of a Raja or King from the Mollucas islands (*Footsteps* 298).  She meets Minke

when she wants to find out more about a boycott, which Minke writes up in his

newspaper, so that she can bring the information back to her palace, Kasiruta.  On their

first meeting, Minke is attracted to her, noting that she is "tall and slender and her skin

was an attractive ebony color"[80] (*Footsteps* 298).  She reminds him of his first wife,

"except for her color" (*Footsteps* 298).  In consequent meetings, she asks Minke to ask

the Governor General for permission to return to her home in Kasiruta; she and her

family are exiled[81] to Sukabumi, West Java.  When Minke goes to see the Governor

General, on her behalf, the request is rejected.  The Governor General tells Princess

Kasiruta's father that his daughter needs to be married, and her father finally asks Minke

to marry his daughter.  Once they are married, Princess Kasiruta is active helping Minke

with his newspaper as a writer.  Because Princess Kasiruta's father taught her to use a

gun when she was in Kasiruta, she knows how to use it when Robert Suurhof, Minke's

enemy, comes and threatens her husband (*Footsteps* 384).  Although she is brave and

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[80] "tinggi semampai dan kulitnya hitam manis" (*Jejak Langkah* 350)
[81] The king himself does not know why his family is being exiled and even asks Minke to inquire this matter further to the Governor General.  Minke suggests that the Governor General simply exile all "sultans, rajas, and tribal chiefs that he did not like, especially those who defied his will," particularly as he attempts to unify the Indies (*Footsteps* 326).

capable of protecting Minke, she is submissive to her husband.  Minke even thinks to himself, "my wife was devoted to me and that was what was important to a Native man from whatever class and whatever region" (*Footsteps* 380).  She tells Minke, "I will always do everything that you want" and "take me wherever you like and for however long you like" (*Footsteps* 454).  What the novels suggest, therefore, is that although women can be as brave as they want, they have to be loyal and submissive to their husbands.  Furthermore, their beauty stands in for the manliness of their possessors.

*Women's Beauty and (Post)Colonial Manhood*

Although some would revitalize manhood by "celebrating all things male" or "opposing excessive femininity" (Bederman 16), the Buru Tetralogy novels suggest that manhood is claimed and even constructed, in part, through possessing beautiful women.  Although she primarily focuses on the twentieth-century United States, Lynn S. Chancer in her book *Reconcilable Differences* poses an argument that is central to this chapter, which is, "sexual access to beautiful women's bodies" has become one of the signs of masculine power, the way money, prestige, and influence have been symbols of masculinity (114).  Because the texts represent the possession of beautiful women as an avenue to masculine power, I argue that these texts can be considered masculinist texts.

Women's beauty, as I argue throughout this chapter, is one of the structures that support Minke's masculinity.  In constructing Minke as the most manly man, the texts construct his wives as the most desirable and beautiful women.  Another of Chancer's argument can also be useful here:

the loss of looks-ism could place masculinity itself at a loss, removing a criterion

by which its internal processes of definition and differentiation historically

became possible.  Without it, a person attempting to be masculine might suddenly

feel disoriented, revealing the extent to which looks-ism is bound up with our

usual perceptions, feelings, and thoughts about gender.  (116)

Thus, taking Chancer's argument further, it is necessary for the texts to construct Minke's

wives as the most desirable woman to further prove Minke's manliness.  Annelies

Mellema, for example, is said to be a "beautiful maiden of whom all men dream" (*This*

*Earth* 73).  "Prima donnas from Italy and Spain, ballerinas from Russia and France, none

are as beautiful as she" (*This Earth* 22).  Minke also make notes that "[Mei] looked so

beautiful, like a flower in bloom.  I was proud to see so many eyes turn in her direction.

And it seemed that she was used to being stared at by men" (*Footsteps* 116).  Thus,

Minke takes pride in seeing that many people desire his wives and that he is the strongest

male for being able to posses a woman who is desired by every male.  In his words:

> [H]er beauty was … profound, greater than all those things that have been made
>
> by man, richer than all the combined and individual meanings to be found in the
>
> treasuries of the languages.  She was a gift from Allah, without equal, unique.
>
> And she was mine alone.  (*This Earth* 206)

From this particular episode, female beauty is clearly a structure in which the word "she

was mine alone," a masculinized concept, can be understood.   Furthermore, this also

provides evidence that even as Pramoedya criticized gender inequality in Buru novels, he

was still perpetuating an old tradition of masculinist texts within which the possession of

beautiful women signify the male possessor as the most masculine man.  This can be

seen, for example, in fourteenth-century Old Javanese *Tale of Sutasoma*, where it was suggested that "it is only fitting that you, being the most eminent, should possess a beautiful wife" (Creese 90).

In masculinist texts, women's beauty also functions to impose manhood on the spectators. Lori Lefkovitz notes, "the female body is objectified by its beauty, and the reader, always masculinized as spectator by the text, is made to wish to possess the woman who is beautiful. Physical descriptions, of beauty in particular, enforce the power of male spectatorship" (18). In this sense, Pramoedya's Buru Tetralogy novels enforce the power of male spectatorship by objectifying the female body. For example, when Annelies is ill, Minke writes at length of her beauty, observing her and voyeuristically cataloguing her attributes while she sleeps:

> Annelies sighed and moved her finger. She will be all right; I will not have to watch her die. I moved away and sat on a chair where I could watch her. Even ill she was gloriously beautiful: Her skin was fine, her nose, eyebrows, lips, teeth, ears, hair…everything. And I began to doubt Dr. Martinet's explanation of Annelies's psychology. Could such a beautiful body house such a disordered mind? And I –an outsider, just an acquaintance—must I also accept some responsibility for her just because of her beauty? Creole beauty. How involved my life was becoming! The result of my own actions as a philogynist. (*This Earth* 205)
>
> […]
>
> The beautiful shape of her nose pulled my hand over to stroke it. The ends of her hair were brown and her eyebrows were lush, as if they had been fertilized

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before she was born.  And her eyelashes, so long and curly, made her eyes seem

like a pair of morning stars in a clear sky, her countenance itself the clearest sky

of all.  (*This Earth* 206)

The first hint of voyeurism is evident: Minke is watching Annelies.  He is the subject

whose eyes wander over an object, Annelies, lying on the bed passively.  He judges and

admires her as if judging an object of art.  His words make the "masculinized" readers

wish to possess her beauty, and by doing so the text perpetuates the processes of

heterosexual male spectatorship.

What is also important here, of course, is the way the narrator specifies that

Annelies's beauty is Creole beauty.  In colonial Indonesia, the status of mixed-race or

Creole is closer to Dutch than to native, in that Creoles' legal status can be the same as

that of ("equivalent" to) the Dutch (see chapter 3).  The narrator's assertion that her

beauty is Creole beauty positions Annelies as a partially Western woman, so that Minke's

access to her body becomes his access to colonial manhood.  His relation to Annelies

strongly recalls postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon's argument that colonized men sleep

with white women, in parts, to claim their "authentic manhood" (72).  Beautiful Creole

women are particularly important for colonized men such as Minke, who in achieving a

kind of charismatic power over his women manages to experience himself as strong and

male.  Additionally, it is important that Minke marries this white-skinned Indo woman, so

that his "authentic" masculinity can be reclaimed without being questioned.

Women's beauty, in these texts, also relates to the manhood of the male

nationalists.  Minke's comment that "Alexander the Great, Napoleon, all would fall to

their knees to gain [Annelies's] love.  To touch [her] skin they would sacrifice their

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nations, their people" (*This Earth* 206) strengthens the connection between beautiful women, manhood, and nation. McClintock (1997) argues that "all nationalisms are gendered": "in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between *men*" (89). In this way, nation is masculinized in its gender and therefore manhood becomes an attribute of the nation. Beautiful women are objects whose possession will increase the value of a man and whose possession by colonized men will underwrite the emergence of a masculinized nation. Minke, "the son of a conquered race," puts himself above Alexander the Great or Napoleon because he has sexual access to Annelies, the most beautiful Eurasian woman. In this sense, we can understand that, as Hellwig pointed out, "Male sexual potency is not just manifested toward women; it also plays a crucial part in interactions between men, in their competitiveness and power struggles" (81 Hellwig). That is, Minke's need to reclaim his masculinity is not simply about reclaiming masculinity for himself or for women but it is also about asserting his masculinity in the eyes of other men.

*Women's Presence and Men's Transformation*

The use of women's beauty in these texts, I argue, is also a strategy to show Minke's growing love of his native culture. In this sense, "women serve as boundary markers and threshold figures; they facilitate the male plot and the male transformations, but they are not the agents of change, nor are they conceivable heirs to political power" (McClintock 70). In these texts, the beautiful women whom Minke adores represent his transformation from someone who idolizes and mimics the West to someone who comes

to value his own emerging nation. Additionally, particularly because the character Minke is based on a real-life nationalist Raden Tirto Adhi Soerjo, it is important to see in what ways Minke's relationships with women depart from Tirto's. From the biography that Pramoedya wrote, *Sang Pemula*, we learn that Tirto was married to Princess Fatimah, the daughter of *Sultan* (King) from Bacan island, part of the Moluccas (12). He was also married to Siti Habibah, a few years earlier. In the novels, however, Minke marries, first, an Indo woman, second, a Chinese woman, and third, this native princess, presumably representing Tirto's real-life wife, Princess Fatimah. It is even more interesting to relate Minke's first two wives to Pramoedya's experiences of traveling abroad (the Netherlands and China) and encountering these women there. It may even be argued that Pramoedya used the texts to recount his relationships to these women. Nonetheless, that the novels "add" two wives, an Indo and a Chinese woman, both of whom are light-skinned, necessitates that we ask, what are the functions of these two "additional wives" in these novels. Here, I argue that these women are added to the texts because they function, first, to provide Minke with "authentic manhood" (by way of his sleeping with a white-skinned Indo woman, Annelies) and second, as providing the text access to discuss discrimination against the Chinese in Indonesia (by marrying him to a light-skinned Chinese woman Ang San Mei).

From the text we learn that Minke's first "love" is the Netherland's Queen Wilhelmina. This love symbolizes his love of Western culture. As I mentioned above, Minke's Western education is his avenue to his love of Western culture. He claims that his education makes him "rather different from the general run of [his] countrymen" (*This Earth* 16). He admires Europe and the United States passionately: "their

awesomeness rivaled the magical powers of the gods and knights, my ancestors" (*This Earth* 17). Thus, in the beginning of the novels, Minke simply adores everything Western and even sees it as better than native. At this stage the texts attempt to show his deeply internalized colonization.

As the story develops, Minke's love interest changes from the Queen to Annelies Mellema. Annelies, who is a mix-raced woman represents the first stage in Minke's transition to his "native" love. Minke believes that she is more beautiful than the Queen (*This Earth* 42) but also the native "Jaka Tarub's angel" *(This Earth* 44). Thus, he idolizes hybridity as the ideal form that is better than both "Western" and "native." He claims that his Javanese clothes are "half-Javanese, half-European clothes." He criticizes people who claim it as "a true Javanese costume" without taking into account the "European elements in the shirt, collar, tie, and even forgetting […] velvet made in England" (*This Earth* 133). He recognizes, however, that the colonizer has an interest in claiming a "pure" identity. For example, he writes in his notes how his teacher, Miss Magda Peters, gets into trouble for saying, "Europeans who feel themselves to be a hundred percent pure do not really know how much Asian blood flows in their veins" (*This Earth* 215). Thus, his love of Annelies marks his moving away from identifying with the "Western" colonizer only to embrace a not-so-native and not-so-Western identity.

After Annelies dies, Minke marries an activist Chinese girl. His love for a Chinese woman is important in showing that Minke's character is not anti-Chinese. This is a critical political statement in the Indonesian context, especially because Pramoedya

had already been arrested, in 1960, before he wrote these Buru Tetralogy novels precisely because he was sympathetic to the Chinese in Indonesia.

