The Appetite for Revenge and Murder in Translation

— Japanese Mystery Novels and their Social Media Savvy Indonesian Readers

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The high volume of published translations of Japanese mystery novels in Indonesia poses questions about Indonesian publishers' aims in relation to their readers' appetite for the genre. The translation of *Girls in the Dark* by Rikako Akiyoshi has been reprinted 14 times (October 2019) while that of *Confessions* by Kanae Minato has been six times (May 2020). In the functionalist approach to translation, translators take account of the importance of having optimal communicative effects on the target audience. In this light, this study sheds light on the consumption, interpretive and creative practices of the readers of these translations, and on how they share their thoughts via their own social media platforms, through the conceptual framework of the active audience and of participatory culture.

The study employs a digital ethnography approach in its data collection, and interviews with translators, readers and others for data confirmation. It aims to explore readers' construction of a perspective on translated texts in the context of publishers' intentions, through observation of the social media posts and uploads of all concerned. The findings show that such readers are primarily young females who are savvy social media users who identify themselves as content creators. Most are book community members and not necessarily obsessive about Japanese popular culture. They display awareness of the social critiques within these stories, particularly in relation to the family and mother-child relationships, which is parallel to publishers' framing.

Keywords Translation(翻訳), Japanese Mystery Novels(日本ミステリー小説), Indonesia(インドネシア), Readers(読者), Social Media(ソーシャル・メディア)

1 Introduction

This study examines two mystery novels from two Japanese female writers, *Girls in the Dark* by Rikako Akiyoshi and *Confessions* by Kanae Minato, which were translated and published by Penerbit Haru (Haru Publishing), in order to explore how Indonesian publishers and readers interact. Publishers in Indonesia are using social media as part of their marketing strategies to reach potential consumers. Haru Publishing is one such publisher, and interviews with readers show that their Instagram account is considered to be engaging and effective in allowing them to access book-related information. Publishers' Instagram accounts serve as dynamic spaces that induce awareness, engage followers, and promote their books. Readers in Indonesia, particularly those who are followers of Haru's Instagram account, are mostly avid readers and loyal Instagram users and community members, and some produce book-related YouTube content. After reading the two novels examined in this paper, these readers have taken to their own social media channels to produce content based on these books, usually in the form of book review vlogs on YouTube and posts on Instagram.

With both publishers and readers being active social media users, the study views these novels' translations as the connection between two nodes of an interactive dyad, i.e. readers as consumers and publishers as producers of media. The study employs the functional translation approach which focuses on the intentional, intercultural and communicative purpose of translation as a practice (Nord, 1997, 2018). It then connects this approach with the canonical theory in media studies of encoding/decoding formulated by Stuart Hall. My argument resonates with the notion that communication is translation (Conway, 2017), in other words it relates to the process of the transfer and substitution of texts by encoders and the process of interpreting meanings in texts by decoders. No text is value-free and the subjectivities of text producers and receivers interact in the construction of meanings. In connection to the idea that there is a gap between the meanings formed by producers and receivers, I attempt not only to investigate publishers' intentions but to explore readers' responses. I view readers as active parties in the context of the participatory culture of online book communities (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009). These online communities are sites which enable the audience to express and disseminate their responses to certain media content, a practice which I argue includes the processes of reading, interpreting, creating, and distributing self-generated content.

The study aims to contribute to translation studies as well as media studies by

exploring the activities of selected mystery book readers, and by observing selected posts and uploads from readers and publishers in order to gauge their level and form of social media engagement. Research that combines translations studies and media studies in the context of new media is still scarce, and therefore I hope that this study can enrich both fields of study in answering the question of what reader responses that the preferences of Indonesian publishers encourage, particularly in this era of online media.

2 Background : Publishers' Positioning in relation to Japanese and Korean Fiction in Indonesia

According to market share data from the Indonesian Publishers Association (IKAPI), Fiction and Literature is the third highest selling category of book sold in Indonesia, at 12.89% of the total market, after Children's Books (22.64%), and Religion and Spirituality (12.85%) (ikapi.org, 2014). As of 6 November 2020, the National Library of Indonesia had a total of 23,241 fiction books, including 4,404 books from foreign countries (19%) and 18,837 from Indonesia (81%) (email, 2020). Of the total, 85% were books from Asia, including the top four countries of Indonesia (18,837), Japan (277), Korea (163), and China (134). While these numbers show how Asian literature dominates the National Library's collection, they don't quite convey how major a factor translations are in Indonesia's fiction publishing industry. On average, 70% of the fiction books published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama (GPU), a major Indonesian publisher that was established in 1974, are translations (interview, 2020). Haru, a small publisher, notes that its translated fiction comprises around 60% of their annual fiction output (interview, 2020).

While the industry is dominated by translations of English books from western publishers, translations of Japanese books have been an inconspicuous, niche staple in Indonesian publishing. Larger media companies such as KOMPAS Gramedia Group have created subsidiary publishers for their various genres, particularly in an effort to accommodate the still promising comic book publishing sector. KOMPA's subsidiary publishers include GPU, Elex Media Komputindo, and M&C!. Although GPU has published a number of Japanese writers' books throughout its 46 years of existence, it has only begun to seriously explore other Asian literature since 2018 (interview, 14 August 2020). GPU is a notable presence in the Indonesian publishing industry

and this is why insights into their operations are offered, as they can provide greater understanding of the Indonesian Asian fiction market.

A fiction editor at GPU for nine years, Juliana Tan notes that in the years 2012-2017 the publisher did not have a specific agenda to focus on Asian books (interview, 2020). The focus had very much been on the international market, and the availability for translation of particular English-language titles. When the editorial team recommended that Asian books be published, the English-language translations of these titles were translated into Indonesian. When Tan became the lead editor for Asian fiction in 2018, the publisher started to turn its attention toward fiction from Asia in their original language, particularly fiction from Korea, Japan and China. By 2019, GPU had established stronger connections with Asian literary agents and was translating books written in a variety of languages.

