Veils and Ecstasy: Negotiating Shame in the Indonesian Borderlands

Johan Lindquist
Stockholm University, Sweden

ABSTRACT *'Malu', meaning approximately shame or embarrassment, is a key emotional trope for contemporary Indonesian migrants. This paper discusses the position of 'malu' in the lives of young female migrants who work as factory workers or prostitutes on the rapidly developing Indonesian island of Batam, located on the border with Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. It shows how veiling and the drug 'ecstasy' have both become techniques for migrants to negotiate 'malu' in the context of the demands of migration and the contradictions of everyday life on Batam.*

KEYWORDS *Emotion, migration, gender, drugs, religion, Indonesia*

As unexpected as it might seem, migrant women sometimes wear Muslim veils or take ecstasy (the popular term for MDMA or 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine) in the same places and for the same reasons; reasons that are both comprehensible and explicitly moral. On the Indonesian island of Batam – a place characterized by rapid socio-economic change and dramatic demographic shifts – female migrants use these techniques in order to deal with *malu*, meaning approximately shame, embarrassment, shyness, or restraint and propriety (Goddard 1996:432; Peletz 1996:228). While veiling reinforces moral boundaries associated with *malu*, ecstasy use facilitates the transgression of those same boundaries. Wearing the veil, or *jilbab*, offers an identity that protects against the dangers of social interaction in the context of migration, while ecstasy use allows female prostitutes to engage more easily in morally ambiguous forms of transactions. Both activities, however, can be transformed into legitimate models of personal development (*kemajuan*), which may displace *malu* upon return home; one as a sign of religious insight, the other as a means for creating economic value. Veiling and ecstasy use are therefore both directly connected with the demands of home and the expecta-

tions of migration. In this context, it is the experience of *malu*, or of being identified as someone who should be *malu*, which becomes an organizing principle for social action and the management of appearances.

In other words, *malu* becomes the emotional link between the *kampung*, the village or home, and the *rantau*,[1] the space of migration, as the demands of what it means to be a moral person haunt the migrant. This link suggests various forms of exchange that bind the individual to broader historically specific moral and social orders, most notably the Indonesian nation. The aim of this article is therefore, first, to identify these processes, and, second, to highlight that female factory workers and prostitutes – groups that are usually discussed separately – negotiate *malu* in contexts of moral and social uncertainty using two distinct yet culturally resonant means, the veil and ecstasy.

Malu has a particular salience in many Indonesian societies. According to Goddard, there 'is perhaps no better term than *malu* from which to begin a survey of traditional Malay culture through the prism of its emotional lexicon' (1996:432). It is therefore understandable that *malu* and its equivalents have received sustained ethnographic attention in Indonesia and Malaysia (e.g. Geertz 1973; Keeler 1983, 1987; Errington 1989; Wikan 1990; Heider 1991; Hollan & Wellenkamp 1994; Peletz 1995; Collins & Bahar 2000). Most of these authors would agree that *malu* is a 'moral affect' (Rosaldo 1983:136 fn 3) that positions the individual within a social order. Peletz (1995:91), for instance, argues that in Malaysia *malu* is a 'brake' for passion (*nafsu*) in women, while Keeler (1983, 1987) claims that learning *isin*, the Javanese translation of *malu*, is crucial in the emotional development of children and closely connected with learning complicated forms of linguistic and social status. He writes that 'understanding the range of meanings of *isin* consists in understanding the full range of situations in which one's dignity and status are on the line' (1983:160).

These discussions understand emotional concepts as bound to a particular culture, language, and place. On Batam, however, it is not other possible translations of 'shame-embarrassment,' such as the Balinese concept of *lek* – famously translated by Geertz as 'stagefright' – or *isin* that have become key emotional tropes, but rather *malu*, a Malay word that exists in other Indonesian languages, but more importantly in this context, a part of the Indonesian *lingua franca*. This also highlights an important difference between Batam, a place where primarily Indonesian is spoken, and the *kampung*, where it is not.[2] As Siegel (1997:15) has argued, the formation of the Indonesian national language 'offers one the opportunity for a certain excursion if not into a new

identity, at least away from an old one.' Referring to the same quote, Spyer (2000:30) argues more strongly that it even 'compels' this shift. In this article, I argue that in the context of the more literal excursion that migration entails, *malu* should be understood in relation to emergent identities connected to the nation.

This does not mean, however, that *malu* is played out in the same ways among the two groups that I am discussing. One of the main differences between female prostitutes and factory workers is education. While the latter are required to have a high school degree, the former usually have far more limited education.[3] Furthermore, while religious engagement may be a legitimate model of *kemajuan* for some women, for others who must support families, only economic success counts. In other words, socioeconomic differences structure life trajectories and lead *malu* to become relevant in various ways in the lives of migrants.

This interest in emotions both follows and diverts from the seminal work of Clifford Geertz (1973) and Michelle Rosaldo (1983, 1984), as outlined in the introduction to this issue of *Ethnos*. On the one hand (and here the frameworks converge), Rosaldo describes emotions as a basis for theorizing social action (cf. Lutz 1988:6). Following this, I argue that emotions in general, and *malu* in particular, are an important starting point for thinking about the motivations and actions of Indonesian migrants who must negotiate both hope and frustration in the *rantau*. For migrants, propriety and shame are often at odds, and choices must be made to bring them together, or, at least temporarily, keep them apart. On the other hand (and this is the main point of divergence), this article is concerned with social change to a degree that Geertz and Rosaldo rarely were. Sewell (1997:43), for instance, has pointed out that Geertz's notion of culture 'posits a very tight fit between publicly available clusters of symbols and the moods, motivations, affects, and activities that these symbols shape.' I therefore raise the following question: What happens when this 'tight fit' becomes increasingly problematic, as cultural forms are increasingly de- and reterritorialized through human mobility (cf. Gupta & Ferguson 1992)?