In these texts, Mei is a threshold figure who provides an entry for the texts to criticize discrimination against the Chinese in Indonesia. For example, Minke records in his notes that when Minke tries to put a sick Mei in Ibu Baldrun's house, Ibu Baldrun is resistant, saying, "they have different customs from us […] the neighbors won't like it" (*Footsteps* 92). But Minke finally persuades Ibu Baldrun and she is willing to accept Mei. In this way, Minke's marriage to Mei represents the author's politics. Pramoedya believes "Chinese Indonesians are part of the Indonesian nation" (Lin). In this case, marriage is a trope that represents a union of two peoples. Reading it in a nationalist and feminist context, however, the union of these different races of people suggests that the nationalists represented by Minke are always male by gender, and that Chinese or other minority groups are feminized, in this text, by the figure of Mei. It is the male nationalist who has to take care of the "sick" and "dying" minority. Although Mei's death may be read to represent a larger event, I argue that Mei's death is necessary for the texts to be consistent with the idea that his destiny is to love a native woman. For the narrative to ensure that Minke's destiny is his own culture, it has to execute Mei.

The native woman who replaces Mei is Princess Kasiruta, a woman of "unique beauty." The text carefully sets up the native to be a "non-Javanese" character to suggest that his "native" culture is not necessarily a "Javanese" culture. Rather, it is the new nation "Indonesia," that embraces different ethnicities. During this time, Minke propagandizes his fellow male natives to form a political organization. He also establishes an organization for natives, and a newspaper "Medan," "the defender of the

natives." Princess Kasiruta, the native woman, therefore provides a vehicle to show how Minke has now been transformed to love his own emerging, not-yet formed, nation.

What is worthy of note, albeit briefly, is that Minke's first and second wives are light/white-skinned women while his third wife is a dark-skinned woman. The order which women he marries first and last may suggest his transformation from loving light- or white-skinned women to dark-skinned women. This transformation can be read as an attempt of the novels to challenge light skin color as a signifier for female beauty. Yet, even as the texts attempt to articulate an ideal of beauty that is not light-skinned, they are not completely embracing "native" beauty. In signifying Princess Kasiruta's beauty, for example, the texts often describe her beauty in such a way that people often mistake her for an "Indo" woman (*Footsteps* 309). Even Minke suspects that she has "Portuguese blood" (*Footsteps* 298). What this suggests, therefore, is that even when the texts seem to challenge light skin color as an ideal of beauty, they nonetheless use Indo (in this case their facial features and not skin color) as once again embodying female beauty.

This ambivalent towards native beauty may be traced to Pramoedya's own desire for "European" beauty. In a letter to his daughter, Pramoedya wrote:

> When I was a boy, I often looked at pictures in Dutch magazines. The American and European movie stars always had such big eyes, not like these half slant-eyes of my people. […] Since childhood, the big eyes have had an aesthetic effect on me. (LLSB 173 qtd. in Mrazek 56)

Here, it was evident that Pramoedya had some desires for Caucasian beauty. It may be that this preference for Caucasian beauty that he wrote into the text as he described Annelies's beauty. Indeed, in the texts, Minke often admires Annelies' "big" and

"shining eyes! ('Like a pair of morning stars')" (*This Earth* 25, 45).  In some ways, therefore, Pramoedya's desire for Caucasian beauty, which in his case is not necessarily about skin color, but rather facial features, seeps into some parts of the novels even as they attempt to challenge such an ideal of beauty.

Furthermore, these novels' use of women as "threshold figures" to facilitate male transformation illustrates my argument that the Buru Tetralogy novels, although attempting to house anti-sexist narratives, are masculinist texts.  These texts insist that manhood comes, in some ways, from possessing beautiful women, and the women themselves function as symbols of different options for alliance among progressive men.

The texts as a whole represent a silent consensus during both colonial and postcolonial time that a man is a man not least because of his possession of beautiful women.  For example, the texts answer the question Minke poses in the third novel ("Was it wrong for me to be attracted by her beauty?  Was it wrong that I had a sense of beauty and had glands in my body?") with Pangemanann's comments in the last novel: "That he had a weakness for pretty women need not be discussed here.  In any case, that is a basic characteristic of real manhood" (*House* 7).  This shows both how Pangemanann and Minke agree on this basic assumption, in spite of their political differences, and how the texts are uncritical of the taken-for-granted assumptions that there is a standard of beauty by which people can measure it.  This may be related to the fact that in Pramoedya's life, beauty was indeed important and an unquestioned issue.  This can be seen from a story he recounted about his first encounter with his second wife at a book fair.  There, he noticed that she was "the prettiest girl around."  Indeed, just like Minke's women in his novels, Pramoedya's woman had to be constructed in superlative terms.

Conversely, the texts suggest that ugly characters are without question undesirable and assume that what constitutes ugliness is self-evident. For example, Surati is a woman whom Minke's mother-in-law, the concubine Ontosoroh, wants Minke to marry. She is the "once-beautiful blossom of Tulangan" but is infected with smallpox and becomes pockmarked and "unattractive to anyone, even to [*nyai* Ontosoroh] and [Minke]" (*Child* 129). When Minke writes in his notes "how disappointed Nyai must be. She would not try to marry me to Surati now" (*Child* 129), the texts assume the naturalization of ugly and unattractive as undesirable. The text never goes back to question why Nyai does not try to marry Minke with Surati when she is ugly. The novels take it for granted that unattractive people are simply unfit as wives, at least for men of status. This attitude supports the idea that "if human beauty is, at the limit, the perfect realization of the concept of human being, then nonbeauty is the imperfect or defective realization of the concept" (Carroll 37). This means that Surati's ugliness makes her less of a human being; therefore, for the texts to suggest Minke's acquisition of manhood, he cannot marry her.

That access to masculinity relies on, as these novels propose, sexual access to beautiful women suggests that these categorizations of who can be considered beautiful matters for (heterosexual) men and women. Not only that, Minke's categorizing his wives as beautiful, or Pramoedya's strategically producing works that have heroines and heroes for whom good looks matter a great deal, are not without their consequences. Stoler argues that the "power of categories rests in their capacity to impose the realities they ostensibly only describe. Classification here is not a benign cultural act but a potent political one" (8). Classifying women by their beauty, this chapter argues, matters

because first, women become the objects of classification; and second, this classification justifies the unequal distribution of power and wealth. For men, however, being classified as ugly does not hurt them the same way as it does women. In these novels, for example, ugly men such as *Tuan Besar Kuasa* Vlekkenbaaij can still have power and money.

What is even more interesting is that physical beauty during colonial times (and this can be extended to the present time) is constructed as an "attribute of superior European species," that is measured "through cranial measurements and facial comparisons" (Krishnaswamy 16). To be as close to a "European feature" as possible is still considered beautiful in Indonesia. Although these novels attempt to challenge the simple equation of light skin color as a beauty ideal, they still, to a certain extent, value women with European facial features such as the "Goddess" Annelies. When the texts consider the exotic Princess Kasiruta who has "enticing black skin"[82] (Footsteps 309) beautiful, they do so by embracing the fact that her facial features resemble Annelies's, i.e., Eurasian.

In closing, this chapter suggests that in masculinist texts such as Buru Tetralogy novels, beauty matters because it holds the structure of masculinity in postcolonial Indonesia. That is, because colonized men are stripped of their manhood during the colonial era, postcolonial texts in some ways remake that "lost" manhood. Pramoedya's novels suggest that possessing beautiful women is one of the means to remake manhood. But remaking manhood as measured by the possession of beautiful women is inherently a sexist endeavor, however understandable in historical context, and inevitably affects and undercuts the generally progressive nature of anticolonialist texts such as these.

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[82] "kulitnya yang hitam manis" (*Jejak Langkah* 363)

# Chapter 6

## From Shame to Same: Embarassment, Conformity,
## and Indonesian Women's Skin-Lightening Practices

I felt as if an enormously heavy rock was sinking deep into the river of my emotions.  I

stood there, silently.  *She* was holding my four-month-old baby and commented how my

daughter was now pretty that her skin was light.  Her jovial tone and choice of words

were, as it turned out, the missing pieces that resolved the big puzzle of why two months

earlier when she saw my baby for the first time, she didn't make the standard comment

(what everybody almost always says) when one sees newborn babies, "oh…how cute is

your baby" (regardless of what they look like).  Instead, she had said, in a rather surprised

and hesitant tone, that my daughter's appearance took after my family's side, which at

that time I took as a compliment.  The compliments were almost always there, uttered in

plain sight for everyone's delight, but this time, certainly not mine.  What was silently

articulated was how my daughter, so young still, was deemed not-yet-pretty until her skin

was light, and that my family and I, whom her appearance took after when her skin was

dark, were therefore considered ugly.  I was thunderstruck—sometimes I secretly wish

thunder would strike me and take me away from such a tense situation.  Yet, with no

thunder striking, I was left standing like an old and dying tree in winter without leaves to

cover my exposed, bare, and naked branches.  I was ashamed, ashamed of myself for

being (caught and exposed) ugly and for passing it on to my daughter, and for standing

there and saying nothing.  (I had, of course, already chosen skin color as the topic of my

dissertation and could/should have unpacked her words then and there.)  But as I

imagined her words floating in the air, I refused to open my mouth, to breathe, to inhale

those words, let alone let them in and wound my psyche. Except that moment always came, when I could no longer hold my breath. I took a deep breath with my mouth closed. I let the comment go and the moment pass in silence. I was really good at staying silent (and remembering). I had been practicing it my whole life, almost.

What was it about me, sometimes I wonder, that made people feel I would appreciate their comments about my ugliness? Ever since I was a child, I had had relatives telling me that I would never grow up to be a pretty girl. Even and especially after I won a beauty contest and became a model during my teenage years (1991-1994), I felt uglier still. If anything changed, it was that my ugliness then became public. My ugliness was displayed on those magazine pages: my "exotic" face, as the editor would describe me, stood out among the light-skinned Indo girls with their European facial features dominating the modeling world. Moreover, now that my face was in the "public" domain, not only relatives, but also strangers would participate in commenting on my ugliness. I remember two advertising agents having a conversation about me in my presence. In English (assuming that I could not speak English), one of them pointed out that he had cast me for the [X] advertisement but that he wouldn't use me after all, because I wasn't pretty. I, of course, simply stood there, practicing my silence (and remembering).

This was probably why, now that I think of it, I often walked with my head-down. I was ashamed of how I looked and who I was. But this realization only came recently, after researching and reading about "feelings" and having many heartfelt conversations with many women, including therapists and close friends, and especially for this chapter, with my interviewees. I have now interviewed 46 Indonesian women, and along with

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them I excavate our long-buried memories and repressed feelings to get at the heart of naming these emotions underlying the very action of (at times excessively and obsessively) "covering" our bodies with skin-whitening creams; understanding why skin (and its color) becomes one of the sites where these emotions and beauty ideals are articulated; comprehending why Indonesian women in particular feel the way that we do about our skin color, and figuring out—by way of institutional ethnography—how these feelings are "structured" by various institutional hierarchies.

I cannot emphasize enough, however, that my argument is *not* a simple cause and effect relation: I do not argue that women feel ashamed of their skin color and therefore use skin-whitening creams. Rather, my argument can only be understood once we peel, so to speak, layers of onion. The first layer is to understand that Indonesian society is a society that values conformity and sameness. The second layer involves understanding how conformity is manufactured and maintained through the gendered management of affects, which for the purpose of this chapter, is limited to how women were made to feel embarrassment and shame about themselves and then (dis)placed and articulated these feelings onto/through their skin (and its color). The third layer is to see the connection between the preference for light skin color and Indonesia's long history of encounters with the outside world: Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Japanese as well as Europeans. The fourth layer is to see the connection between these women's skin-whitening practices with their recognition that Caucasians were receiving preferential treatments in their daily lives in Indonesia. The fifth layer is to acknowledge the possibility of reading these women's decision to practice lightening routines at particular times in their lives as reflecting their resistance to the oppressive systems of feelings. And finally, the sixth

layer is to grasp the ways in which I employ "shame" and "embarrassment" not only as

"feelings" as such but also and mostly as a "theoretical-emotional lens" through which I

decode what were expressed during the interviews. As it will, I hope, become clear in

this chapter, I do not simply make the argument that what these women were feeling was

"actually" (and solely) shame and embarrassment: that would be an arrogant and

imperialistic argument. Rather, by using "shame" and "embarrassment" as theoretical-

emotional lens,[83] I was able to make narratives of shame and embarrassment visible in

their telling their stories and, most importantly, to make sense of why (most) of these

women preferred light skin color and practiced whitening routines in their lives.