Younger publishers such as Haru have tended to focus on publishing Asian literature from the time they were established. In 2011 Haru started translating and publishing works from the Asian continent, including titles from Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and India (penerbitharu.com, 2020). As a result, in the past nine years, Indonesian reader communities have recognized the publisher as a prime source of Asian fiction, particularly titles from Korean and Japanese authors (IGTV@detectives_id, 2020; Youtube : BookTube Indonesia, 2019, 2020).

In terms of their production processes, interviews with GPU's and Haru's fiction editors and translators reveal similarities between both publishers (Juliana Tan, interview, 14 August 2020; Andry Setiawan, interview, 19 August 2020). These publishers learn of titles for potential translation and mainly deal with the writers' literary agents rather than contacting the original publishers directly. Publishers prefer books from writers whose work has already been well-received, e.g. Keigo Higashino at GPU and Rikako Akiyoshi at Haru. In addition, editors check bestseller lists from various sources such as Amazon.com, and recommend their personal favorites to the editorial team.

During interviews, both Tan and Setiawan emphasized the importance of employing "good translators" whose work clearly reflects the quality of the books being published. Tan mentioned that many are comic book translators, which means that they are more used to translating dialogue than the descriptive narration often found in fiction (interview, 2020). Setiawan noted that translators sometimes make original work "flat" due to being unable to assimilate a book's essence and atmosphere into

their translations (interview, 2020). Both editors credited this “lost in translation” effect to the translators’ lack of mastery of Bahasa Indonesia, their supposed mother language. In terms of translation best practice, Haru seems to have employed different translation strategies for *Girls in the Dark* and *Confessions* in order to cater to its readers. While both books use italics for Japanese formal suffixes, i.e. *-kun*, *-san*, *-senpai* and *-sensei*, and for uniquely Japanese usages such as the *bon* festival, *tatami*, and *hatsumode*, the translation of *Girls in the Dark* has noticeably more footnotes. Setiawan indeed admitted that in his early translating days, he was inclined to use footnotes frequently to give better understanding of texts to readers (interview, 2020). In addition, he made efforts to identify appropriate Indonesian translations for most words instead of retaining the original Japanese. For example in the case of “*shoyu*” and “*dashi*”, he used Indonesian words that he believed have closely-related meanings (“*kecap asin*” and “*kaldur*”). He did, however, make an exception for the phrase “*yami no nabe*.” Setiawan argued that although he didn’t think too much of it at the time, the phrase was a crucial part of the story, and it is unique as there is no precisely equivalent phrase in Indonesian. Another consideration was that “*yami no nabe*” was becoming popular among Japanese students who mimic elements of that tradition, so retaining the phrase would introduce a slice of Japanese popular culture to Indonesian readers (interview, 2020).

The business strategy of riding the wave of Korean popular culture washing over Asia was common to both GPU and Haru (Tan, interview, 2020; Setiawan, interview, 2020). Both editors were well aware that the Indonesian market has an appetite for stories originating in Korea thanks to the Korean Wave. They also, however, displayed optimism about the demand for Japanese works by stating that Indonesian readers are attracted to different genres in works from the two countries. Referencing GPU’s long history in Indonesian publishing, Tan believes that Indonesian readers generally prefer light and entertaining, less serious literary works (interview, 2020). Setiawan agrees with this notion and claimed that the fans of Korean fiction seem to be sensitive to trends, as they buy books in the romantic comedy genre that have been adapted into drama series and/or movies, and recently, readers have been buying non-fiction works that are related to certain idol bands, e.g. the boyband BTS (interview, 2020).

Both editors confirmed that readers of translated Japanese-language books in Indonesia have an appetite for the genre of detective and mystery fiction. Tan elaborated several causes for this, namely that detective and mystery stories do not need to have

deeply philosophical contents, the issues dealt with are relevant to other countries including Indonesia, and readers are able to enjoy the stories and understand their characters and emotions without having to master Japan's history or societal context (interview, 2020). However, Setiawan addressed a difference between GPU and Haru in their selection of detective and mystery titles by noting that while GPU publishes works from established or famous authors and targets Indonesia's most avid readers in general, Haru tends to select works from authors who are newcomers and targets young readers (i.e. university students) (interview, 2020). He also emphasized that most importantly, Haru selects books that can lead to discussion among readers, which is why Haru is active in organizing and participating in talk shows and book discussion events that engage reader communities via online and offline platforms.

3 The Universal “Monstrous-Feminine” Narrative

Feminism has been one of the most exhaustively treated issues since the French revolution in the late 18th century (Lewis, 2002). In terms of the context of a given era, Lewis (2002) elaborates on how women are often discussed within the scope of their position in the economic system (capitalism, ownership and property), their roles and position in the patriarchal system (sexual, maternal, obedient, domestic, emotional), and their status in cultural politics (the binary opposite of masculinity, the sexual Other). As mentioned above, publishers view Indonesian readers as having a healthy appetite for the mystery genre. Interestingly enough, the attention of both publishers and readers seems to revolve around novels that are written by female authors. This article contributes to the discussion on women's agency in society as well as the cultural politics surrounding them in fiction by putting forward the notions of “femicidal fears” (Meyers, 2001) and the “monstrous feminine” (Creed, 2007; Dumas, 2018). I argue that these notions can best explain readers' thoughts on the two mystery novels published by Haru Publishing, *Girls in the Dark* and *Confessions*.