The concern with social action and change becomes particularly evident in relation to the gendered reactions to *malu* in the context of migration. Women are generally supposed to be more *malu* than men. In this sense it is considered a positive sentiment, perhaps best understood as 'appropriate shyness' (Collins & Bahar 2000:39). Migration, however, demands new forms of social interaction that are more problematic than those in the *kampung*. Although econ-

omic failure is the main source of *malu*, for female migrants, in particular, anxieties concerning sexuality are equally prevalent – for factory workers in relation to pre-marital sexuality, and for prostitutes with regard to selling sex for money.[4]

As Collins and Bahar (2000:48) have pointed out, while men are expected to respond aggressively to *malu*, or – as Boellstorff shows in this issue – violently, women are supposed to withdraw, and thereby recognize their subordinate position in society. This gendered subordination should be understood in relation to the ideology of 'State Ibuism' (Suryakusuma 1996:98) or 'State Maternalism' (Wolf 1992:68) that researchers have connected to Suharto's New Order regime (cf. Sears 1996). Mather (1985) and Murray (1991: 131) have even suggested that *malu* has served as an instrument for controlling the rapidly growing female labor force in Indonesia.

More recently, however, Steedly (1999) notes a shift of interest in the study of gender in Indonesia and Southeast Asia towards smaller units of generalization that aim to reveal the complexity and historical specificity of local contexts (cf. Brenner 1998; Tsing 1993; Steedly 1993). In this article, I attempt to bring these two perspectives together – generally speaking, the 'national' and the 'local' – by showing how gendered forms associated with the Indonesian nation emerge and become problematic in one particular place. At the same time I problematize passivity and withdrawal as the proper female response to *malu*. Instead – and this leads us back to Rosaldo's focus on emotions and social action – I emphasize the agency of women who are caught up in these complicated fields of power (cf. Ortner 1997a, 1997b). Reddy (1997:347) has astutely pointed out that shame 'derives from thoughts about how one is seen by others... Thus, shame can lead to withdrawal coupled with action aimed at managing appearances.' It is primarily this reflexive management of appearances, in the face of dramatic economic and social change, which lies at the heart of this article.

Migrant Space

Until 30 years ago, Batam was an obscure island populated by only a few thousand fishermen and coconut farmers, located at the Indonesian border with Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. Today, as part of the Growth Triangle that binds together Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, Batam has witnessed dramatic social and economic changes as Singapore has been transformed into a financial hub and a 'global city' (Sassen 1991). As a result, factories formerly based in Singapore have moved offshore to places such as Batam, where foreign capital has converged with inexpensive Indonesian land

and labor in an attempt to generate 'comparative advantages.' During this period, the population has increased dramatically, and there are currently approximately 600,000 people living on the island, nearly all of them pan-Indonesian migrants.

Batam has commonly been represented by the Indonesian government as a competitor to Singapore – the new 'Houston' or 'Rotterdam' of Southeast Asia, the 'locomotive' of Indonesian national development.[5] The island has a distinct frontier-town atmosphere: it is a place that has changed too quickly. Golf courses, marinas, and gated communities co-exist with factories, squatter communities, karaoke bars, and brothels, while jungle still covers large parts of the island. Along with the industrial estates that offer facilities for multi-national corporations, prostitution has expanded rapidly, serving the large number of mainly Singaporean men who take the 40-minute ferry ride across the Straits of Malacca in search of inexpensive sex and drugs. The economy of the day – based in the factories – and the economy of the night – based on prostitution and drug use – have developed together, both depending primarily on female labor and foreign capital. In this context, national-cultural distinctions between men as breadwinners and women as tied to the domestic sphere are easily disturbed (cf. Blackwood 1995:126).[6]

The Day

It is just after 4 p.m. at the Batamindo Industrial Estate, the flagship of economic development on Batam. As most of the factories are changing shifts, workers dressed in company uniforms move in seemingly endless rows along the broad sidewalks; something of a rarity in Indonesia. Most of the workers in the estate are young women, and a large number of them wear a *jilbab*. Shita from Central Java, who is working at Sony on a two-year contract, is among them. From the factory it takes her only five minutes to walk to the dormitory where she lives together with eleven other women from her Central Javanese hometown of Cilacap. As she enters the building, a group of women in the front room are intently watching a soap opera on a small television set. Shita walks straight to the sleeping quarters and returns quickly, having changed and taken off her *jilbab*. She is immediately filled in on the latest string of events that has led the show's heroine to leave her husband.

The sidewalks and the general sense of order in the estate serve to strengthen the feeling that Batamindo, which is managed by a Singaporean corporation, is organized according to different principles than those of the world that exists outside its walls. One of the estate's brochures reads:

> The Park's management style and industrial infrastructure were established with emphasis on the provision of efficiency, flexibility and quality; three factors cherished by foreign investors. Batamindo Industrial Park facilitates start-up operations in the quickest possible time frame. It also offers the foreign investor a climate of ease and efficiency in terms of hassle free operation (Batamindo Industrial Estate 1992:4).