Interview and Writing Process:  Talking and Writing about "Feelings"

The process of recruiting the interviewees was straightforward. By using snowball and

random methods, including walking up to women in various public spaces such as

convenience stores, shopping malls, fitness centers, pharmacies, universities, bookstores,

bus-stops, and restaurants, and asking them if they would participate in my research

and/or if they knew anyone who would be willing to do so, I recruited 46 Indonesian

women.[84]  To ensure that my sample included women of various social backgrounds, I

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[83] For clarity purposes, I'd like to make an analogy of "shame" and "embarrassment" theoretical-emotional lens or perspective with a "gender" perspective. That is, stories that these women tell might not be in themselves "gendered" let alone "feminist" stories; yet by employing a gender perspective to decode their stories, I am able to make gender relations visible in *my* telling of their stories. Similarly, these women might not necessarily tell "shameful" and "embarrassing" stories as such; however, my employing "shame" and "embarrassment" as a theoretical-emotional perspective to decode these women's stories will make visible the ways in which "shame" and "embarrassment" have been deployed in these women's lives, particularly in relation to maintaining conformity and shaping women's decision to practice whitening routines.  Doing so allows us to examine the function of "shame" in these women's lives (I'm drawing here from works such as Elspeth Probyn's and Sara Ahmed's who are both interested in the question, "what affect *does*" (Ahmed *Cultural* 4; Probyn 79).

[84] In addition to these women, I also interviewed women and men working at skin-whitening companies, as well as dermatologists and beauticians.  But because I interviewed them for different purposes, i.e., for

went to different areas of the cities and asked not only shoppers but also women who worked at these malls.  In cases where I needed to recruit women with particular backgrounds not yet included in my sample or whom I wasn't able to recruit by way of random methods, I used snowball methods, asking my interviewees if they knew anyone, for example an Indonesian woman of Indian descent, who would be willing to be a research-subject.

Most interviews were conducted in Jakarta and Balikpapan, and in a few cases in the United States and Canada, in 2005.  I chose Jakarta for the obvious reason that it is the capital, most developed, most populated, and most "transnational" city in Indonesia. This allowed the possibility of recruiting women with diverse backgrounds and with experiences of transnational/racial encounters in their daily lives.  Not wanting my research to be "Java-centric," I also included a city outside the island of Java.  To this end, I chose Balikpapan, a less-populated and smaller (medium)-sized city on the island of Kalimantan.[85]  Balikpapan is particularly apt for my research because this fast-growing city attracts several transnational corporations who exploit the island's rich natural resources and hence establish their offices there.  As a consequence, people of different races and ethnicities from various cities across Indonesia and countries come there, making Balikpapan a transnational city, or generally known as a migrant city (*kota pendatang*), and providing a mix of racial encounters in the everyday lives of people there.  Indeed, Balikpapan has the highest number of foreign workers in Kalimantan

understanding how skin-whitening products work and/or were distributed, I did not include them in this number.  I will mention them, however briefly, when appropriate in this chapter.

[85] Kalimantan is the largest island in Indonesia.  However, the northern part of this island is occupied by Malaysia and Brunei.  The other large islands in Indonesia, listed here according to its size (from large to small) are: Sumatra, Papua, Sulawesi and Java.  Particularly because Kalimantan has low level of population density per square kilometer (the population density for East Kalimantan, the province where Balikpapan lies is 11 people/km2; Jakarta's population density is 12635 people/km2), this area has become one of the most popular destinations for people transmigrating from Java.

island.  However, although the focus of this chapter is certainly on Indonesian women

living in Indonesia and therefore almost all interviews were conducted there, this chapter

also attends, albeit briefly, to the ways in which women's experiences of living and

traveling abroad helped shape how they felt (and dealt with their feelings) about their

skin color and skin-whitening practices in their lives.  To this end, I was able to recruit

fifteen women who had traveled abroad; three of whom were living in North America.

Jakarta and Balikpapan indeed served well my intention to have a mix of women

with diverse backgrounds, and, as we will see later on in this chapter, with experiences of

encountering people of various races, nations, and skin color in Indonesia.  The women I

interviewed for these in-depth interviews were born and raised and/or came from various

places across Indonesia and abroad.[86]  They were also diverse in terms of their ethnic,[87]

occupational,[88] educational,[89] sexuality,[90] ability,[91] and age[92] backgrounds.  Regardless of

the women's diverse backgrounds, however, the interview findings suggest that desire to

have light skin and practices of whitening routines are found across class, sexuality,

ethnicity, regional, occupational, and age backgrounds.

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[86] The women I interviewed come from various cities and small villages on Java island (Bandung, Brebes, Cianjur, Gombong, Indramayu, Jakarta, Kediri, Pekalongan, Purwodadi, Semarang, Sidoarjo, Solo, Sukanagalih, Surabaya,), Kalimantan island (Balikpapan, Banjarmasin, Pulau Bulu, Tarakan,), Sumatera island (Medan, Padang, Palembang), Bali island, and various islands from the Eastern part of Indonesia (Maluku, Sumba, Ternate); and one was born in Portugal.
[87] Although most interviewees self-identified by their ethnicity (Javanese, Sundanese, Padangnese, and so forth), some identified themselves as having Indian, Malay, Chinese, European, and Arab backgrounds.
[88] Some of these women worked as engineers, domestic workers, homemakers, sales associates, herb beverage (*jamu*) sellers, owners of small convenience stores, researchers, live-in nannies, preschool teachers, bookstore attendants, gas-station attendants, waitresses, students, foreign language teachers, entrepreneurs, event organizers; a few occupied managerial level positions at transnational corporations; and a few others were unemployed high school graduates.
[89] One of these women was illiterate; a few had not graduated from elementary school; many were high-school graduates; some had completed four years of college education and even master degrees.
[90] Most of these women were or had been involved in heterosexual relationships—twenty-two were married, three of whom married "non-Indonesians"—but two women identified themselves as lesbians.
[91] Almost everyone was abled-bodied, except for one woman who was recently and partially blind.
[92] At the time of the interviews, these women were in their twenties (24 people), thirties (18 people), forties (1 person), fifties (2 people) and eighties (1 person).  The youngest interviewee was twenty, and the oldest was an eighty-year-old woman.  The median age was twenty-nine.

The interviews usually lasted from one to one-and-one-half hours, although the meeting itself usually lasted longer. We mostly met at quiet restaurants allowing me to tape the conversations without much noise distraction. I also conducted some interviews in the comfort of their own homes, reducing the hassle of having them travel to meet me.

During the interviews, I took making the interviewees "feel" comfortable very seriously. I was well aware that I asked these women to dig into their emotional backgrounds and that this necessarily involved the difficult task of disclosing themselves and their feelings to a stranger. After all, digging is always about opening the ground, making a hole and a lot of mess in the previously and neatly arranged ground. I was obliged, therefore, to do the emotional work of tending, so to speak, to their emotional garden. I need to clarify, however, that I never played the role of a psychologist or a therapist, a role I had not been trained to do. The consent forms that they signed prior to the interview also specifically stated that the interviews were conducted for my research and not their personal benefit. Nonetheless, I attempted to practice listening with empathy, a skill I learned from works such as Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication: a Language of Life*, to make sure that the interviewees were left feeling understood rather than judged, particularly at times when they broke into tears. In many cases, I also made myself vulnerable by disclosing my own experiences with skin-whitening practices; this seemed to make them feel more comfortable and open in telling their own experiences. My being mindful about my own and the interviewees' emotional experiences throughout the interview and writing process was a conscious effort. As social geographist Liz Bondi has argued, this effort can enrich our research in practical, methodological, and substantive ways ("The Place" 243-4).

Analyzing the interview results on and writing about "feelings," however, was anything but straightforward. First, there was a problem with "unexpressed and inexpressible feelings" (Bondi "The Place" 237). For instance, during the interviews, when I asked them how they felt about being ignored for not having light skin and being considered "beautiful,"—after they narrated some story with great emotion—many women simply said "fine" (*biasa saja*) in a tone that suggested it did not matter to them. Comments such as "maybe they were just lucky" or "but we were indeed physically different from them, so [we] just accepted our fate" were common. This inability to access the interviewees' feelings during some moments of the interviews sounds similar to Ann Stoler's experiences in her interviewing Indonesians:

> They avoided such expressions of affect, both in how those relations are remembered and in what sorts of emotions are made visible in the telling. Our attempts to elicit "feelings" often fell flat. (174)

These failed attempts to get at their feelings, as Stoler pointed out so beautifully, may indeed reflect some sort of avoidance in their expressing their feelings.

However, I also suspect that these were also related to the ways in which their feelings might not yet be "found." In distinguishing feelings from affect,[93] Brennan argues

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[93] Brennan defines affect as "the physiological shift accompanying a judgment. […] The idea that affects are judgments, or, as a new vernacular has it, attitudes (as in, 'lose the attitude') has less common currency than the notion of affects as surges of emotion or passion. But the evaluative or judgmental aspects of affects will be critical in distinguishing between these physiological phenomena and those deployed in feeling or discernment. In other words, feelings are not the same thing as affects. Putting it simply, when I feel angry, I feel the passage of anger through me. What I feel with and what I feel are distinct" (5). I'd like to point out here that other scholars have theorized the differences between "affect" and "emotion." Here, I will simply take on Probyn's very useful definition, which is similarly expressed by Ahmed (*Cultural* 5) and Brennan (6), that emotion is "the social expression of affect, and affect in turn is the biological and physiological experience of it. To an extent, this is an apt description" (Probyn 25). Moreover, as Brennan pointed out that "there is no reason to challenge the idea that emotions are basically

"Feelings" refers to the sensations that register these stimuli and thence to the

senses, but feelings includes something more than sensory information insofar as

they suppose a unified interpretation of that information. […] I define feelings as

sensations that have found the right match in words. (5)

This suggests that while these women might have felt "sensations," they might not have

found the perfect words that matched their sensations. Particularly because most of us

were taught to "sugar and spice" our feelings (Jacoby 56), we might be lost for adequate

words to articulate negative "feelings." Indeed, as women's studies scholar Sara Ahmed

has pointed out, it was the limitation of vocabularies available to describe feelings that

was our problem (*Cultural* 22). As feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky states even more

strongly:

Now, if knowing cannot be described in ways that are gender-neutral, neither can

feeling. Differences between men and women are most often described in the

language of character traits or dispositions: It is often said of women, for

example, that they are less assertive than men, more preoccupied with their

appearance, etc. But what is not captured by the language of disposition is the

affective taste of a low level of assertion or a sense of the larger emotional

constellation in which a feminine preoccupation with appearance is situated. (84)

There was also a problem related to the "mutability," "fluidity," and "flexibility"

of feelings (Bondi "The Place" 237). For example, the same "affective vocabulary" (T.