The element of mystery in fictional plots has become intertwined with feminist perspectives. With Mary's Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a representative example, the use of mystery and thriller themes by female writers as metaphors for their stance on traditional society constitutes the “female Gothic experience” (Moers, 1974). Meyers (2001) proposes the notion of “femicidal fears” to shed light on the continuing debates on female victimization and agency in society. The concept refers to female-centered

Gothic narratives and the challenges and urgency of “taking gender oppression seriously without positioning women as pure victims” (Meyers, 2001, p.xii). For Meyers, the Gothic genre can be defined as a body of narratives that features encounters with violent transgressions of societal boundaries on the part of the Other, and fear of what these transgressions may cause in the context of female victimization (Meyers, 2001, p.2). Femicidal plots, in which female characters position themselves as deserving and/or desiring of their own violent ends, are taken as the cultural norm. Meyers (2001, p.18) notes that even though the genre is said to challenge the traditional norms that victimize women, “love, fear, and mystery” remain essential ingredients of the female-centered Gothic romance tradition. Furthermore, she argues that writers may have also unintentionally preserved the notion of women as victims through a celebration of particular values in their stories that relay the idea that “good women, chaste women, monogamous women, ‘normal’ women need not to be afraid—real men only kill women who deserve to die” (Meyers, 2001, p.38).

The obverse of the idea of female victimization is posited in the notion of the “monstrous-feminine” (Creed, 2007; Dumas, 2018), which captures how some narratives tend to position women as victimizers. Taking western horror films as a case in point, Creed (2007) argues that women are frequently represented as monstrous in the texts of popular culture. She notes that the phrase “monstrous-feminine” is strongly linked to the gender construct of femininity being ranged against monstrosity; it relates to the mothering and reproductive functions of the female (Creed, 2007). A study of female representation and victimization in the prime time television program *Law & Order : Special Victims Unit (SVU)* was inspired by Creed’s notion of the monstrous-feminine (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). The paper shows how the program articulates the anxiety about “feminine qualities and women’s power” (p.181) particularly in the domestic realm, and the idea of the monstrous maternal.

Cuklanz and Moortis (2006) note how the program’s storylines feature immoral and violent women, including those who abuse their power in the domestic realm in order to harm the people they are closest to, including their own children. Home in *SVU* is depicted as “the site within which a dangerous maternal instinct motivates women to commit heinous crimes” (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006, p.176). They also argue that the plots of *SVU* echo the narratives in Minato’s *Confessions* : “...individual ‘sick’ families cause social problems, and . . . ‘the system’ fails some families that it should help. The dysfunctional family is a cause of crime, rather than the symptom or result

of larger institutions and social problems. ... mothers often are either criminals in their own right or they cause the criminal behavior of their children” (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006, p.182). Finally, the study points out how the father figures in the show are often dismissed on the basis of the criminal acts of their children, which implicitly blames monstrous maternal behavior for destroying families and society from within.

Contemporary Japanese popular culture displays related themes that resonate with Creed’s argument, as it includes murderous maternal figures, beautiful yet deadly killers, homicidal schoolgirls, and women as *femme castratrice* among others (Dumas, 2018). Dumas (2018) proposes that the notion of the monstrous-feminine can also be applied to Japanese all forms of popular fiction, i.e. films, *manga*, video games and novels, particularly through the themes of women attempting to escape their perceived appropriate places in the domestic, social, and moral spheres, and how these attempts “threaten the integrity of the patriarchal sociocultural order of Japanese society” (Dumas, 2018, p.7). She discusses post-war Japan’s economic development in order to give context on how such themes may have come into being. The development of an industrial Japan has induced changes in the private and public domains which have been connected to the decline of the traditional Japanese family, specifically to women’s increasing participation in the workforce and their decreasing confinement to domestic labor (Dumas, 2018). Dumas (2018) proposes that in this connection, the powerful rhetoric employed in contemporary Japanese popular culture is derived from the notion of “maternal excess”, on the basis of which Japanese women are blamed for a range of Japan’s cultural ills.

Indonesian novels are also replete with this notion of fearsome females (Downes, 2019; Machali & Nurhayati, 2005). Although *Saman* by Ayu Utami and *Beauty is a Wound* by Eka Kurniawan have not yet been associated directly with this idea, both books feature female characters who are rebelling against the traditional concept of femininity, i.e. the patriarchal, prescribed characteristics of truly (Indonesian) women. They are constantly challenging taboos through their sexual liberty (Machali & Nurhayati, 2005) and are even monstrous in Kurniawan’s book, in which the main protagonist is a female ghost seeking revenge. Resonating with Meyers’ notion of femicidal fears (2001), these characters are then “punished” by meeting not-so-happy ends.

I have noted the above concepts in order to understand from an academic perspective how female agency in society is portrayed within works of fiction. This

article however does not aim to join the debate on the definition of particular genres, and whether both books belong to one or two of the genres discussed above. It instead tries to formulate a theoretical basis upon which to understand readers' thoughts on womanhood and on the social issues that are intertwined with the novels' plots. Instead of conducting in-depth textual analysis of both books, it attempts to elaborate functional concepts and a terminology through which readers' perspectives on the translations of these texts can be comprehended.

4 Social Media, the Active Audience and Translation

My perspective is based on two key arguments : 1) the practice of translating that must be explicated here is not solely the purview of the books' translators and publishers, but also of their readers who share their responses on social media; 2) the practice of sharing content based on the media readers consume transforms them into an active audience who engage in a participatory culture. I view the readers that are the subject of this study as an active audience who do not consume media content merely passively, but also process and translate this content, and then share their understanding through their own media platforms (Pink, 2016).