Batamindo houses about 100 multi-national corporations and over 65,000 workers, and is generally considered to be the most successful development project on Batam. Eighty percent of the workers are women between the ages of 18 and 24, with a high-school degree being a prerequisite for employment.[7] Furthermore, most of the women must sign a contract promising not to marry or become pregnant while working there. Approximately 50 percent of the women in the estate wear the *jilbab*, an extraordinarily high number by Indonesian standards, even after the recent wave of Islamization throughout the country.[8]

Religious activities are strongly supported by the management and the local government on the island, and each factory has its own organizations for Christians and Muslims. The convergence of state and corporate interests can be seen, for instance, in attempts by the Department of Religious Affairs to provide pre-marital counseling for workers. At one point, the head of the local office explained the reasoning:

> By counseling them [the workers], we hope to prevent the possibility of negative behaviors [in particular pre-marital sex and pregnancy out of wedlock] being manifested. If these problems occur, workers' productivity could be reduced. (*The Jakarta Post*, December 19, 1992).

In contrast, young male migrants view Batamindo as a place where it is easy to find a girlfriend, and on Saturday nights the dormitories are packed with visitors long into the early hours of the morning, despite official rules stating that guests must leave by midnight. In interviews with officials at Batamindo, as well as with nurses in the clinic, issues of sexuality arose constantly. For instance, one top official appeared worried that many women were becoming lesbians, asking me if I had found any evidence of this, while a nurse working in the estate's clinic claimed that there were 'very few virgins here now.' Activists warned me that the large concentration of young female workers meant that large-scale HIV prevention efforts were necessary at Batamindo, while local newspapers and everyday gossip among workers often carried rumors about women becoming pregnant and having abortions or abandoning their babies. The occasional corpse of a baby found in the area only served to substantiate such suspicions.[9]

Religion appears as not only the solution to preventing immoral behavior, but also to improving worker productivity. The convergence of economic, nationalist, and religious discourses concerning young women is recognizable from other contexts in the region (e.g. Ong 1987, Chapter 8). As Ong notes (1995:187), the relationship between the management and self-management of women's bodies is 'in tandem with the larger forces at work in the construction of the body politic.'

The complicated relationship between management and self-management becomes particularly interesting in relation to veiling. In conversations with workers who wore the veil it was clear that most of them began to do so only *after* they had arrived on Batam. The typical response to my enquiry about this was that they had only just 'become aware' (*baru sadar*). For instance, Widya, from the city of Yogyakarta in Central Java, claimed that she had always wanted to wear a *jilbab* before she came to Batam, but that it was rare there. While in Java it was easy to be branded *fanatik* (cf. Brenner 1998:232), on Batam one gained support not only from roommates but also from the agencies and companies that recruited them.

Widya continued: 'one of the good things about working here is that there are a lot of religious activities. In the *kampung* it is usually only on *Hari Raya* [the day of celebration that breaks the Islamic fasting month] that there is anything going on.' In the estate, however, it is possible to take part in religious activities on a daily basis, either in the main mosque or in a wide variety of organizations that are organized through particular companies or by community-based groups created by workers and supported by the estate management. The interests of the workers, the companies, and the local government appear to converge, as the movement of workers is restricted to the mosque (or the church), the dormitories, and the factory. The development of the industrial estate is matched by the spiritual development of the worker. While this may easily be interpreted as an added instrument in the disciplining of workers, in reality it is more complicated.

Although 'becoming aware' was certainly a key motif among women who wear the *jilbab* at Batamindo, many – away from home for the first time – readily admitted that another major reason for veiling was to avoid male attention and *malu* in the streets.[10] Wearing a *jilbab* protects women from being approached by men, or of being identified as a *lontong*, a prostitute.[11] The contexts in which the *jilbab* was used, however, varied between individuals. Widya wore the *jilbab* at all times outside of her dormitory, and inside if there were male guests in the sitting room. Ella, a woman from Solo in Central

Java, would only wear the *jilbab* on particular occasions, when going to the mosque or travelling outside the estate, usually to the main town of Nagoya. Shita would veil at work and when leaving the estate, but not when moving around the estate during her free time. Unlike most women I talked with, she was fairly straightforward when elaborating on the reasons for this:

> When I am working in the factory it is easier to take breaks for prayer if I am wearing a *jilbab*. The managers don't bother me as much. If I go to Nagoya to shop I wear a *jilbab* so that the *calo* (touts) don't bother me. But at Batamindo I don't feel like I need to wear it since I feel safe.

For Dewi, a woman from a small village just outside of the Central Javanese city of Yogyakarta, the decision to begin veiling was motivated by a particular experience. During her first year on Batam, Dewi had lived in one of the dormitories inside the estate, but after becoming involved with a man from North Sumatra who also worked in the estate, she moved out of her dormitory and into a room that he rented in Belakang Sony (literally Behind Sony), one of the squatter communities – locally identified as *rumah liar* (literally 'wild houses'), or *ruli* for short – that surround the estate. Initially, they had decided to get married, but when she found out that he was seeing other women she broke off the engagement. As a result she moved back to her dormitory and decided to begin veiling.

> When I lived in Belakang Sony I felt as though I was living in sin (*berdosa*), but now I have decided to be good (*baik*). I prefer living in the dorms because most of the women are religous and rarely go out. In the *ruli* there is no one to watch over people and you can come and go as you like.

Some researchers have argued that wearing the veil can be understood as a kind of 'symbolic shelter' that allows women to enter public spaces (e.g. Macleod 1992). Brenner (1996:674) claims that this is not the case in Java, where there is no clear delineation between 'male' and 'female' spheres. On Batam, however, this distinction is far more problematic, since the island has a reputation throughout Indonesia as a place of prostitution and limited social control, making movement through public space particularly sensitive for women. As in Ong's (1987) Malaysian account, and as I have already noted, on Batam the entrance of young women into public space has generated broad commentary and public anxieties concerning their sexuality. In media and everyday talk the links between factory work and prostitution are often explicit. It is not uncommon for newspaper articles about female workers to move easily from indust-

rial estates to brothels, often suggesting that the salary from mere factory work is not enough to survive.[12] Visiting government officials argue that female workers have too much free time and may easily be lured by the potentially high earnings that prostitution offers.