Hunter 125) may mean different things in different time and cultures (Harré and Gillett

"Emotion Words" 160). Not only could the meanings of affective vocabulary themselves

synonymous with affects (if more an evidently physiological subset)" (6), I will use them interchangeably
as appropriate in this chapter.

change, the feelings themselves may change (Bondi "The Place" 237). This means that during the interviews, these women might indeed no longer harbor any particular feelings for those moments in the past; they had indeed learned to "accept" their fates and felt "fine." To make matters even more complicated, Harré and Gillet pointed out that "[w]ords used for describing emotional feelings and displays are rarely used to express emotions. If someone says, 'I'm envious of you,' it is almost sure that the judgment they are thus expressing is not a display of that envy that figures among the seven deadly sins" (148). What all of this suggests, therefore, is that with difficulties and disparities between "affective vocabularies" and the emotions one is feeling, it is necessary that I approach the interview findings by listening "around and beyond words," recognizing that women's experiences are sometimes found outside language (DeVault 63-64). This, in addition to listening carefully to their expressed feelings and constructing questions that were "beyond standard vocabulary" (DeVault 63-64), I looked for the underlying emotions implicit in their statements by paying attention to their body language and tone of voice, and certainly employing (in this chapter) the "shame" and "embarrassment" perspective in decoding these interviews. Moreover, I also paid attention to their "silence": when and why they were being silent and what is left unarticulated.

It can be difficult to write about feelings and certainly, my own feelings, in this chapter. I am aware, for example, that I may fall into the trap of writing shame as a "fetishized" object of inquiry that is detached from its historical context (Ahmed *Cultural* 32). This is where I find Sara Ahmed's work useful. In responding to the problem that Wendy Brown raised—that we need to go beyond fetishizing the wound in articulating or claiming an oppositional identity based on "being wounded"—she answered:

So a good response to Brown's critique would not be to "forget" the wound or

indeed the past as the scene of wounding. […] To forget would be to repeat the

forgetting that is already implicated in the fetishisation of the wound.  Our task

might instead be to "remember" how the surfaces of bodies […] came to be

wounded in the first place.  Reading testimonies of injury involves rethinking the

relation between the present and the past: an emphasis on the past does not

necessarily mean a conversation or entrenchment of the past […]

Following bell hooks, our task would be "not to forget the past but to break its

hold" (hooks 1989: 155).  In order to break the seal of the past, in order to move

away from attachments that are hurtful, we must first bring them into the realm of

political action.  Bringing pain into politics requires we give up the fetish of the

wound through different kinds of remembrance.  The past is living rather than

dead; the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present. (*Cultural*

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Hence, my task here is to "remember" these stories and ask these women to remember

theirs and to write them in ways that allow the process of remembering and the process of

their experiencing these feelings in the past and in the present to be visible and

historically contextualized.  Moreover, as I experiment here with deploying shame and

embarrassment as theoretical-emotional perspectives, I hope to move away from

fetishizing shame and embarrassment as objects of inquiry and instead positioning them

as a "moving"[94] lens that cannot be fixed let alone fetishized.

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[94] I use "moving" here both in the sense that stories of shame and embarrassment can "move" or touch us
and in the sense that they constantly move and therefore cannot be "fixed": they are historically situated
and therefore have different meanings in different time and space.

*What* I write (the content) therefore shapes *how* I write this chapter (the form). I therefore chose to write this chapter with a rather different style; a kind of writing that allows for my personal and emotional investments in this dissertation to be visible and *felt*. This means I chose to write with my emotions lingering in some parts of the text, allowing "feelings" to seep into the theories and arguments I propose here. I do so with the expectation that, by employing a writing strategy that "evoke[s] emotional experiences that illustrate [my] arguments," I can "disrupt academic conventions" of "dispassionate commentary" (Bondi et al. "Introduction" 11). This kind of writing necessarily embarrasses me. It exposes the narcissistic urge of writing the self into the text and of "occupying" other women's stories and making them "my" stories as I tell them to you. To this end, I find it worthwhile to recite cultural studies scholar Elspeth Probyn's beautifully written phrase, "somewhere between the narcissism of incorporating stories as one's own and the paralysis of never telling any stories, I will experiment with that moment. I'll use it to see what it can do" (45).

State-Imposed Conformity and the State's Formulation of "Good" Women

I was afraid, I admit now, when senior students first summon me for "briefings." It was 1995; I was a first-year student in political science, just discovering the excitement of "real" political protests, of joining and leading controversial discussions, of writing papers and emails from an oppositional standpoint, of giving up skin-whitening practices and purposefully putting on twenty pounds (in my politically inspired attempts to challenge beauty ideals). The (usually male) senior students would "advise" me to stop (or to "reconsider") doing political activities. I, however, displayed no feelings of fear

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and persisted in doing what I did.  But I was afraid, particularly when I offended the

religious group with my feminist criticisms, of what would happen to me.  My fear was

intensified when certain students who, as rumor had it, were "spying" for the state (at that

time under Soeharto's repressive regime), began fishing for some information about me

(as I sat right across from them).  I realized I was in trouble, for speaking up.

Being dissuaded from speaking up as I had experienced it was very common

under the Soeharto regime (1966-1998).  My experiences were trivial compared to high-

level and more significant political dissenters who had to face arrest, detention,

harassment, a judicial death penalty, a corrupt pro-state legal system, and intensive state

surveillance, all of which provided evidence that the state reinforced "ideological

conformity […] at gunpoint" (Amnesty International 3-5, 7, 20).

To further impose this culture of "silence," the Indonesian government issued a

censorship policy, which was in effect in one way or another since 1960.  Soeharto's

policy was up-dated in a 1982 Law requiring a license for publication[95] (Abidin 78).

Although "censorship" was not named in this law, in practice, the state simply revoked a

publication's license when it published articles that criticized the state, the president, his

family; advocated what was deemed "communist" or "offensive" (albeit with unclear

standards); or focused on ethnicity, religion, and race.  Only in 1999 did Soeharto's

successor establish freedom of the press by revoking the law requiring a government

license (Abidin 23, 95).

It would be apt to say here that the state cultivated "an atmosphere of fear" where

articulating dissent (particularly against the government) could mean death or abuse and

thus coerced Indonesians to think or speak alike (Amnesty 21-2; Schwarz 41).  And I, as

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[95] This policy is known as *Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers* (SIUPP).

an Indonesian growing up in Indonesia under the Soeharto regime, was no exception. I had internalized (while resisting it simultaneously) what my father (or any other "fatherly" figures for that matter) had told me, "silence is golden." What I aim to illustrate here is that my feeling of fear for articulating a different opinion or being different from the norm necessarily hinged on this larger structure of a repressive state.

It is worthy of note, however, that this culture of conformity in Indonesia is not a modern invention. Conformity certainly has existed in Indonesia long before the New Order. What is interesting about conformity since the New Order era is that it is both carried out by military as well as cultural forces. That is, in addition to the violence carried out behind the closed doors of the repressive state that ensured conformity in Indonesia, the state also tactically appropriated Javanese traditions—its "intricate rules of etiquette and the concern with politeness" (Schwarz 238-9; Mirpuri 60) to justify a culture of conformity in every aspect of Indonesians' lives. Even Soeharto was "polite"—cautious and subtle" (Schwarz 46) in publicly taming his critics and worked at "exert[ing] power without seeming to" in ruling the nation. Schwarz (40) provides this example: in "disposing" of high-level dissenters who were members of the Armed Forces elites, Soeharto would simply send them abroad to hold prestigious ambassadorial positions. In this sense, Javanese culture, the culture not only of the Javanese who made up 45 percent of the population but also Javanese hegemony throughout Indonesia, fitted perfectly in justifying Soeharto's conformity (Lamourex 154). This Javanese cultural root of conformity may explain why even in today's Indonesia (led by another Javanese president), although it is considerably more open compared to Soeharto's repressive regime, the culture of conformity persists nonetheless.

It is within this culture of conformity that we can understand the hegemonic

nature of the "good woman" ideal that was pervasively propagated mostly but not only by

the state. What I am suggesting here is that it is this culture of conformity that made

women feel compelled to conform to such an ideal. The ideal that the state under

Soeharto projected was a (heterosexual) "domesticated woman," who "accept[ed] [her]

natural role as a wife and mother, fully and solely responsible for the social development

of her children" (Robinson 3; Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 17). This construction was

further formulated in a specific policy—*Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara* (GBHN)—

which in 1993 stated that women although "equal partners to men" (*mitra sejajajar*),[96]

should perform dual roles (*peran ganda*) both in the home and in the public sphere, and

could contribute to the development of the nation as long as they were still "in line with

their essential nature" (Wagemann 311-312). Hence, women were taught that to be

"good," they needed to function (even in public space) as embodying their "essential

nature" (*kodrat*), which in this case was defined as a wife and a mother.

While "good" women were constructed as good wives and mothers, "bad" women

were constructed as (politically and sexually) independent women. One of the ways the

state constructed such an image, particularly under Soeharto, was to demonize one of the

largest and most progressive women's movements, Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita*

*Indonesia*—Indonesian Women's Movement), whose members were educated and highly

political women (Parawansa 70), that existed during the Soekarno era. The state actively

propagated the idea that Gerwani were "whores," responsible for mutilating the Armed

Forces generals' genitals during the 1965 coup! Moreover, because of its allegiance to

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[96] This notion was actually better than the previous hetero/sexist notion of women as husband's companion (*pendamping suami*).

the Indonesian Communist Party, Gerwani was represented as "traitors" to the nation (Wieringa 80-1; Oey-Gardiner 102). Labeling politically and sexually independent women as "bad" women functioned to depoliticize women, control women's sexuality and autonomy, and ensure their conformity to a norm of women as submissive and loyal wives and mothers. These stereotypes have lived long enough that they continue to persist even today.

Lying dormant underneath these constructions of "good" and "bad" women is the gendered management of affects. An example that I draw from an interview I conducted with a spokesperson for a well-known whitening-product company (who wishes to remain anonymous) makes this clear. She shared her company's consumer-survey research findings which found that many women turned to whitening products not only to keep their skin smooth but also to keep their husbands, and worry that their husbands would be attracted to another woman. In Indonesia, however, this fear is exacerbated because women who "lose" their husbands are blamed for not being able to keep their husbands. They are not only made to feel "bad," but also to feel like "bad" wives.

In Indonesia, not unlike in most other countries, it is important that women be "good," which even elsewhere usually means "good" wives. But in Indonesia, this injunction is pushed a step further. The good woman/the good wife is beautiful—and beauty is light-skinned. This idea weaves its way through all of my interviews. As the spokesperson for the whitening products company explained, a woman proves to her family and society that she is responsible enough to take care of herself and therefore can be trusted to care for her family by using whitening cream. Similarly, an interviewee, Umi pointed out that what is important in Indonesia is that women be clean because that

signified a "good" woman. Hence, she said, she used lightening cream not because it could lighten her skin per se, but rather because it would make her skin look clean. She added that no one would care if a man took a shower, but it was unacceptable for a woman to be dirty because such a woman, she said, would be considered a "bad" woman. I make note here that in spite of her disclaimer to the contrary, her statement certainly begs the question why lightening her skin makes her clean. Clearly, women were invited to feel "good" about themselves by using skin-whitening creams because doing so suggested that they were "good" (and responsible) women. Moreover, general expressions of feeling such as "I don't feel *good*" (*nggak enak*) to illustrate how my interviewees felt when not using these whitening products were quite common. Although the line separating one's "*feeling* good" and one's feeling of "*being* good" lies is not always sharply delineated but what is unmistakable is the quadruple equation of "being good," "feeling good," "looking good" and having "good" or light skin color. That is, women, more often than men, are socialized to feel good when they look and "be" good.

It is also interesting to note the ways in which the image of good women as good mothers played out in further cultivating women's feeling good about themselves (as mothers) that was related to (other) women's practices of skin-whitening routines. As good mothers who are "fully and solely responsible for the social development of her children" (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri 17), women became, in Foucauldian sense of "discipline and punish," the "disciplinarian" of society. This explains why women, more than anyone else (as I shall point out in the next section), felt the need to constantly comment and advise each other about their skin color. Because when women comment on another's skin color, as in the example I used in opening this chapter, they were acting

out of their desire to fulfill the role of a good mother who cares about others, and in so doing they could feel good about themselves.