Nord (1997) emphasizes key elements of the functionalist approach to translation such as 'intentionality', 'communicative purpose', and 'intercultural dimension' in discussing the translation process. 'Intentionality' denotes that the act of translation is performed with a particular purpose, the facilitation of communicative interactions, and these interactions involve the bridging of the gap between members of different cultural communities in an intercultural process (Nord, 1997, 2018). The functionalist approach to translation also emphasizes the importance of determining the degree of success of the product of the translation process. This involves asking whether the text translator as text producer has successfully rendered the text in such a way as to conform to the targeted text-recipient's requirements, so that she or he finds it meaningful. Nord (2018) notes however that the meaning associated with the product of translation is not necessarily similar for both its producer and receiver, which hints at the existence of a gap between the meanings the two attribute to the text.

The core concepts 'producer', 'text', 'receiver' and 'communicative interaction' are strongly associated with communication studies. This study supports the argument that communication is translation, in that both translation and communication convey

the idea of transfer, and they function through signs' substitution process when meaning is being conveyed (Conway, 2017). Conway (2017) posits that media studies and translation studies are closely interlinked, particularly in the context of Stuart Hall's canonical theory of encoding/decoding. To put it simply, encoding is the process of creating a message for others to understand while decoding is the process of interpreting that message (Martin & Nakayama, 2013). The theory problematizes the idea of the "true meaning" of a particular text. Media scholars have pointed out that there is a gap between the understandings of the producers and the receivers of a text which constitutes a space in which to contest meanings. Martin and Nakayama (2013) note the same issue while addressing popular culture texts, viewing media industry producers as encoders who commonly rely on larger identity formations to help fashion texts in order to target a particular market (in order to sell a product), and readers, viewers and listeners as decoders who have their own social identities that influence their interpretations.

Taking this "gap" between meanings into account, Conway (2017) views message receivers as an active audience and suggests that while translation studies have explored the process of textual transformation, media scholars need to elaborate a theory that can explain the receiver's capacity to resist the prescribed meaning of the text conveyed to them (Conway, 2017). As mentioned above, a text is always understood within a certain context, particularly because producers and receivers have their own subjectivities. A text has connotation and nuance, hence the possibility of resistance because producers and receivers may interpret a message (a text or other communication act) differently (Conway, 2017, p.712).

My second argument involves the notion of social media enabling a form of participatory culture in which users are an active audience. Since as early as 1973, media scholars have conceived of the audience as an active agent which has the capacity to choose which media to consume in accordance with their goals (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). According to Fuchs (2017, p.65), "participatory culture is a term that is often used for designating the involvement of users, audiences, consumers and fans in the creation of culture and content." This understanding rests on the notion that social media has created a more democratic public space which enables users as an audience to not only passively consume, i.e. watch, read and listen, but also to actively produce their own contents (Fuchs, 2017). Indeed, Jenkins et al. (2009) note this development and question whether cultural power has shifted from producers to

consumers. Producers may find themselves compelled to cater to consumers' demands, particularly those that are made via larger fan-based communities which have the channels and bargaining power to influence producers.

Participatory culture was famously discussed by Henry Jenkins, who argued that there are several necessary preconditions for it, namely : 1) Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; 2) Strong support for creating and sharing content with others; 3) Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices; 4) Members of the community who believe that their contributions matter; and 5) Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (Jenkins et al., 2009, p.5-6).

Examination of their social media channels reveals that readers of the translated texts discussed in this study often use these platforms within the above described parameters. For most of them, their venues of choice are YouTube channels and Instagram accounts, a pattern which chimes with the social media use data presented in Datarepor "Digital 2020 : Indonesia." The report (Kemp, 2020) shows that YouTube is the most-used social media platform in Indonesia (88% of total Indonesian social media users), followed by WhatsApp (84%), Facebook (82%) and Instagram (79%). These percentages are based on Internet users aged 16 to 64 who reported using one or more of these platforms in the past month. In answer to the question of what kind of content they consumed, 99% said online videos and 79% said vlogs (Kemp, 2020). In terms of average monthly traffic, YouTube.com was the second most-visited website after Google.com, while Instagram.com was the sixth (Kemp, 2020). These statistics demonstrate that Indonesians are very familiar with using YouTube and Instagram for their online activities. However, I agree with scholars who warn us that the assumption of the audience producing content may not always be valid, as not all consumers decide to become new media content producers merely because they have the opportunity to do so (Bird, 2011; Van Dijck, 2013). This is why it is necessary to narrow the focus of this study and to select the methodology which best fits with this study's research purposes.

5 Focus and Methodology

This study supports the notion that after being translated, published, distributed, and consumed by readers, translated texts are re-interpreted before being shared by

readers on their social media channels. Pink (2016, p.43) notes that media studies and cultural studies scholars “have examined media practices primarily in terms of media use and how media audiences have engaged with, and made sense of, media in their everyday lives.” In connection to fan fiction, Pink (2016, p.50) also elaborates on how fans now do not simply consume media produced by media outlets, as they are becoming creators and producers of alternative contents which “disrupt the culturally dominant distinctions between the practices of production and consumption.” This study chimes with these arguments and considers readers’ social media activities as practices that consist of stages. First, readers assimilate a text, then they construct their own understanding through the process of interpreting it, and finally they convey this understanding through self-generated content which they upload to or post on their own platforms. Based on this dynamic, this article explores the question of how the preferences of Indonesian publishers translate into reader responses, particularly in this era of online media.