This is a boundary, however, that women themselves are often concerned with policing. For instance, female factory workers who frequent discos in the main town of Nagoya make clear attempts to distinguish themselves from prostitutes, both spatially and in terms of dress. Most remain on one side of the disco and are easily distinguished by their uniform of loose T-shirts and jeans. Similarly, many women living in the dormitories avoid squatter housing around the estate, which often are associated with premarital cohabitation and a lack of social control. Veils serve a similar purpose in creating social boundaries and formalizing identities. Sri, who comes from Central Java and works for Seagate, told me that

> when I first came here I didn't wear a *jilbab*, but when I started working the night shift at Batamindo the people who owned the house where I was boarding told me that it was dangerous for women to go out alone at night on Batam. They said that it would be safer if I wore a *jilbab*.

Shita claimed that from the beginning she could tell the difference between the times when she was and was not wearing a *jilbab*. 'Guys would not approach me nearly as often when I wore the *jilbab*. These days I always wear it when I go out.'

Wearing the *jilbab* and engaging in religious practices may help displace *malu* in yet another way, however, namely by offering a model of individual development (*kemajuan*) in a context where saving money is difficult.[13] Though salaries on Batam are high by Indonesian standards, the cost of living is also among the highest in the country. Even for the women who have not traveled to Batam to help support their families economically, bringing back money or consumer goods are the most obvious signs of success. In relation to this, Shita told me that

> even if I have not saved a lot of money or gained skills that I can use to find a better job, people at home will see that I have a learned something while I have been away, that I have been able to develop (*maju*) through religion.

Widya put it the following way:

> It is easy to mess up (*rusak*) your life on Batam if you want to, but if you want to develop (*maju*), that is possible as well.

In Brenner's study of university-educated women who had chosen to begin veiling in Java at a time when it was a 'marginal practice,' 'becoming aware' was, as on Batam, a common theme (1996:691). But associated with this awareness was a sense of moral obligation, which Brenner suggests signifies a 'new subjectivity' (*ibid*.: 684). Among these women, she argues that the fear of *sin* is a greater motivation for veiling than the fear of *shame*.

At Batamindo, however, it would appear that the opposite tends to be the case – it is primarily the fear of *malu* that is crucial in the lives of migrants on Batam. As in Brenner's Javanese account, veiling at Batamindo cannot be reduced to a new form of disciplining of women. The veil is 'flexible,' allowing many women the possibility of moving through space with feelings of greater security, performing, in Goffman's (1959) sense, as 'pious women,' and thereby presenting an official identity. As an effect, it creates a moral boundary to the ambiguities of social life, as well as offering a model of personal development upon return home.

On Batam the *jilbab* as a sign of religious devotion and chastity was, however, often doubted by other people. Rumors of women who wore a *jilbab* during the day but frequented discos by night were common. My neighbor's girlfriend, who worked at Batamindo and wore a *jilbab*, would frequently spend the night in his room, trying to sneak in late at night while my housemates chuckled from our balcony across the street. One of my neighbors told me that he 'didn't trust *jilbabs* anymore' because he thought most women wore them to hide their unattractive bodies, another man claimed that they were 'merely a formality' (*formalitas saja*), while a nurse at the Batamindo clinic revealed that 'if a woman comes into the clinic and has a problem with something like sex and they are wearing a *jilbab*, I tell them to take it off, that they should be *malu*.'

The potential ironies are evident. While veiling protects women from the threats of pre-marital sex or of being harassed by men – thereby displacing potential sources of *malu* – and is considered a legitimate model for personal development, the veil is not always read as a sign of piety and demands a broader transformation of subjectivity.

In this article, however, I am not primarily concerned with issues of subjectivity in relation to religious belief. Instead I want to point out that *malu*, or being recognized as someone who should be *malu*, is a force that leads young migrant women to choose to begin veiling. In other words, *malu* does not necessarily lead to withdrawal from social life, but rather directs women to actively engage in it. Although this can easily be read as a sign of increasing

social control, we should pay attention to Ortner's (1997b:146) claim that 'the cultural construction of power is always, simultaneously, the cultural construction of forms of agency and effectiveness in dealing with powerful others.' Female migrants on Batam wear the *jilbab* for a number of different reasons and in different contexts, thereby dealing with the threats of social life in various ways.

The Night

As Efran, Umar, and I sit on the floor in the hallway, Diana is in her room putting her baby to sleep, while Lidya is burning incense and reading a prayer so that she will be certain to get a client that evening. They have already showered, dressed, and put on their makeup, and they are ready to go. It is 11 p.m. on Thursday, Ladies' Night at all the discos in town, which guarantees free entrance for all women. Diana still looks pale from the close call she had that morning when she came home and breastfed her one-month-old baby boy despite having taken ecstasy the night before. Umar, her boyfriend and the father of the child, describes the incident in horror: the baby's body had started trembling and small black spots appeared on his skin. Shaking his head, he is in awe that the baby survived and seems to be doing fine. Lidya comments loudly from inside her room that she took ecstasy every other day when she was pregnant, and there is no problem with her two-year-old daughter, Tika. Efran, her boyfriend, smiles at me as he tries to keep Tika from grabbing the filled ashtray on the floor between us. As Diana and Lidya step past us, Rosa, who is five months pregnant, comes out of her room and follows them down the hall. We all turn our heads and watch as they disappear down the steps. Soon we hear Lidya outside calling for a motorcycle taxi that will take her to Ozon, the most popular disco on Batam.