All of these—the state, Javanese cultural norms, media—provide evidence that institutions such as the nation-state and media have helped shape women's feelings about themselves and certainly about their skin color.  Thus far, I have pointed out that Indonesian society is characterized by a culture of conformity, reinforced at its peak by the repressive state under Soeharto's rule and is maintained by the continuing domination of Javanese culture in Indonesia—a culture that values harmony.  I also have pointed out how this cultural structure of conformity provided a conducive environment for Indonesian women to conform to the good-women-as-wives-and-mothers norm.  This norm helps shape how women felt about themselves: the gendered management of affect played a significant role in structuring how women could feel good when they conform to the norm, or feel bad when they deviate from the norm.

Consumerism furthers the pressure.  Scholars such as Sut Jhally have pointed out how ads work to teach people that consuming particular products will bring us to happiness.  He argues, "Fundamentally, advertising talks to us as individuals and addresses us about how we can become happy.  The answers it provides are all oriented to the marketplace, through the purchase of goods or services" (251).  This means that as women recognized that their unhappiness was caused by their skin color, they would tend to consume whitening products so that they could be happy.  Similarly, Hermawan Kartajaya, an Indonesian marketing specialist, emphasized how the "feel benefit," rather than the "think benefit," the benefit of reaching consumers' emotions and promising happiness over rational explanations, had played a significant role in helping consumers

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make their choices.  As he succinctly pointed out, "People's actions are rooted in

'feelings'" (34).  In the next section, I will focus solely on "bad" feelings.  Specifically, I

will discuss feelings of shame and embarrassment that women were supposed to feel

when they were perceived to deviate from the norm, particularly for this chapter, the

light-skinned norm.


<div align="center">Conformity and Embarrassing Comments</div>

As the psychologist Rom Harré has pointed out, "the major affective instrument of

conformity" is embarrassment (*Physical* 145).  Not surprisingly, most of my interviewees

reveal how they were made to conform to the light skin norm by way of embarrassing

comments.  These embarrassing comments worked as instruments of conformity, for two

reasons.  First, because in a society where community bonds are strong and individuals

regard highly the opinion of their family and friends, such as in Indonesia, people tend to

shy away from being shamed or embarrassed for fear of being excluded by people they

care about deeply (Probyn 3, 88).  Second, embarrassing comments that point out

women's deviance from the norm work to cast doubt on women's self-confidence and

self-esteem, making women feel unconfident and anxious about whether or when they

have deviated from the norm.

But one may ask, what causes one to be embarrassed to begin with?  Harré

pointed out that embarrassment happens when "[o]ne has become the focus of (an

apparently excessive) attention from others whose opinion one values with respect to

what one has said or done, or how one appears" and that that person "has become aware

that others have taken the sayings, doings or appearances in question to be abnormal"

(*Physical* 153).  Hence, I use "embarrassing comments" here to mean comments that expose how others (those who are well-regarded by the interviewee) are aware of their "abnormality."  One of the interviewees, Alya, shared her experience of being addressed comments that would cause one to be embarrassed:

> My relatives would twist my name so it had the word 'Negro' in it.  At school, I was called *dakko-chan*[97] (laughing).  So I was happy when there was someone else in the classroom who was darker than me.  That means I wouldn't be the target of their jokes.

There are various layers at work here.  First, when she laughed, she turned her head away from me as if wanting to hide.  This "turning away," as I will explore later, is body language that often suggests that one is ashamed or embarrassed.  Even if my conclusion that she is ashamed can be applied only at the time of the interview, and not necessarily to the past, it is telling that she expressed how happy she was (exposing the implicit feeling of unhappiness of being addressed such comments) when others had darker-skin color because attention would turn to those others and not to her.  In other words, she recognized that it was her dark skin color that invited the attention of the onlooker.  This dark skin color was, as it can be inferred from her story, what violated the light-skin norm.  Finally, these seemingly humorous and "harmless jokes" further exposes the racial and color hierarchy in Indonesia within which "Negro" and their stereotypical representations by way of *dakko-chan* dolls were represented as "abnormal," a cause for shame and embarrassment.  Being called such a "degrading" term was not only undesirable but would also cause one to be embarrassed.

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[97] "Dakko" is the Japanese pronounciation of the English word "dark" or "darker" and "chan" is a diminutive form for children.  Hence *dakko-chan* (dark-boy)*,* a popular toy during the late 1950s to 1960s in Japan, was "a highly caricatured jet black figure with big eyes and huge red lips" (Creighton 222).

These experiences of being given nicknames that signify one's skin color were shared by many other interviewees. Kiki, for example, was laughing as she remembered how her husband used to call her "Sireng Maulani" after a famous musician Ireng Maulana (the word *ireng* in Javanese means black), because her skin is dark. Unlike previous interviewees whose nicknames were chosen after a famous musician or doll, Mia said that people used to simply call her "*si hitam*" or "blackie." This nickname is the most common one among the interviewees.

From the interviews, it was evident that blacks or dark-skinned people are deemed undesirable in Indonesia. The interviews suggest that dark-skinned people of whatever nationality are perceived as "scary," "criminals," "smelly," "dirty," and "weird looking." I provide here one example of how an interviewee perceived how Africans and dark-skinned people in Indonesia were treated:

Africans often get caught at the airport carrying narcotics and illegal drugs [although some of them] came here to actually do business, selling fabrics or materials made from plastics. They tend to stay in Tanah Abang that is known as a rough neighborhood. And if you look at the mapping of Jakarta, that is the lowest area. […] Taxi drivers sometimes wouldn't stop to pick up African passengers. People wouldn't walk near them. If we eat like this in this table, and there is an African on that table over there (pointing to a table across the room), people would laugh at them. […] Even when I came a few times to cultural events that invited diplomatic people who were referred to as "His Excellency," people still made comments [about these dark-skinned diplomats]. […] Indonesian people who were dark-skinned also got that kind of treatment. [...]

When a Papuan (dark-skinned Indonesian) won the Physics Olympics, people said

"So, there *is* a smart Papuan…" Did they think they were "jungle" people? […]

These stereotypes still exist.

Her narrative exposed the working of color and racial ideologies in Indonesia within

which blacks and dark-skinned people were discriminated against. Dark-skinned people

were more vulnerable to "random" checks at airports, were stereotyped as not intelligent,

and were often made fun of. This understanding allows us to understand how one of my

interviewees such as Alya might see her being called "Negro" or *dakko-chan* as causing

her to feel unhappy, and possibly embarrassed or ashamed.

Further, embarrassing comments tend to pressure women to conform to the norm

because women (and also men to some degrees) want to avoid being embarrassed and to

feel included. In the interviews, it was very common to hear that these women began

using skin-whitening products after comments were addressed to them about their dark

skin color. I provide here one example. An interviewee, Nina, admitted that in a

previous job, her officemates often said to her:

"(*Aduh*), you have the darkest skin." Although I would tell them "I don't care,"

inside I felt like saying how dare you say that. But then I always thought about

how I could look not too dark. […] So, everytime there was going to be a big

meeting, I'd make sure that I whitened my skin, at least my hands, legs, and face,

so that I would feel ehm ehm [making a sound of clearing her throat while

smiling].

Here, the "big meeting" became a public space where an "audience," important in the

production of shame (G. Taylor 53), gathered. In this case, her putting on skin-whitening

cream could be read as her desire to not stand out, in other words to conform, because to stand out would invite (undesirable) attention from other officemates. The attention was deemed undesirable because it would embarrass rather than flatter her. Interestingly, her applying skin-whitening cream was intended to *avert* rather than, as commonly narrated in whitening ads, to *invite* the gaze of others. This desire to not attract the gaze of others or to be invisible reminds us of Fanon's plea, "I strive for anonymity, for invisibility. Look, I will accept the lot, as long as no one notices me!" (116). The assumption here, certainly, is that to be noticed while having dark/black skin was to be exposed to possible embarrassing and undesirable comments or attentions.

Women pay attention to these comments because they are "signs" that tell them whether or not they are accepted by their group. As law professor Cass Sunstein has pointed out, people tend to listen to and do as others tell them, in other words to conform, because there is "the pervasive human desire to have the good opinion of others" (9). It seems that Nina chose to put on lightening cream so that others would think well of her, now that she believed herself to have lighter skin. In Ajeng's case, she was more open in admitting that she used whitening cream so that other people would not comment that her skin was dirty (*jorok*). Looking at it in such a way, the feeling of "shame" that one feels when being addressed such embarrassing comments functions as "a type of feedback loop that continually connects the individual and her environment" (Probyn 83). This means, by way of these comments, women would be attuned to whether or not they had conformed to the societal norm and thus how they would fare in society.

What is interesting in the Indonesian case is that the majority of women there do not have light or white skin, at least not like what is on view in whitening ads. This was

why the presence of others who have darker skin, such as in Alya's case, would change one's position within the skin color hierarchy. The light-skin norm did not really exist in the sense that everyone's skin was light and one's dark skin simply stood out everywhere she went. Rather, it worked by way of comparison. Women were compared to others, if not to themselves in the past. Hence, comments such as "you look darker now" have become all too familiar for all of us Indonesian women.

More importantly, because light skin color was not the "norm" in Indonesia, these comments and practices of whitening routines were crucial in perpetuating the light-skinned norm. In Foucauldian terms, the kinds of comments my interviewees received may be regarded as "normalizing judgments," necessary for "the success of disciplinary power (Foucault 170). That is, the very act of throwing comments about each other's skin color normalized light skin as the desirable norm and exposed the existence of constant "surveillance" (Foucault 84) that women carried out as they became each other's "disciplinarian." Women get rewarded, by being addressed pleasing comments such as "you look beautiful; your skin looks lighter," and get punished by being addressed embarrassing comments such as "your skin looks darker; you should …(and one may fill in the blank here with various tips that women offer each other)." All of these comments hence worked as "normalizing judgments" when they normalized light-skin as the desirable norm to which women should aspire.

Additionally, various acts, from putting on skin-whitening cream, or staying out of the sun to choosing particular colors and outfits that would make or keep women's skin appear lighter, which almost all interviewees (myself included)[98] admitted to having

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[98] Out of 46 interviewees, only 8 suggested that they never tried any skin-lightening products. These eight women, however, admitted that they had seen other women use it and were "seduced" to try it but never

done at some points in our lives, further perpetuated light skin as the "imaginary" norm. As feminist disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson pointed out, women's bodies are disciplined and made to be "normal" through devices such as the brace, the corset, or "normalizing surgeries" be they "reconstructive" (to look "normal") or "cosmetic" (to look "beautiful") (10). I'd like to apply her argument to the case of whitening cream to argue that even when women used "bleaching" or whitening cream for "medical" (to lighten marks caused by sun damage or acne) as opposed to "cosmetic" purposes (to lighten one's entire facial and skin), women participated in perpetuating the norm of (evenly) white face. Furthermore, these "twin ideologies," normal and beautiful, according to Garland-Thomson, are both intended to create the "normate"—"the corporeal incarnation of culture's collective, unmarked, normative characteristics"—by "commodify[ing] the body and parad[ing] mutilations as enhancements that correct flaws to improve the psychological well-being of the patient" (Garland-Thomson 10-1). Hence, as women used these creams for "cosmetic" or "medical" purposes, to feel beautiful, normal, included, or, as I will point out below, to have good self-esteem, in other words for their psychological wellness, we had participated in normalizing light and white skin as the norm whatever our intention.

I will now turn to the ways in which embarrassing comments that exposed women's "abnormality" questioned women's self esteem and self-confidence and produced gender-specific "shame." Citing John Rawls, Bartky pointed out, "shame is an emotion felt upon the loss of self-esteem" (87). I will unpack these understandings by first pointing out that the interviews reveal that skin color mattered for these women

did. However, when asked what were some of the things they did everyday to care for their skin (*perawatan kulit*), almost all suggested that there were some things they did or avoided doing because they did not want their skin to get darker.

because it is one of the sources of their self-esteem and self-confidence.  Some of the more common expressions during the interviews were:

> Ina:　　"When I had to meet with many people and my skin was dark, I didn't feel confident."[99]

> Vanti:　"Generally, women feel more confident when their skin is white."