This study attempts to answer this question by using a qualitative digital ethnography approach. Using this approach, researchers are often in mediated contact with participants instead of in their physical presence (Pink, 2016). To support my arguments I have adopted several strategies of ‘netnography’ in collecting the necessary data, which are based on the purposeful observation, selection, and analysis of activity on publisher’s and readers’ social media accounts (Kozinets V, 2013; Seraj, 2012). First, I explored YouTube uploads that discuss Rikako Akiyoshi’s *Girls in the Dark* and Kanae Minato’s *Confessions*, both published by Haru, identifying them by using keywords such as “Penerbit Haru,” “Minato Kanae,” “Akiyoshi Rikako,” and “Confessions.” The study regards YouTube uploads by the readers as primary data. Related posts in reports in other media, and interviews with editors, translators, and readers are then used for data triangulation. The review videos to be analyzed were selected on the basis of the number of views they gained above the minimum of 1,000, or the number of the host channel’s subscribers, the criterion once more being a minimum of 1,000. The values ascribed to videos, i.e. the channels’ subscribers number and number of views are associated with engagement potential with viewers. Table 1 shows the uploads that are the focus of analysis (data from 12 November 2020).

Table 1. YouTube Book Review Videos by Readers

No	Channel	Video Title	Duration	Posted	Views
1	Zona Knisa	"REKOMENDASI NOVEL MISTERI Zona Knisa" (Mystery Novel Recommendation)	9 : 03	30 April 2019	5,098
2	Kanaya Sophia	"Review Novel Misteri - Girls in the Dark Akiyoshi Rikako" (Mystery Novel Review - Girls in the Dark Akiyoshi Rikako)	5 : 23	12 Oct 2019	5,571
3	Kanaya Sophia	"Review & SPOILER Discussion Novel Misteri Jepang - Confessions" (Review & SPOILER Discussion Japanese Mystery Novel - Confessions)	1 : 00 : 59	20 Oct 2019 (live stream)	3,315
4	Kanaya Sophia	"6 Novel MISTERI ADIKTIF Ini, Bikin GA BISA BRENTI BACA!" (This 6 Addictive Mystery Novels, Can't Stop Reading Them!)	9 : 11	5 June 2020	6,180
5	Biblio Story	"Review Buku "CONFESSIONS" Minato Kanae BookTube Indonesia" (Book Review "CONFESSIONS" Minato Kanae BookTube Indonesia)	13 : 28	30 Sept 2019	467
6	Fathiyah M	"Book Review Confession - Minato Kanae BookTube Indonesia"	9 : 04	3 June 2020	2,774
7	Esti Maryanti Ipaenim	"Review Novel Confessions Minato Kanae - Jawaban Tantangan Penerbit Haru - BookTube Indonesia" (Novel Review Confessions Minato Kanae - Answering Challenge from Haru Publisher - BookTube Indonesia)	8 : 26	3 Sept 2019	2,700
8	Cozy Library	"Review Novel Confessions - Minato Kanae Book Review"	7 : 10	23 Aug 2019	864

After making observations and taking research notes on the above review videos, I contacted and interviewed the owners of those channels to confirm my analysis. I adapted several of Radway's (1983) study notes on romantic novel readers, which maps these works demographically in terms of age, level of education, job status, and community memberships. Radway (1983) conducts interviews with readers by asking questions about their motivations for reading, how they imbue the reading activity with meaning, and their plot preferences in novels. Her analysis then posits their reading experiences as a form of training for a "reinterpreting process" which connects novels' characters and stories with people in the readers' surroundings (husbands, partners) and with the patriarchal society in which they live (Radway, 1983). Using notes on

this previous study, I conducted interviews with readers by asking semi-structured questions which explored their thoughts on the books in question (in relation to their plots and characters). On the basis of their book review vlogs, we discussed their personal formula for creating social media contents, how they viewed themselves in the online sphere, the impact of this perspective on their channels (their social media practices, their motivation for establishing their channels), and subsequently the ways in which they developed their views on translation and on the notion of Japanese-ness.

Table 2. Readers' General Information (per 12 November 2020)

No	Name	Age	Education	Location	YouTube	Instagram
1	Fitria Khairum Nisa	29	Master's	Jakarta	Zona Knisa Subscribers : 778	knisafitria Followers : 1,088
2	Fathiyah Muinah	28	Vocational	Makassar	Fathiyah M Subscribers : 1.21K	fatimuin Followers : 1,735
3	Kanaya Sophia	34	Vocational	Jakarta	Kanaya Sophia Subscribers : 26.7K	possessivereader Followers : 9,566
4	Murni Katenni	25	Bachelor's	Makassar	Biblio Story Subscribers : 1.19K	murnikatenni Followers : 1,084
5	Esti Maryanti Ipaenim	32	Master's	Jakarta	Esti Maryanti Ipaenim Subscribers : 401	estisisme Followers : 1,743
6	Sherry	20	Bachelor's	Bandung	The Cozy Library Subscribers : 2.14K	booksntealibrary Followers : 3,129

6 The Female Authors, the Novels and the Publisher

In this section, I will discuss the context of the two novels selected as the focus of this article, *Girls in the Dark* by Rikako Akiyoshi and *Confessions* by Kanae Minato. Both novels were written by female Japanese writers whose works are labelled by the publisher “*iyamisu mystery*”—the mystery genre that leaves readers feeling uneasy when they have reached the end of a story. The novels are viewed as original texts, the publisher and translators as the producers of the translations, and the resulting novels as products of translation. This section explains the relationships between the producers of the original texts and the producers of the translations, and also introduces the social media marketing strategies that were employed by the producers of the translations to attract readers.

Figure 1 *Girls in the Dark*, new cover (Haru Publisher, 2019)

Figure 2 *Confessions*, cover (Haru Publisher, 2019)

Rikako Akiyoshi's *Girls in the Dark*

According to the author's short biography in *Girls in the Dark* (2019), Rikako Akiyoshi studied literature at Waseda University and received her Master's degree in Film and TV Production from Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. Her debut work *Yuki no Hana* won the Yahoo! JAPAN literature prize. Her second work, *Ankoku Joshi*, also gained popularity and was adapted into a movie with the title and released in 2017 by Toei and Showgate. In Indonesia, her eight works of fiction have been translated and published by Haru Publishing. These are : *Girls in the Dark* (2014), *The Dead Returns* (2015), *Holy Mother* (2015), *Scheduled Suicide Day* (2017), *Absolute Justice* (2017), *Silence* (2017), *Giselle* (2018), and *Memory of Glass* (2019).