With the emergence of the Growth Triangle in the early 1990s, prostitution rapidly expanded on Batam and neighboring islands, as primarily Singaporean men began to take the short ferry trip across the border. This process reached its peak in 1998 at the height of the Asian economic crisis, as the Indonesian rupiah dropped to as little as one sixth of its previous value in relation to the Singapore dollar. While Indonesian men are mainly found in the half dozen quasi-legal *lokalisasi* – low-charge brothel villages – most prostitution on Batam is based in karaoke bars and discos around the main town of Nagoya, which cater primarily to foreign men.

On a busy night, Ozon is nearly filled to its capacity of 2,000 people by 11 p.m. At the back of the disco, the DJ plays techno versions of Indonesian and

western pop songs, but only a few people are on the small dance floor in the middle of the club. In contrast, the high tables and barstools that surround the dance floor are packed with people who can afford to buy drinks. Most of them are conspicuously moving their heads back and forth to the beat of the music – in most cases, such people are 'tripping' on ecstasy, the drug of choice in Indonesian night-clubs during the late 1990s. Behind the DJ, and at the entrance to the toilets, there are young men selling drugs, offering their goods to anyone who looks their way.

Lidya, who is in her mid-twenties and comes from Medan in North Sumatra, works as a freelance prostitute and is searching for a *tamu*, a client – preferably a Singaporean. The ecstasy that she has taken has not quite kicked in, and she is indecisive about whom to approach. Lidya claims that she feels *malu* about approaching clients, and she uses ecstasy to cross the barrier.

> I like taking ecstasy because I am not as scared to approach a client. If I don't take ecstasy, I feel inferior; I feel *malu* towards the clients. Ecstasy makes me feel brave.

Most of the freelance prostitutes who work in Ozon use the drug on a regular basis, many of them nearly every night. Unlike brothel areas, which are 'closed institutions' (Cohen 1993), or prostitutes who have pimps to negotiate transactions with clients, Lidya and other freelance women must to a greater degree perform in order to attract clients. Ani, who comes from Central Java, claims that taking ecstasy 'makes everything easier. If I am at the disco and I don't take it, I feel confused and I can't stand the music. I just keep asking myself why I am here. It is also easier to act and dance in a *seksi* way.' Cindi, who comes from the island of Bangka, agrees, saying 'if I have not taken ecstasy I feel *malu* if I try to pick up (*merayu*) a client. I don't know what to say or how to act. It feels strange to touch a client if I am not *on*.'[14]

In Ozon and other discos on Batam, ecstasy is crucial in the formation of a space where appearances may be altered and subjectivities may – at least temporarily – be transformed. One clinical study claims that ecstasy produces 'an affective state of enhanced mood, well-being, and increased emotional sensitiveness, little anxiety, but no hallucinations or panic reactions' (Vollenweider *et al.* 1998). Conversations with men and women who frequently take the drug suggest that this is a generalizable description. In the context of the disco, ecstasy allows women to transgress culturally powerful modes of bodily control and perform as prostitutes. It allows them to forget their *malu*, by 'distancing emotion' (Scheff 1977) and to become the kind of woman whom a client will desire, thereby facilitating economic transactions. In this context, there is a

whole repertoire of actions that is learned through practical mimesis and which is facilitated by ecstasy: learning to dance in a manner that is *seksi*, or be flirtatious without appearing overly aggressive, or change attitudes depending on the client. The most successful freelance prostitutes are not necessarily the ones who are considered most beautiful, but rather, those who have mastered this repertoire.

To merely understand ecstasy in relation to this specific use within the context of prostitution, however, would be to underestimate its potential meanings and uses. In the disco ecstasy generates distinctions between clients and prostitutes alike by becoming a sign that one is *gengsi* (hip). Not being *on*, therefore, can also become a source of *malu* in relation to other prostitutes, since it can be seen as a sign that one cannot access the drug, implying that one cannot get a client or afford to buy it.

In contrast, John, a Chinese Singaporean who opened one of the first discos on Batam in the late 1980s, suggested that all the talk about taking ecstasy to get rid of *malu* is 'bullshit.' He insisted that 'the only reason people take ecstasy is to feel good.' While people no doubt take ecstasy to 'feel good,' this simple statement obscures the various reasons that people have for taking the drug. In this case, John is buying into discourses that argue that the disco is a space of pure enjoyment, rather than one based on relations of economic inequality and meaning making.

Bloch and Parry (1989) argue that all forms of economic systems must allow for an ideological space in which short-term economic acquisition – which often is morally ambiguous – is accepted in order to reproduce a long-term moral order. In relation to this, consider the following quote from Rosa:

> of course I feel *malu* when I think about what I am doing – though it has become easier – but it is nothing compared to the *malu* I would feel if I returned home with nothing. Now, I can feel proud (*bangga*) when I return home. I am sure some people suspect that I work as a prostitute, but no one ever asks.

This *malu*, she tells me, is more powerful than the *malu* that she experiences in being a prostitute. In this context, the complexity of the meanings of *malu* – ranging from propriety to shame – becomes evident in the double-bind of modernity (Bateson 1973). Becoming a person is not only about acting in a particular manner and recognizing one's position within society; other demands have become equally important, namely signs of success from the *rantau*. However, Rosa's movement from the space of home, the *kampung*, to the space of migration, the *rantau*, and back again, facilitates this process. *Malu*, it appears, can be erased and forgotten.

The greatest fear of many prostitutes is – as the quote above suggests – that news of their work will spread back to the *kampung*. The use of Western pseudonyms is one example of how identities are masked, while new ones are forged in relation to a broader world. Returning home always means transforming oneself back into an ideal, moral person, primarily through more conservative forms of dress. Being identified as refined (*halus*) rather than crude (*kasar*) is another sign that one knows *malu*. As Rosa puts it:

> Whenever I return to Java and visit my son and my mother, I have to stop smoking and start wearing a sarong again. I have to restrain myself when I speak and not be as *kasar* as I am on Batam.