> Wati:　"Because I was born dark-brown (*sawo matang*), I didn't have any self-confidence.  So I whiten my skin to be more confident."

These kinds of statements come up over and over again in the interviews, suggesting the extent to which women's self-confidence is closely linked to their skin color.  What was particularly interesting here was that it was women and not necessarily men who were perceived to feel more confident when they had light(er) skin color.

This gendered aspect of self-esteem that depended on skin color had certainly been discussed in many texts, including Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* and various writings by bell hooks.  It was indeed my reading of, and my identifying with, one of the characters in Morrison's novel, Pecola, a black girl desiring blue eyes, that allowed me to recognize that my feeling of ugliness was not just internal and/or personal.  Rather, such a feeling was produced, circulated, and needed to be contextualized within larger historical and social (particularly gender, racial and skin color) structures.  Moreover, as hooks, in the U.S. context, pointed out, if skin color affects black women more than men it does so partly because "even though black males were victimized by color caste hierarchies, it was possible for dark-skinned black men to transcend the

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[99] The words these women used were "*percaya diri*," literally meant the belief in oneself, which I translated as self-confident but can also mean self-esteem.

limitations of color in ways that were not in place for black females. Ultimately, sexist thinking about the body meant that everyone placed more value on female appearance than on the appearance of males" (*Rock* 45). Hence, in the U.S. context, dark-skinned women, more so than dark-skinned men, would tend to feel lack of confidence and/or unpretty precisely because gender hierarchy puts more emphasis on women's rather than men's appearance.

This certainly is the case in the Indonesian context as well. An interviewee, Ira, admitted that she knew from a very young age that she was ugly and desirable because of her dark skin color. She said:

> Sometimes people would tell me, "you don't have any sex appeal. Your skin is too dark." Even guys said things like, "why are you so black?" So, they didn't think that they would hurt you, you know. They just blurted it out in front of you, so I got used to it. Even my family, relatives, they would say, "oh, how come you're so black, so ugly, You're a girl! […] I married a Caucasian, but not necessarily because they're not Indonesians [and therefore considered better]. But it's the other way around. Indonesian men didn't really think I was beautiful so I had no chance with Indonesian men. I have to admit that.

It was precisely these comments about how ugly she is because her skin is dark, so often addressed to her that she got "used to" hearing them, that made her learn and accept her place in society. That is, in Indonesian society, she was considered undesirable because of her dark skin color. She even admitted that, contrary to the common assumption that women married Caucasian men because they were better (or having better genes as I will show later), she *had to* marry a Caucasian man. What is worthy of note here is that most

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Indonesian men do actually marry dark-skinned Indonesian women—remember, there are more women in Indonesia with medium/tanned skin than light skin to begin with. Yet, it was precisely her "feeling" that played a key role here: these comments made her *feel* so ashamed of herself (being ashamed as reflecting that loss of self-esteem) that she felt she would never be able to attract any Indonesian men.

In teasing out the gendering of shame based on skin color that impacted one's self esteem, I find it useful here to take a step back and look at the ways in which, in a patriarchal society, women in general are positioned differently from men. Gendered socialization indeed provides an environment in which women, more so than men, are "expected to experience the specific emotions of guilt and shame" (Ferguson and Eyre 256). Here, I am in agreement with Bartky who argued that it isn't that men cannot feel shame but that women are more-shame prone than men. This is particularly so because women bring their general experiences, which the Swedish philosopher Ullalina Lehtinen calls "*Erfahrung*" (66) to their understanding of a particular situation, which may make them more prone to feel shame than men, even when exposed to the same situation.

It is always useful to revisit some examples of how women were socialized and positioned differently from men. First, as was evident in the story that opened this chapter, even from their babyhood, girls, more so than boys, get comments more often on their skin color and how the "right" color would make them "pretty." Second, men, unlike women, are not asked (by other people in their lives or by popular culture) to put on different kinds of make up,[100] to cover up their otherwise "deficient" selves (Bartky 40). Third, fathers, unlike mothers, are not asked to discipline or "shame" their daughters

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[100] However, there is a relatively new fad in South Korea where men began to use make up, including whitening cream.

about their looks.  Fourth, taking care of their looks may not be important for men who are not threatened by other men's beauty in the same ways women are threatened by the beauty of another woman because their husbands might take her as a second wife, or just as bad, leave her for another and more beautiful woman.  Certainly, narratives and representations of the second wife as younger and more beautiful women—popular in Indonesia—only further such fear.

In addition to this gendered aspect of shaming, it is worthy of note that such a system works in conjunction with, although not limited to, heterosexuality.  hooks has even pointed out that skin color hierarchy partly exists because of the norms of a heterosexist society.  She suggested that "psychological splitting"—a condition where "black folks could resist racist thinking that suggested they were the intellectual inferiors of whites while not only accepting but perpetuating the notion that fairer skin made one more valuable"—was evident in the lives of black males who in their public lives challenged racism yet in their private lives chose lighter-skinned women as their partners (*Rock* 40).  From my interviews, it appears that even lesbians may not be immune to the norms of a heterosexualized culture.  In some Indonesian lesbian communities, as a couple of the interviewees attested, light-skinned women were also considered more desirable than dark-skinned women.  Hence, it seems, regardless of their sexuality, women may have more tendency to feel shame, embarrassment, and less self-confidence about their appearance when it deviates from the (light skin) beauty norm than men.

But it is not a given that women would turn to whitening cream when they don't feel confident about themselves.  Why does this happen?  In answering this question I find a shame perspective useful: the feeling of shame underpins the very act of covering

one's skin with whitening cream.  Various scholars have pointed out that the English

word "shame" come from "the Goth word *Scham*, which refers to covering the face"

(Probyn 131) or, from the "Indo-Germanic root *kam/kem* meaning 'to cover'" (Jacoby 1).

In addition to "cover," other scholars mentioned other expressions for feeling of shame

such as to "hide from that other," or to "turn away from the other's gaze" (Ahmed

"Politics" 75; Lindsay-Hartz et al. 295).  Being aware of these expressions of feeling,

therefore, is crucial in detecting the existence of shame and how this feeling underpins

whitening practices.

Let's now examine how feelings of shame function.  When interviewees were

addressed "embarrassing comments" about their dark skin color, they took note of how

the skin was an important site upon which their feelings (good or bad) hinge.  That is,

managing the skin became necessary for the management of affect.  The logic here is that

if one feels "good" about their skin, they would feel more confident in uncovering this

very skin.  Accordingly, when one feels "bad" or possibly embarrassed or ashamed about

her skin color, she would "resolve[s] the experience of shame" (Lindsay-Hartz et al. 298)

by, in this particular case, "hiding" or "covering" that skin with "something" that would

resolve that shame.  Indeed, in a few cases, women admitted that they would rather stay

home than going out when their skin was dark because, in Yasmin's words, "I was

embarassed."  Her staying home, certainly, can be understood as a sign of "hiding"

herself.  But in most cases, this need to cover oneself manifests itself in the

(psychological) covering of the skin with "something," which interestingly was called

"*white*ning" cream, that is perceived to have the capacity to free her from such shame.

Yolanda's succinct response when asked why she would put whitening cream indicated

this: "so that when I look in the mirror I am not ashamed (*malu*) of myself."  Here, the

shame of the self is articulated by the very action of covering the skin with whitening

cream.  What I am hinting at here is this: just as popular culture often represents women

taking a shower after a rape scene to signify the desire of cleansing the body and psyche,

putting on skin lightening cream on our bodies can be read as a psychological covering of

our shame rooted on our skin color.  As such, whitening practices can be (subversively)

read as manifesting women's agency in their refusing, or better yet, resolving, that

experience of shame.

But why, one may wonder, when we are ashamed, is it the face, and in the

particular case of Indonesian women, the skin (mostly of the face and other visible parts)

that are being covered?  Here, I'd like to turn to the notion of what the skin *can* do:  the

skin can "remember" (Prosser 52), even if we cannot.  The skin can remember when it

was marked as it stretched during our pregnant months; when it wrinkled as it endured

the change of time; when it was "worked upon" differently by different genders as its

texture (soft/rough) signify gender identities (Ahmed and Stacey 1), and even, as Probyn

pointed out, when it simply "blushed" as it displayed our embarrassment.  The skin is a

site where our pasts are always made visible in the present and in the presence of others.

This notion of skin as a repository of, and that publicly *displays*, our life's stories

(although as Prosser pointed out it cannot *tell* its own stories) underlies my argument that

the skin (and its color) becomes a useful site through/on which we (dis)place and

articulate our feelings, particularly for this chapter, of shame and embarrassment, because

skin is a site where the self is "exposed" to others.

It is both the public and private nature—at times what literally "borders" the private-self from others/public—of the skin that allows the skin to be one of the sites through which others can "read" us and hence upon which our feelings can be (dis)articulated.  I am invoking here both Harré's notion of the "body," taking it to mean specifically the skin, as a "'legible' surface from which the moral judgement can be read" (*Physical* 142) and Fanon's notion of "epidermalization of," which in his case and in some ways in this chapter relates to "inferiority" (13).  Because the skin is (constructed to be) telling of who we are and a site where our "inferiority," or, in this chapter, our "shame" and "embarrassment," materialize, or in Fanon's word epidermalize, to begin with, there is therefore the need to "manage" and "manufacture" it to reflect what we want it to tell others.  I am intrigued here by the ways in which skin, just like "[s]hame[,] resides on the borderline between self and other.  It plays a critical role in the mediation of interpersonal closeness and distance, sensitively gauging my feelings about how close I can and want to let someone come" (Jacoby 22).  Hence, if shame surfaces on the skin and the skin may cause one to be ashamed of herself, it is because both the skin and shame function as borders between the self and others.

Certainly, not all parts of our skin are seen by others.  That is why, to recall an example I mentioned earlier, Nina would whiten "at least" her face, legs, and hands prior to an important meeting.  Another interviewee, Pingkan, suggested how the face is most important for her because, "Usually people noticed the face first, not other parts," although she then added, "but it would look weird if the face is white and the body is black (laughing)."  What needs to be highlighted here was that her whitening practices hinged on the notion of the facial skin in particular as a site that others would "notice"

and comment on.  Furthermore, as Ahmed suggested, "Shame is a very bodily feeling of badness, in which one is witnessed or caught out by *others*.  […] The 'apartness' of the subject is intensified in the return of the gaze; apartness is felt in the moment of exposure to others, an exposure that is wounding" ("Politics" 76).  Hence, it is the capacity of the skin to expose the self to others and the ways in which others may respond to that exposed skin (possibly with embarrassing comments) that particularly made the skin an important site to be "managed."  But, taking it further while drawing from Harré and Fanon, I argue that the interviewees' emphasis on face and other visible parts of the skin reflected the ways in which the skin, because of its embodiment of both private- and public-self, functions as a site where "moral judgments"[101] were based on and therefore can be articulated upon.  That is, because the skin is exposed for others to see, it grants others permission (whether we want it or not) to judge us, based on how "good" our skin (and therefore the person inhabiting that skin) has been.  As Parrot and Harré pointed out, "Bodily appearances serve as public indices of character" ("Embarrassment" 50).  Being judged to have "good" skin reflects on the ways in which that person has indeed been a good and responsible woman.

What is problematic here is that as women cover their skin with whitening cream, possibly as a psychological "covering" of that shame, it leaves larger institutional structures of racism/colorism (within which light/white skin is considered better) and (hetero)sexism (within which women instead of men are asked to put on these cream) unarticulated.  That is, instead of feeling the need to "fix" these structures, women

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[101] Here the moral judgments involve judging someone with moral values such as a "good" or "bad" character that then influenced how one would feel good when being judged as good, etc.

displace this feeling onto their skin and therefore feel the need to fix the skin rather than the structures.