Girls in the Dark (暗黒女子, *Ankoku Joshi*) was first published in Japan by Futabasha Publishers Ltd. in 2013. The story revolves around the murder of Shiraishi Itsumi. She is a popular high school student who is also the president of the school's prestigious literature club. She is found dead in the garden of her Catholic girls' school, St Mary's Academy. The questions which linger around her death include whether it was suicide or murder, she having been pushed from a window. White lilies-of-the-valley in her hands are the only clue. The story begins with the new club president who was also Itsumi's best friend, Sayuri Sumikawa, calling members of

the literature club to set up a reading session after her death. Each member is asked to write their goodbye essays to Itsumi and to read them at this meeting. The readings evolve into the uncloaking of each member's own perspective on Itsumi as a person, on what the flower represents, and on the tragedy.

The story proceeds through the narration of seven girls, thereby providing a different point of view in each chapter. It begins with Nitani Mirei's perspective on how she came to know Itsumi, Itsumi's treatment to her, her taking on Itsumi's character, and her belief about who is responsible for Itsumi's death. Although they present different perspectives, similar patterns are followed by Kominami Akane, Diana Datcheva, Koga Sonoko, and Takaoka Shiyo. The surprise comes from Sumikawa Sayuri, when at the end of this process she produces Itsumi Shiraishi's note, which gives the readers of the novel the alleged victim's point of view. Itsumi's writing reveals that she faked her own death in order to accomplish her plans, which included deceiving her disapproving father and reuniting with her object of affection, a young male teacher at the school. She was pregnant and planned to elope and raise the baby with him somewhere far from the big city. Most surprising to the girls however is that Itsumi admits in her writing that she was playing the part of a puppeteer, with the club members as her chosen playthings. Her plan however doesn't proceed as she wanted it to when at the end of the story Sumikawa, who is supposed to be her best friend and sidekick, turns the tables on her. The novel then ends with Sumikawa Sayuri's unexpected actions, which readers' reviews described as a clever plot twist.

Beneath the twists and turns, the novel presents subtle insights on the issue of the ideal family in terms of the conventional relationships therein between parents and children, the role and status of mother and father figures, and the ideal behavior of children. These explorations are conducted through contrasting depictions of the Itsumi and Nitani families. Other issues related to school, education, bullying among students, and teacher-student relationships are investigated through the relationships between the characters. The core of the novel is the presence of female characters who are beautiful and apparently innocent, but also cunning, resourceful, and as is revealed later in the story, dangerous. Indeed, as Akiyoshi writes, "Itsumi was the true *femme fatale*" (translation is mine) (2019, p.269), but this study argues that all of the female characters in *Girls in the Dark* fit this description. More specifically, the characters in the novel are depicted in ways which resonate with the concept of the "monstrous feminine" (Creed, 2007; Dumas, 2018) and the tragic ending of Itsumi is the result of "femicidal

fears” (Meyers, 2001).

Published for the first time in Indonesia in 2014, *Girls in the Dark* was the second thriller published by the newly-established Haru Publishing (Setiawan, interview, 2020). Haru has also taken marketing steps to raise potential readers’ and buyers’ awareness of Rikako Akiyoshi’s books through its social media activities, most notably on its Instagram account @penerbitharu (106K followers as of 13 November 2020). Observations of the account reveal many promotional posts of various types. For example, Haru has asked questions in order to initiate discussion about a plan to visit Japan with readers alongside a display of the covers of Akiyoshi’s books (post : February 5, 2018). They also created the Haru Group Awards competition for reviewers and ‘Bookstagrammers’ (post : November 17, 2017), which features in the Instagram account. Finally, they posted captions and pictures from the movie adaptation of *Girls in the Dark* (posts : January 30, 2017; April 4, 2017; December 11, 2017). Haru was banking on the chance to re-promote *Girls in the Dark* when its cover changed of necessity due to the end of the cover art’s copyright period, from a black-themed cover in 2014 to a new white-themed cover in 2019 (post : February 3, 2019).

Andry Setiawan, who is the editor and translator of the book, first came across the title at the 2013 Tokyo book festival when it was recommended by the publisher’s literary agent. Akiyoshi was still a newcomer to the mystery book genre at the time but Setiawan and his team took a deep liking to the title and decided to publish it. He noted that this was a good decision, pointing to the fact that the book had been reprinted 14 times by October 2019, and that Akiyoshi’s other books are also in demand, with eight others now having been published by Haru. No less importantly, a loyal fan base has been established and seems to be growing in Indonesia (Setiawan, interview, 2020). Setiawan said in an interview with detectives_id, a book community account on Instagram, that readers enjoy Akiyoshi’s books because of the unique trademark features of her writing (IGTV @detectives_id, 2020). These include, first, the author’s excellence in fusing “the grotesque with beauty”, in other words raising tough issues in a sensitive way (e.g. suicide, murder, the search for justice, the blurred line between right and wrong), and in depicting social flux through interesting plot twists. Second, Akiyoshi does not label her characters “right or wrong”, or “protagonist or antagonist”; she does not unilaterally judge, and instead allows space for readers to form their own opinions. This democratic instinct was mirrored on September 6th, 2020, when 120 people joined a meet and greet event with Akiyoshi, organized by

Haru and Pantja Merah via Google Meet (Johari, 2020). The event, which was titled “Social Issues in Japanese Thrillers”, was part of Haru’s Asian Literary Festival event series.