For those who have partners or children living on Batam, however, this tension becomes more complicated. For instance, one day when I went over to visit the hall that I described in the beginning of this section, Diana had a black eye. Her boyfriend Umar had hit her when she came home from Ozon *on* and without any money. At the time Diana complained to me that Umar:

> always gets mad if I come back without any money even though it sometimes is difficult to get a client. If he had any sense of responsibility (*bertangungjawab*), I wouldn't have to work like this, but he always says that it is difficult for men to find work on Batam. What I really want is to be a housewife and have children, but if he keeps hitting me I will leave him since I am the only one making any money.

Umar, of course, had a different story. He claimed that the first time he had hit her was when she actually brought a client back to their floor. Everyone was shocked by this, and it made Umar furious.

> It's bad enough that she has to work as a prostitute for us to survive, but she doesn't have to make me even more *malu* by bringing this guy back. Now she also seems more interested in taking drugs than she is in making money. All I do is sit here and wait for her all night, and when she returns she is *tripping* and has no money! I wish that I had never come to Batam. I had a good job before in Medan [North Sumatra], but I just wanted too much and now I am stuck here. I would rather die than return home *malu* without any money.

In this particular situation, the distinction between the short-term and the long-term sphere does not necessarily represent the distance between the *kampung* and the *rantau*. On the contrary, the distinction is dependent on what each person identifies as 'home' and, thus, the threshold for where the long-term moral order begins. This is perhaps a distinction that makes life bearable: the commodification of the body, and the spaces where this is allowed,

are distinguished from personal relationships and the space of 'home.'[15] In the economy of the night the distinction between 'pleasure' and 'labor' is never clear and constantly a source of conflict and anxiety. The distancing of emotion through the use of ecstasy facilitates economic exchange, but also creates personal tensions and moral dilemmas.

Lidya and Efran have similar problems. They are not married, neither of them have an identity card, and, as a result, they have not even been able to get a birth certificate for their child. Lidya told me that:

> I don't know what to do about my situation. I feel all this *stres* but I don't know what to do about it. I don't want to work like this again, but where are we going to get money (*modal*) so that we can go back to Efran's *kampung*? I really want a house, a kitchen and a garden where our daughter can play.

Efran experiences a similar kind of entrapment.

> I feel heartbroken (*sakit hati*) and *malu* when I know that Lidya is going out to sleep with men while I sit here. But what else can I do? I am sick of looking for work, and no one will hire me. We have to think of our daughter, and someone has to take care of her... Once we are married it won't be possible for Lidya to do this kind of work (*kerja*). I will definitely be the one who works. Once we have enough resources – maybe we will return to Padang, get married, and never come back here again.

Efran reveals his desire to make things right again, so that he, the man, will be the breadwinner, while Lidya is at home with the children. Once they are married and Lidya has stopped working as a prostitute, once they have become a 'family' – and restored the proper gender roles – they will become part of the Indonesian nation.

In this context one should ask not what the 'family' fails to do, but what it actually does (Ferguson 1999, Chapter 5). In the Zambian Copperbelt, Ferguson claims that constant reference to 'the fiction of the modern family' (1999:205) effectively obscures more basic political struggles between men and women and between generations. Similarly, on Batam the 'modern family' does not offer a reasonable model for Indonesian migrants. As Siegel (1998:87) has pointed out, 'the Indonesian family is an effect of the nation, deriving its legitimacy and its form from outside itself. From that perspective, the household is no longer the place one goes to find someone who knows how the family should operate. That knowledge rests with the enlightened nationalists. The family is a site of potential disruption.'

Efran and Lidya both understand this 'disruption' as being their own fault. In reality, however, they are hindered not only by their own *malu* but also by the economic transactions that the state demands for identity cards and marriage certificates, and an ideology that positions women in the household and men as workers. In this context, prostitution appears as the only way out, and ecstasy becomes a technique for engaging with the economic system that will make this possible.

The Malu of Modernity

As domestic and transnational migration has intensified in Indonesia during the last three decades (e.g. Hugo 2000), *merantau* – the most common Indonesian rough translation for 'migration' – has become increasingly associated with wage labor and the consumption of modernity, and in an important sense nationalized as a cultural form. Furthermore, while *merantau* was a predominantly male activity in its original formulation as a term from the ethnic Minangkabau in western Sumatra, as it has become nationalized it has become gendered in new ways. Most notably, during the last two decades it has become increasingly common for young women to migrate in search of work (e.g. Silvey 2000).[16]

The moral economy (Thompson 1971; Scott 1976) of *merantau* is explicitly circular and demands that one returns successful after a period away from home (e.g. Naim 1976:149–150). 'Success' must of course be specified historically, and particularly in the context of a capitalist wage economy, there is often an 'ironic compromise between what' migrants 'could imagine and what social life will permit' (Appadurai 1996:54). For Indonesian migrants on Batam, *malu* therefore emerges in the gap between what is imagined and what is permitted, or rather, in the movement between the two. In contrast to official representations and the stories that circulate to the *kampung*, development on Batam does not keep its promises, and economic success and associated forms of consumption are not readily available for most migrants.