The argument here is not that the interviewees all claimed that their using skin-whitening cream was solely rooted in their shame alone. But by employing a shame perspective, I allow the narrative of shame to become visible. That is, putting on skin-whitening cream exposed one's need to "cover" one self with something that was (psychologically) considered as not shaming. Paradoxically, or maybe consequently, putting on whitening cream turned out to put oneself in a never-ending cycle of shame: one usually ends up more ashamed for using these whitening products. This is evident from the interviews: when I asked them the first time around if they had ever tried whitening skin, many women said no. However, as I asked differently phrased questions throughout the interviews, they began to tell me which whitening brand they had tried. Riana, who at first did not want to be interviewed because she said she never used whitening cream, and hence had nothing to say, but then changed her mind asked me, "I told you that I didn't use whitening cream when you asked me about it the other day. How did you know I used it?" I did not, in fact, know if she had used whitening cream. But I was certain that even if she didn't she would still have many things to share with me. Nonetheless, what so many of the interviewees suggested is that lightening practice itself needed to be kept from public eyes (or ears), to be covered up, because it was considered in and of itself a shaming practice. Herlina commented on her friends:

> They use it but they won't admit it. […] Maybe they were afraid that they would be mocked (*diejek*) for turning white all of a sudden.

Her comment further exposed the feeling of shame that underpins the whitening practices. As Ferguson and Eyre pointed out, "We frequently hide or privately manage shame, because of its painful nature" (254). That is, it is better to manage our shame of our skin color privately, for to *expose* to others that we have managed our shame privately simply furthers that feeling of shame nonetheless.

<u>Beyond Borders, Beyond Shame</u>

In this concluding section, I will read these women's whitening practices within the context of larger institutional and transnational structures. This allows us to see these practices as reflecting their agency as they decided whether or not to practice skin-whitening routines. I do so by applying Dorothy Smith's "institutional ethnography" method that she set forth in *The Everyday World as Problematic*. In it, she pointed out the ways in which various institutional structures shape the ways in which women go about living their daily lives. In terms of the Indonesian case, this would mean that the need to whiten one's skin can not be detached from the fact that these women recognize how in their daily lives Caucasians coming from abroad received preferential treatments in Indonesia, suggesting that larger institutional structures of racism/colorism/nationalism (and in some cases sexism) played important roles in shaping their decisions. As a whole, what I attempt to offer in this chapter is "an analysis that anchored those experiences in the political, economic, and social processes that shaped them" (Smith 215). Certainly, ending this chapter with a focus on social structure, I aim to emulate Fanon's suggestion that we need to "choose action […] toward the social structures" (100).

From the interviews, all of the women without exception shared some story to show how Caucasians in Indonesia are considered "better" and (therefore) receive better treatment. Here are just a few examples from the interviews. All of these comments exposed (racist) assumptions preferring Caucasians:

Andarini:    "Why do they always think that [my daughters] are beautiful because of their father? Don't they think the mother is also beautiful? (laughing). They always wanted to know how my children were so beautiful; and they never said that the mother was beautiful. They always thought that there was something else. When they saw my husband, they said, 'no wonder.'

Widhi:    "They always asked me where the father came from. [...] Sometimes people even thought I was their nanny" (laughing).

Vivi:    "The mothers are ordinary, servant class. But their kids are so beautiful because of their fathers."

These expressions certainly exposed the underlying assumptions that Indonesian women were considered less valuable compared to their white-skinned fathers whose "good genes" were perceived to have made the children beautiful. Employing a shame perspective, I could read these as comments that would make the women feel ashamed for being Indonesians, considered inferior to Caucasians.

As Benedict Anderson has noted, in writing about Indonesia, "the Americans and Europeans, even today [...] profit from the residues of colonial racism. White visitors, especially those from the intellectual and official class, are usually treated with high deference" ("Mythology" 2). Such preferential treatment is largely connected to the

working of the transnational economy structure in which Indonesia is positioned as a transnational space, both as a "departure" and "destination" country. Cynthia Enloe in theorizing the existence of hierarchies of race, skin color, gender, and nations across nations argued that various industries such as tourism and politics relied on the working and maintenance of these hierarchies "in the societies of departure and the societies of destination" (41). Thinking about this issue through the maze of gaze metaphor, I argue that it is necessary, even inevitable, that in these fragmented spaces of both departure and destination countries, these hierarchies are maintained if they were to co-exist in this larger global structure. This is so because in this maze, as is in this current global order, each fragmented space is never isolated from other spaces. There are always people or things that travel to such a space and provide some links to other locations. This somewhat "coherent" structure across the maze is needed to allow for people to move across this maze.

Indonesia—first, as a "departure" country (the third largest migrant country from Asia)—has a stake (around U.S.$1 billion/year in remittances from these workers)[102] in maintaining these hierarchies. Based on the 2005 data from the Ministry of Human Resources, Indonesia sent around 500,000 workers (330,000 of them women) abroad, mostly to Middle East and other Asian countries.[103] Particularly because these women were sent off as domestic workers, these women had to learn (to accept) their place as "subordinates" to their employers. In some ways, the state and the Indonesian workers' agencies (and the workers themselves) needed these workers to "learn their place" in the

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[102] http://www.icmc.net/files/traffreport.en.pdf (p. 37). Data from http://www.nakertrans.go.id/pusdatinnaker/tki/Devisa%202004.htm shows only about U.S.$171 million/year.
[103] Bear in mind that many out-migrants are not registered with the government.

world society so that these workers would not cause trouble and instead bring money home.  If Indonesian women felt that they were "less" than Caucasians, this feeling was, in some ways, needed for the maintenance of this transnational economy.[104]  Hence, the maintenance of these color/racial/gender hierarchies allowed women in less—or underdeveloped countries to become readily (and willingly) available human resources to be domestic servants/nannies in more developed countries.

Certainly, because of the transnational economy, women were not only "reminded" to feel less than Caucasian employers in Indonesia but also in the foreign countries that hosted them.  This was brought home to me in hearing what Indonesian women residing in the United States reported in their interviews:

I was with [my son]; he was two years old.  We went to [a store and] […] bought a stroller, with [my brother].  My husband didn't come, so there was no white person.  […]  We went out and we used it, and they asked for [the receipt]; the security was black.  But I already put it in my purse.  And you know, white [customers], they just went through without being asked.  I was so angry with them.  So I filled out a complaint on their website.  […] But he was black.  Not white.  Sometimes whites are smoother with their attitudes.

Her story illustrated various racial and skin color hierarchies at play.  First, she recognized that her white husband was her source of protection, without whom she, an Indonesian woman, would be, to put it mildly, hassled by the "black" security officer.  Yet, in recounting her story of how white American hurt her feelings by not fully

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[104] Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to look closely at the feelings of women as migrants, it is interesting to bear in mind the ways in which Third World immigrants are made to feel "guilty" or "bad" for being positioned as "stealing" the jobs of people living in First World countries, while First World immigrants are made to feel "good" just for wanting to work in Third World countries.

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accepting her, she nonetheless upheld the notion that Caucasians have better attitudes

compared to blacks.  What is worthy of note here is that within this transnational context,

her anger was (dis)placed onto the black body of the security officer instead of on to the

racial/national hierarchies that made her, instead of the other white customers, questioned

to begin with.

Furthermore, in order for Indonesia to be a good "host" or "destination" country

and attract foreign investors, people living in Indonesia have to learn their places in the

world's economy as well.  Based on 2004 data, foreign workers (not necessarily

Caucasian)[105] in Indonesia numbered about 20,000 (6,000 top executives, 11,600

professionals, 1,200 supervisors, 500 technicians, and the rest were other[106]).  More than

half of these workers lived in Jakarta; only 400 workers lived in East Kalimantan (mostly

in Balikpapan).  To make these foreign workers feel at home and keep or spend their

dollars in Indonesia, they are given many privileges.  Examples from the interviewees

include being seated at different lunch tables (marked as "staff only") with more menu

choices compared to Indonesians at off-shore mining sites, being given more expensive

airline tickets so that they could fly on time when a flight was canceled while Indonesians

only got their money back, as well as getting their requests faster compared to Indonesian

employees.  I will share here only one example:

> When I was staying in B. hotel [in Indonesia] and my relatives came, they were
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> not allowed to swim.  They [the staff] came right away and said that it was for

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[105] Most of these workers came from Japan (3,500), South Korea (1,900), the U.S., Australia, England,
India, Canada, Malaysia and China (about 1500 each).
(http://www.nakertrans.go.id/pusdatinnaker/tka/TKA_WNegara%202004.htm)
[106] http://www.nakertrans.go.id/pusdatinnaker/tka/TKA_Jab%202004.htm.  This number does not include
families accompanying these workers, tourists, students, undocumented workers, unemployed, and other
undocumented foreigners in Indonesia.

members only.  But when my Caucasian[107] friend came with her kid [and they were] swimming there; no one asked anything.  They weren't members nor staying in the hotel.  But they let them [swim].  They didn't care.  But when my relatives came with their kids, they said "members only."  I even asked, "Can I pay you, can we pay you?" "Oh no, it's members only" [they said].  So it seemed that we were dirty, while Caucasians were not.

This example certainly reflects the notion of Indonesia as a good "host" welcoming Caucasians warmly to the point of refusing Indonesians and (unintentionally) making them feel "dirty" or less worthy than the Caucasian guests.  That Indonesians received "less" even in their own country was also evident from the ways in which many locally produced products are labeled as "export quality" to signify their "better" quality compared to products that are produced for local consumptions only.  This actually is symptomatic of former colonized countries where they see their own countries as a "wasteland" (Thiong 'O 3).

That women recognized Caucasians were receiving better treatment than Indonesians allowed for the possibility of reading these whitening practices as in some ways reflecting their desire to be treated well (to not be embarrassed) and not necessarily their desire for whiteness as such, although it certainly is attached to it.  After all, as Fanon suggests, "if he [*sic*] is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race" (100).  Although in this dissertation I do not argue that white race

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[107] Almost all interviews used the term *Bule* (pronounced: boo-lay) to refer to Caucasians but I am using the term Caucasian here for consistency and clarity purposes.

supremacy alone explains whitening practices in Indonesia, white race supremacy provides more reasons for Indonesians, and women in particular, to feel even less confident about themselves, being treated and considered less than these Caucasians even in their own home country.

Because whitening practice is in part about making the self feels good and more confident, the interviews consistently reveal that when women can *feel* good about themselves, the tendency to practice lightening routines is lessened. For example, some interviewees candidly admitted that they stopped using whitening products because they felt secure and confident with their husbands and jobs. Lily said that after she got married she realized that she had her own "segment" of guys who actually liked darker-skinned women. Lidya admitted that getting a prestigious job somewhat changed her desire to lighten her skin. She felt confident that with her high-paying job she did not have to submit to those time-consuming practices. Here, it seems her economy capital provides her access to deflect the pressure to feel bad about her dark skin color.

Interestingly, therefore, when women moved to another country and had fewer encounters with other Indonesian women who, by way of embarrassing comments, would make them feel bad about their skin color, they felt themselves less pressured into conforming to the light-skinned norm. Ira, Andarini, and Amanda who currently resided in North America admitted that they were less concerned about whitening practices when they were in the United States. Alya, Lily, Nia, and Lidya who had lived abroad, in France, England, and the Netherlands also claimed that they began to value their "tanned" skin, touted as exotic in these countries, once they left Indonesia. All of these

suggest that when women *feel* good about themselves, their tendency to use whitening cream diminished.

Although some women chose not to practice whitening routines because they could find other ways to make themselves feel good and left it at that, other women went further in resisting these whitening practices by thinking of doing something about the situation. Ira suggested:

> Because we were raised in Indonesia, we [were] groomed [to] be good wives. If you can't be a good wife because you are dark, you have to excel in something else, so I was into reading or something.