Kanae Minato’s *Confessions*

Andry Setiawan sees Kanae Minato, a new author Haru Publishing is striving to introduce to Indonesian readers, as a writer that can hopefully expand Akiyoshi’s fan base (interview, 2020). According to the biographical note on Minato in the novel *Confessions* (Minato, 2019), she was born in 1973 in Hiroshima. *Confessions* (告白, Kokuhaku) is her first novel, published in Japan by Futabasha Publishers Ltd. in 2008. The book was awarded the Japanese Bookseller Award in 2009 and the American Library Association’s Alex Award for “Best Adult Book that Appeals to Teens” in 2015, and was also among the top 10 in the Weekly Bunshun’s “Best Mystery Novels” in 2008 and in the top 10 Wall Street Journal “Best Mystery Novels” in 2014. The movie *Confessions*, directed by Tetsuya Nakashima, was shortlisted for Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd Academy Awards in 2011. To attract Indonesian readers, Haru attempts to build on Minato’s reputation and brand in Japan as “the queen of *iyamisu*”, a subgenre of mystery fiction which deals with grisly episodes and the dark side of human nature. Haru has translated and published two of Minato’s books, *Confessions* (2019) and *Penance* (2020).

Confessions tells the story of Yuko Moriguchi, who is a middle school teacher and a single mother. The story begins with her addressing her class for the last time, as she is resigning from her position. The reason is the tragic death of her four-year-old daughter, Manami, on the grounds of the school where she teaches. The authorities have concluded that Manami’s death was an accident but Moriguchi is not satisfied with this. Before leaving the school after her resignation, she launches her plot to gain revenge on two students (first identified as Student A and Student B) in her class who she believes murdered Manami.

Similar to *Girls in the Dark*, *Confessions* offers different points of view in each of its chapters. It begins from Moriguchi’s perspective, and the story then proceeds through the narration of Mizuki Kitahara (a female student, the class captain), the mother of Naoki Shimomura (student B), the older sister of Naoki Shimomura, then Naoki Shimomura herself (student B), and finally Shuuya Watanabe (student A). Subtly

imbricated in the story are the themes of family, teacher-student relationships and mother-child relationships, with Japanese social norms as the context. The notions of the “monstrous-feminine” (Creed, 2007; Dumas, 2018) as well as of the “monstrous mother” (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006) are also dealt with in the novel, directly in the case of Moriguchi as teacher and mother and Naoki’s mother, and indirectly in the case of Naoki Shimomura (student B) and Shuuya Watanabe (student A). The narrative portrays Moriguchi and Naoki’s mother as females who are supposed to nurture and educate children, enabling them to become functional members of society. Naoki Shimomura (student B) and Shuuya Watanabe (student A) are the products of dysfunctional families; they are sons who are being improperly nurtured by their monstrous mothers, following Dumas (2018).

Confessions was translated by Clara Canceriana and Andry Setiawan and published by Haru in 2019, and it was reprinted for the sixth time in May 2020. Setiawan mentioned that he has known about Minato and her books since his studies in Japan, and he became particularly familiar with them in 2011 when Minato’s work became highly popular due to a movie production based on her work (interview, 2020). He however only suggested that the book be translated and published when he felt Indonesian readers were “ready” for Minato’s work. He elaborated further by saying that he felt Minato’s “*iyamisu*” subgenre might not have been well-received by Indonesian readers if her titles were published under the rubric of J-Lit. Indonesian readers have an appetite for mystery, thrillers and detective stories, but the popular formula entails a happy ending in which a case is solved and the murderer is found and arrested. Setiawan thought Minato’s unhappy and ambivalent endings might initially meet with reader resistance, so the publisher waited until Akiyoshi’s fan base was stable and eager for similar works from Japanese authors (Setiawan, interview, 2020).

The publisher promoted reader awareness of *Confessions* by uploading a video to its YouTube Channel (Penerbit Haru, 573 subscribers) entitled “Membedah Novel Thriller Psikologi bersama Psikater dr. Jiemi Ardian” (Dissecting the Psychological Thriller with Psychiatrist Dr. Jiemi Ardian). The video was uploaded on 21 September 2019 and gained 1,098 views (as of 13 November 2020). Over the course of almost 44 minutes, it discusses each character’s possible mental disorder and psychological challenges, which may have induced them to act destructively in *Confessions*. Peer pressures and social expectations, children’s mental health, parents’ role in education and nurturing, and the role and responsibility of the social environment are all among

the issues highlighted. In relation to boosting *Confessions*' YouTube presence, Haru also asked book communities to complete a *Confessions* relay reading challenge, #ConfessionReadingChallenge, before formally publishing the novel, an event that BookTube Indonesia responded to (Murni, Esti and Sherry's review videos).

Haru executed their promotional strategy through their Instagram account, producing posts which included a countdown to the book's publication, an invitation to readers to post black and white self-portraits with their faces covered and with an *inochi* (命) sticker to mimic the book's cover, and famous Indonesian authors' testimonials about the book. A challenge on Instagram was also launched in a 19 July 2019 post, #HaruConfessions_Drabble, in which the publisher asked Instagramers to post a "drabble"—a short story of 100-300 words on the theme of "confession". The winners were rewarded with a free copy of *Confessions* and a merchandise gift bag. In terms of offline activities, Haru coordinated *Confessions* movie screenings and book discussions in Jakarta on 31 August 2019 and in Malang on 12 October 2019.