In relation to the spread of *merantau* as a cultural form, it is not surprising that *malu* has emerged as a key emotional trope for migrants on Batam. While *isin*, *lek*, and other related emotional tropes remain bound to a particular ethnic group and language, *malu* travels and becomes the link between the *rantau* and the *kampung*, between the citizen and the nation. As I have noted throughout, particular modernist forms associated with the nation and *kemajuan*; most notably economic success, religious development, and the nuclear family, are at the heart of these anxieties.[17]

One is *malu* to return 'home' without having anything to show for the time one has spent in the *rantau*. For migrants, therefore, the links between *malu* and *merantau* effectively describe the contradictions of life on Batam and in the Growth Triangle. In this context *malu* appears as an emotion that describes the failures to live up to the ideals of the nation. It offers migrants an experiential trope as *Indonesians* in the shadows of the promises of *Indonesian* economic development (cf. Siegel 1997; Boellstorff 2002).

Malu is therefore a crucial starting point for analyzing the tensions surrounding the moral economy of *merantau* on Batam and Indonesia. In the *rantau*, *malu* becomes the emotion that links the expectations of home with experiences of migration. On Batam, discourses concerning *malu* are pervasive in everyday life and position the subject in relation to his or her local moral worlds (cf. Kleinman 1995). These worlds are, however, constantly threatened, negotiated, and transgressed in the context of rapid social, cultural, and economic change. In this context, the disjuncture between the promises of migration and what it actually offers, generates anxieties for many migrants, since it threatens the possibility of returning home as a successful person. It is in relation to these experiences that the importance of returning to the *kampung* with signs of success should be understood.

In this context, I have attempted to show how female factory workers and prostitutes are part of a common emotional economy (Cannell 1999:231) in which the avoidance of *malu* – or of being identified as someone who should be *malu* – is of crucial importance. Although I am by no means equating the two acts, veiling and the use of ecstasy both facilitate survival, as Butler (1990: 139) puts it, in the 'situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs.'

Though the performance of prostitution may appear as an inversion of the performance of piety, in fact they are both crystallizations of particular gendered styles.[18] Although there are certainly varying degrees of reflexivity involved in these acts, in all situations the primary problem is not self-identity, but rather avoiding being identified as someone who does not belong (cf. Reddy 1997). It is important, however, to highlight the reflexive nature of this process; Batam is a place that not only produces new kinds of power relations, but also offers new forms of freedom and agency for migrants, many of whom are away from the *kampung* for the first time. In the context of *merantau*, *malu* is an emotion that leads women to engage with, rather than withdraw from, a new kind of world and its contradictions; a process that does not, however, necessarily guarantee success.

Unlike the classic studies of 'shame-embarrassment' in Southeast Asia by Clifford Geertz, Michelle Rosaldo, and others, everyday life is constituted within the framework of the nation, and in tension with a transnational economy that utilizes female labor, rather than in the context of a local community where culture, place, and language appear to more easily correspond. Focusing attention on *malu*, therefore, opens up a space of analysis that poses questions about the gendered anxieties that emerge in the shadows of the Indonesian project of development.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. The *rantau* is the area outside of the ethnic home region, and also the root word for *merantau* (cf. Rodgers 1995:5).
2. This is of course a generalization that deserves modification. However, in rural areas and smaller towns around Indonesia, local or regional languages tend to dominate in everyday conversation.
3. A high-school degree is based on 12 years of education.
4. *Malu* is closely linked with sexuality. Most notably, the Indonesian word for genitals is *kemaluan*.
5. For a history of economic development on Batam, see Smith (1996).
6. On 'national-cultural,' see Ivy (1995:3–4).
7. As of 2002 the maximum age for new hires had been lowered to 23. The use of young women in electronics factories has become a global corporate form. For an early review, see Ong (1991).
8. The use of the *jilbab* became increasingly common during the 1990s in the last years of the New Order as President Suharto turned towards Islam. For instance, there was a lifting of the previous ban on veiling in schools (Hefner 2000:18–19).
9. For one case, see *Sijori Pos*, March 10, 1998.
10. Collins and Bahar (2000:46) heard the same kinds of response when interviewing women in the South Sumatran city of Palembang.
11. *Lontong*, which literally is a kind of inexpensive pressed rice, is the local slang for prostitute.
12. For instance, see the articles in *Sijori Pos*, August 6, 1998, and November 24, 1998. One was entitled 'From Hollywood Hill to Free Lancer.' 'Free lancer' refers to women who work as prostitutes.
13. This also highlights an important gendered contrast on Batam: for men, engaging in religion is not as legitimate a model of *kemajuan* as it is for women.
14. Many of the terms used in relation to drug use are English; *tripping* and *on* are only two examples.
15. See Day's (1990) study of prostitutes in London for strikingly similar distinctions.

16. Naim (1976:149–150) defines *merantau* as 'leaving one's cultural territory voluntarily, whether for a short or long time, with the aim of earning a living or seeking further knowledge or experience, normally with the intention of returning home.' *Merantau* has traditionally been associated with groups such as the Baweanese (Vredenbregt 1964) and the matrilineal Minangkabau of West Sumatra (e.g. Kato 1982), but has more recently become widely used among most ethnic groups in Indonesia (e.g. Ali 1996; Waterson 1997:230–231).

17. I am not claiming that the desire for economic success is a modernist form in itself, but rather that it is tied to new patterns of consumption and the expansion of an economy based on wage labor.

18. Kulick (1998:9–10) elaborates on this position in relation to Brazilian transgendered prostitutes.

References

Ali, Mariam Mohamed. 1996. Ethnic Hinterlands: Contested Spaces between Nations and Ethnicities in the Lives of Baweanese Labor Migrants. Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Batamindo Industrial Estate. 1992. From Commitments to Results. Brochure.

Bateson, Gregory. 1973. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. London: Paladin.

Blackwood, Evelyn. 1995. Senior Women, Model Mothers, and Dutiful Wives: Managing Gender Contradictions in a Minangkabau Village. In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, edited by Aihwa Ong & Michael G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bloch, Maurice & Jonathan Parry. 1989. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boellstorff, Tom. 2002. Ethnolocality. *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 3(1):24–48.