First of all, her comments certainly exposed her observation that women in Indonesia, possibly unlike in the United States where she had been living for more than ten years, were taught that *the* most important thing for them when they grew up was to be a wife (and a mother). One of the cultural meanings of being a good wife was, according to her, to be beautifully light-skinned. For her, however, rather than changing her skin color, she chose to compensate for her dark skin color by spending more time exercising her brain rather than her body so that she can be a good wife. Later on during the interview, however, she commented how her being smart was actually seen as a disadvantage in attracting possible suitors, suggesting that for most contemporary young Indonesian men beauty seemed to be one of the most important criteria a future wife should have.

A few interviewees went further, however, and determined to challenge structural hierarchy. Kiki said that she had thought of writing a letter to some magazine editors, although she didn't actually follow through. She said she felt angry (*geram*) with the magazines for perpetuating light-skin beauty ideals. When watching television with her

kids, she would sometimes change the channel so that her children wouldn't be overexposed to oppressive beauty ideals. This certainly was one of the first steps that hooks mentioned one should take to be responsible about our own self-esteem (or the lack of it) that is related to the ways in which beauty ideals are represented to us (*Rock* 54). Titi suggested that she and her friends, all of whom were successful in their career, had even seriously thought of publishing an alternative magazine, although because none of them would want to give up her job and hence could not find anyone to actually *do* it, such a grand plan never materialized. If such a plan was too grand, another interviewee, Lidya, showed how something less grand could nonetheless be powerful. She admitted that whenever someone said Caucasians were the best people in the world, she would debate with them and would not let them go away with it. She said:

> I felt like I was responsible. I felt I wanted to convince them that Caucasians weren't special. We don't need to think the world of them. The ugly truth is that we are the ones thinking that these ugly Caucasians are superior!

Her words certainly reminded us of the power of words as a powerful tool of resistance. "Psychology of resistance" is indeed needed if we were to "decolonize" "the minds and imaginations" of colonized folks (hooks *Rock* 45). At the very least, we need to resist the urge to feel embarrassed about having dark skin or being Indonesian.

The invitation here, therefore, is not to deny those feelings, as if we can choose not to feel ashamed, but to recognize and resist those feelings, rooted in and shaped by the structures within which these feelings are (re)produced and circulated. As Lidya remarked, "It's such a pity that Indonesians have to be afraid [of Caucasians]. […] We shouldn't feel so inferior. […] Nothing to be ashamed of." I couldn't agree more.

**Epilogue: Beyond Moving and Moving beyond National Borders**

In the process of writing this dissertation, I moved from the United States to Canada. It became clear to me, during the moving process, that "moving" necessarily involves selecting which part of our pasts we want to hold on to and bring with us to our future home. The process of selecting which tangible materials we want to bring was rather straightforward; we simply relied on how many boxes we could and wanted to buy and which stuff could fit in these boxes. The process of selecting which intangible materials such as cultural practices we wanted to bring was much more complicated: at times we were not even conscious of our "cultural" possessions. Nonetheless, as we move across national borders and encounter others, new understandings about ourselves and others are inevitably being formulated and particular cultural practices are being transformed and negotiated. This is what this dissertation, in part, attempts to make visible.

Throughout this dissertation, I have provided evidence that people traveling to and/or from other locations bring with them their values and cultures. These values have been disseminated through popular epics or tales (chapter 2), propaganda, leaflets, brochures, performances, newspapers, magazines, advertisements (chapters 3 and 4), novels (chapter 5), or everyday encounters (chapter 6). In making sense of how these circulations of objects and people help shape our understanding of various categories of identity, I offer a way of seeing and thinking necessary in a transnational context that I call "the maze of gaze."

I propose the maze of gaze metaphor because I find the structure of the maze useful to help us understand better categories of identity in a transnational context. In this maze of gaze, "historical periods" and "countries" represent the metaphoric walls;

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both define the boundaries and shapes of this maze of gaze. Categories of identity figure as the metaphoric "passage," the walkway that is bounded by these walls: their meanings therefore are shaped by these historical and geographical locations. Simultaneously, figuring as the walkway throughout this maze of gaze suggests that these categories of identity exist in continuum and in relation to categories of identity in other places. Also important to remember here is that the walls in this maze of gaze undoubtedly limit our visions: our understanding of categories of identity is necessarily situated, limited, and historically specific. Yet, as we travel and persist in finding our way out of this maze, our gaze is transformed into one that acknowledges the specificity of each site while simultaneously recognizing that each site is connected to other sites and is indeed a part of a larger structure. That is, our understanding of categories of identity must be contextualized within a transnational context.

Employing the maze of gaze metaphor, I have made clear in all of my chapters that circulations of objects and people across national borders necessarily reshape our understanding of skin color, as it intersects with other categories of identity, in a transnational context. In chapter 2, I took the readers through a journey that begins with an exploration of the meanings of skin color in Java from the tenth- to fourteenth-century precolonial period. This journey involves a close reading of five Old Javanese adaptations of Indian epics, and ancient Indian, Arabian, and indigenous tales. As one would travel in a maze by going through each fragmented space before being able to make connections among these spaces, I too analyze these epics and tales within their own historical and geographical contexts before making connections across these locations. Hence, I first provided evidence that in each of these epics and tales, the

"moon" has consistently been used to signify women's beauty. By pointing out that the waxing moon, or the light half of the moon, was used to represent light-skinned beautiful women in these precolonial texts, I argue that the preference for light-skinned women predates European colonialism. Then, I made visible how the moon became a useful symbolic referent throughout all of these differing locations to expose the transnational nature of such a beauty discourse.

After making the argument that preference for light-skinned women predates European colonialism, I pointed out how although the preference for light-skinned women continued after Indonesia's independence, the meanings of light skin color throughout these different historical periods varied significantly. I used advertisements for various beauty products to argue that during the heyday of Dutch colonialism (1900-1942), "Caucasian white" women stood as the epitome of beauty. This beauty ideal, however, was challenged during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945). Using periodicals, advertisements, and other forms of Japanese propaganda, I argue that "Asian white" women then came to embody an ideal of beauty in Indonesia. In the second half of twentieth-century post-independence Indonesia (1945-1998), I argue, "Indonesian white" beauty is constructed as part of the country's long struggle to formulate its gendered national identity against colonial and imperial power. Pointing out the shifts in meanings of light skin color in these periods, I expose the ways in which various nation-, race-, and ethnic- based categories of whiteness exist in post-independence Indonesia. Moreover, because I have found that a "white" beauty ideal is signified by ethnicity, race, or nationality, this allows me to make the argument that skin color, rather than a signifier *for*, is signified *by* race, gender, ethnicity, and nation.

Continuing our journey throughout these historical periods, I then focused on the post-1998 Indonesia to demonstrate a further shift in meaning. Unlike in the late-1980s and 1990s, when the preference for light skin color was visually represented by "Indonesian white" women, in our contemporary moment, light-skinned women are resignified: no longer just "Caucasian white" as in the Dutch colonial period, nor "Japanese white" as during the Occupation, nor "Indonesian white" as in the decades following independence, but something more complicated that I call "Cosmopolitan white." Here, whiteness experiences further "mutation": it is no longer racialized or nationalized, but transnationalized. Whiteness is represented as, or equated with, "cosmopolitanness," embodying transnational mobility. In this particular case, it is a magazine's content that acts as the metaphoric walls defining the boundaries and shapes of this maze of gaze; whitening ads become the metaphoric passage, the walkway, that is bounded by the "walls" and occupies the space in between the magazines' content. As images and text in these ads and magazines suggest, white-skinned women, unlike women of "other" colors, travel more frequently and with easier access, across nations because in the global setting, white has more currency than other skin colors. Indeed, white as the desirable color is the structure that holds this maze together.

After taking the readers through a journey that encompasses various historical periods (from the pre- to postcolonial periods), and geographical locations (from India, Arab lands, China, the Netherlands, Japan, the United States, and Indonesia), I invite them to explore the root of the problem: why beauty matters. To this end, I made use of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru tetralogy novels to argue that beauty matters because it anchors the structure of masculinity in postcolonial Indonesia. Formerly colonized men,

stripped of their manhood during the colonial era, remake that "lost" manhood in postcolonial texts. In Pramoedya's novels, possessing beautiful women is one of the means to remake manhood. But one needs to also pay attention to how the narrative of beauty is also needed here to make sense of the novels: beauty anchors not only the structure of masculinity in postcolonial Indonesia, but also the novels. That is, possessing the most beautiful women in the room as access to (heterosexual) masculinity would not make sense without the larger narrative of beauty that supports it. Moreover, what is interesting about these novels is that they attempt to challenge the simple equation of light skin color as a beauty ideal. Yet, they still, to a certain extent, value European facial features such as the "Goddess" Annelies. When the texts consider the exotic Princess Kasiruta who has "enticing black skin beautiful" (*Footsteps* 309), they do so by embracing the fact that her facial features resemble Annelies's, the European woman.

This journey, however, would not be complete without paying a visit to Indonesian women. Reflecting on interviews with forty-six Indonesian women, I offered an explanation of how Indonesian women understand the meanings and hierarchies of skin color in their lives and how these shape their decisions to practice, or not, whitening routines. To contextualize their voices within larger sites of institutions, I explained, first, that Indonesian society is a society that values conformity and sameness. Then, I pointed out how conformity is manufactured and maintained through the gendered management of affects: how women were made to feel embarrassed and ashamed about themselves and then (dis)placed and articulated these feelings onto/through their skin (and its color). It is worthy of note that I do not simply argue that because women are

ashamed of their skin color, they then used whitening products.  Rather, I explored the "feelings" of "shame" and "embarrassment" as a "theoretical-emotional lens" through which to decode the interviews.  This means that by using "shame" and "embarrassment" as theoretical-emotional lens, I was able to make narratives of shame and embarrassment visible in their telling of their stories and, most importantly, to make sense of why (most) of these women preferred light skin color and practiced whitening routines in their lives. Finally, thinking through the maze of gaze metaphor, I then made visible the connection between the preference to light skin color and Indonesia's long history of encounters with the outside world: Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Europeans.  By doing so, this dissertation persists in rendering "itinerary," "moving," and "traveling" across nations important in telling the stories of women's everyday lives in this transnational age.

In charting the circulations of people and ideas across national borders and their effects particularly on our understanding of skin color, I have uncovered how the maintenance of global order and hierarchies relies on the ways in which various countries and their people participate actively in maintaining such a global order.  That is, the constant meanings of skin color (for example, white as desirable) across various nations keeps global white supremacy in place.  Simultaneously, the specific/localized meanings of skin color (the preferred "white" in Indonesia being "Indonesian white," which differs from "Japanese white" or "Caucasian white") allow people in specific countries to have their "possessive investments" in their own whiteness.  Hence, this dissertation invites readers to rethink whiteness beyond its exclusive association with Caucasian peoples and to comprehend the complex ways in which transnational circulations of gendered popular culture depend on how whiteness is capable of maintaining its currency across the globe.

This dissertation therefore serves as an invitation to move our analysis beyond national borders.  It is an invitation to constantly shift or "move" our locations from which we are "situated" to allow for more critical ways of seeing while simultaneously tracing our "move" to make visible the connection between these locations and the particular gaze that emerges from constantly shifting our grounds.

In some ways, each chapter in this dissertation could even be seen as representing a fragmented part of this maze of gaze.  Each chapter focuses on Indonesia's encounters with specific countries and is concerned with how categories of identity are transnationally constructed within a specific historical period.  To get a better understanding of the meanings of skin color in Indonesia, we therefore have to consider all of these chapters as constituting fragments of Indonesian society in a transnational context.  Just as most people do not explore all sites existing within a maze that is full of twists and turns before they exit the maze, I too have left some fragmented spaces untraveled.  In the future, other scholars, or perhaps I myself, may travel and explore these or other uncharted spaces within this maze of gaze to enrich our understanding of categories of identity in a transnational context.

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