Brenner, Suzanne. 1996. Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and the Veil. *American Ethnologist*, 23(4):673–697.

—. 1998. *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Cannell, Fenella. 1999. *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, Erik. 1993. Open-ended Prostitution as a Skilful Game of Luck: Opportunity, Risk and Security among Tourist-oriented Prostitutes in a Bangkok *Soi*. In *Tourism in Southeast Asia*, edited by Michael Hitchcock, Victor T. King & Michael J.G. Parnwell. New York: Routledge.

Collins, Elizabeth & Ernaldi Bahar. 2000. To Know Shame: Malu and Its Uses in Malay Society. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 14(1):35–69.

Day, Sophie. 1990. Prostitute Women and the Ideology of Work in London. In *Culture and AIDS*, edited by Douglas A. Feldman. New York: Praeger.

Errington, Shelly. 1989. *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books

Goddard, Cliff. 1996. The 'Social Emotions' of Malay (Bahasa Melayu). *Ethos*, 24(3): 426–464.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson. 1992. Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1):6–23.

Hefner, Robert W. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Heider, Karl. 1991. *Landscapes of Emotion: Mapping Three Cultures of Emotion in Indonesia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hollan, Douglas W. & Jane C. Wellenkamp. 1994. *Contentment and Suffering: Culture and Experience in Toraja*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hugo, Graeme. 2000. The Crisis and International Population Movement in Indonesia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 9(1):93–129.

Ivy, Marilyn. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kato, Tsuyoshi. 1982. *Matriliny and Migration: Evolving Minangkabau Traditions in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keeler, Ward. 1983. Shame and Stage Fright in Java. *Ethos*, 11(3):15–165.

—. 1987. *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1995. *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kulick, Don. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lutz, Catherine A. 1988. *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Macleod, Arlene Elowe. 1992. Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo. *Signs*, 17(3):533–557.

Mather, Celia. 1985. 'Rather Than Making Trouble, It's Better Just To Leave': Behind the Lack of Industrial Strife in the Tangerang Region of West Java. In *Women, Work and Ideology in the Third World*, edited by Afshar Haleh. London: Tavistock Publications.

Murray, Alison J. 1991. *No Money, No Honey: A Study of Street Traders and Prostitutes in Jakarta*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Naim, Mochtar. 1976. Voluntary Migration in Indonesia. In *Internal Migration: The New World and the Old World*, edited by Anthony H. Richmond & Daniel Kubat. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Studies in International Sociology, 4.

Ong, Aihwa. 1987. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

—. 1991. The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 20:279–309.

—. 1995. State Versus Islam: Malay Families, Women's Bodies, and the Body Politic

in Malaysia. In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia,* edited by Aihwa Ong & Michael G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ortner, Sherry B. 1997a. Introduction. *Representations*, 59:1–13.

—. 1997b. Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountain Climbing. *Representations*, 59:135–162.

Peletz, Michael G. 1995. Neither Reasonable Nor Responsible: Contrasting Representations of Masculinity in a Malay Society. In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia,* edited by Aihwa Ong & Michael G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press.

—. 1996. *Reason and Passion: Representations of Gender in a Malay Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Reddy, William M. 1997. Reply. *Current Anthropology*, 38(3):346–348.

Rodgers, Susan. 1995. Imagining Modern Indonesia via Autobiography. In *Telling Lives, Telling Histories: Autobiography and Historical Imagination in Modern Indonesia*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Susan Rodgers. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rosaldo, Michelle. 1983. The Shame of Headhunters and the Autonomy of Self. *Ethos*, 11(3):135–151.

—. 1984. Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling. *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, edited by Richard A. Shweder & Robert A. LeVine. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Sassen, Saskia. 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

Scheff, Thomas J. 1977. The Distancing of Emotion in Ritual. *Current Anthropology*, 18(3):483-505.

Scott, James. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Sears, Laurie (ed.). 1996. *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sewell, William. 1997. Geertz, Cultural Systems, and History: From Synchrony to Transformation. *Representations*, 59:35–55.

Siegel, James T. 1997. *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—. 1998. *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-revolution Today*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Silvey, Rachel M. 2000. Stigmatized Spaces: Gender and Mobility under Crisis in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 7(2):143–161.

Smith, Shannon L.D. 1996. *Developing Batam: Indonesian Political Economy Under the New Order*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Australian National University.

Spyer, Patricia. 2000. *The Memory of Trade: Modernity's Entanglements on an Eastern Indonesian Island*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Steedly, Mary Margaret. 1993. *Hanging Without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Post-colonial Karoland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—. 1999. The State of Culture Theory in the Anthropology of Southeast Asia. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 28:431–454.

Suryakusuma, Julia I. 1996. The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia. In

Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia, edited by Laurie J. Sears. Durham: Duke University Press.

Thompson, E.P. 1971. The Moral Economy of the English Crowd. *Past and Present*, 50:76–136.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 1993. *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Vollenweider, Franz X., Alex Gamma, Matthias Liechti, & Theo Huber. 1998. Psychological and Cardiovascular Effects and Short-term Sequelae of MDMA ('Ecstasy') in MDMA-naive Healthy Volunteers. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 19(4):241–251.

Vredenbregt, Jacob. 1964. Bawean Migrations: Some Preliminary Notes. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 120(1):109–137.

Waterson, Roxana. 1997. *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Thames and Hudson.

Wikan, Unni. 1990. *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wolf, Diane. 1992. *Factory Daughters: Gender, Household Dynamics, and Rural Industrialization in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press.