7 The Readers and the Translations

I have made observations on the interplay between the authors and publishers of the two novels, which is one of the themes of this article. The previous section noted the status of the novels as original texts being introduced by the publisher as translated products, and how they have been presented through social media marketing strategies in order to attract readers' attention. The reason for this discussion was to provide the background of the encoding and decoding process between the publisher as the text producer and the reader as the text receiver. This section builds empirically on the theoretical and conceptual discussions of the previous sections, using data from the selected readers' videos (see Table 1) and interviews conducted by me with the readers, who were Nisa, Fathiyah, Kanaya, Murni, Esti and Sherry (see Table 2). It begins with the examination of their book review vlogs, then gives an analysis of readers' self-identification and its relation to their social media channels, then discusses their reaction to the social issues dealt with in two novels being examined, and last but not least, it considers the idea of translation and its potential connection to the notion of Japanese-ness.

Reader Book Review Videos

It was the readers' book review vlogs on YouTube that first induced my curiosity about Indonesian readers' appetite for Japanese mystery novels. Careful observations of the eight selected vlogs (see Table 1) reveal that generally the readers followed a similar pattern in their vlogs, for example summarizing the books, giving their opinions of their physical appearance, using similar phrasing to describe their reactions, and giving their ratings. Not all invested effort in discussing traits of the novels in ways that were unique to them.

The vlogs of all the readers begin with a story summary of a particular book or of several books, lasting three minutes on average. The readers then continue with a description of the physical appearance of the novel or novels. Nisa mentioned the dark-covered version of *Girls in the Dark* that captured her attention and noted the change in the cover to a lighter and mostly white version (Figure 1). Esti and Murni mentions the awards received by the book *Confessions*, which are displayed on the book's cover. Fathiyah also noted the awards while pointing at other elements on the cover (chairs and women sitting). Sherry points at the character “命” (inochi) that is on the face of the woman sitting at the center of the *Confessions* cover (see Figure 2). She shares the experience of asking Andry Setiawan from Haru Publishing about the meaning of the character. She also relates that she complied with a request from Setiawan's Instagram account to relay the call to put the *inochi* sticker on readers' own black and white photos and to post them on Instagram. Sherry offers her viewers the opportunity to contact her personally if they don't know how to do this.

Next, the readers talk about how they encountered the books being reviewed. Nisa mentions that she came across Akiyoshi's books at a bookstore, while Kanaya informs viewers from outside Jakarta that they can buy them online. Esti, Murni, and Sherry say that they reviewed *Confessions* while participating in Haru's #ConfessionReadingChallenge. Sherry gives some time in her vlog to explain several rules of the challenge. Only mentioning this briefly in their videos, Murni, Esti and Sherry elaborate further on the relay reading system employed in their interviews. BookTube Indonesia was asked by Haru Publishing to encourage its members to join this challenge. The BookTube community took this opportunity by posting the announcement and many members stated their interest in joining, but since the challenge required a relay system consisting of only one book to be read, reviewed, and then sent to another participant, only five people ultimately completed the task. They were

Murni from Makassar, Venindya from East Java, Sherry from Bandung, Esti from South Jakarta, and Rifqi from North Jakarta. Due to the amount of time required for the book to reach a member after having been sent by another, particularly when they live on different islands, other members decided that they would simply do a review without participating in the challenge.

The reviews become more personal when readers share their private reading experience. They mention that they are impressed with the books' "unpredictable plot twists" (Kanaya, Nisa, Sherry, Fathiyah). Fathiyah and Kanaya both use the term "mind-blowing" when describing Akiyoshi and Minato's plots. Kanaya elaborates further on *Girls in the Dark*, saying that the novel's narration makes readers feel that they are a character in the book who glimpses each characters' point of view through successive chapters. Nisa mentions how she is impressed with Akiyoshi's books because their details show how the writer has done serious research on various relevant facts before writing. In relation to her emotional reaction to *Confessions*, Murni confesses that she cried and felt sadness when Naoki's sister read her mother's diary, which chronologically narrated her little brother's deteriorating psychological condition. Kanaya seconds Murni's reaction of being thrilled with the plot of *Confessions*. The discussion of their emotional reaction serves as a prelude to the use of the term "*iyamisu*", which was introduced by the publisher to describe Minato's works; in this regard readers admit that they have indeed felt unsettled after reading the book, just as the genre's definition suggested they would (Esti, Murni, Kanaya). Sherry states that if viewers like psychological thrillers and Rikako Akiyoshi's books, then they will enjoy Minato's books, which echoes Haru's thread of posts in its social media. Kanaya also takes the time to discuss the similarities between the two female authors in her one hour live stream. Last but not least, a noticeable similarity between the review videos is the readers' ratings, as both novels earned five-star ratings. (Esti, Murni, Kanaya, and Sherry).

While these similarities are evident in the book review videos, some readers also take pains to include commentary on the books' distinctive traits, which differentiates their posts from each others'. In her live stream discussion of *Confessions*, Kanaya makes some comments about the novel's well-developed characters (Kanaya). She asks who her viewers' favorite character is, while admitting that this is hard to decide when each has their own "sickness". She describes them as "morally grey", while Murni and Sherry see the characters as complex and with questionable morals. Kanaya also

uses the term “mother complex” to describe Shuya Watanabe’s condition, a phrase which Fathiyah also employs in her review video. On the weaknesses of the novel, Kanaya mentions that she is a bit annoyed with several plot holes in the story, e.g. how Moriguchi discovers where Watanabe planted the bomb, how Moriguchi then takes the bomb to Tokyo and moves it to the precise building where Watanabe’s mother works, and the questionable timeframe of this trip to Tokyo, as at one point the narrative informs us that it takes about 3-4 hours to travel from the city which is the setting of the book to Tokyo. As for Esti, in her video she points out what she sees as a limitation, in that the mothers dominate the story, while the fathers’ roles in the troubled teen characters’ lives are not given enough attention. She further invites her viewers to think about whether fathers should have equal responsibility with mothers for nurturing children. Murni ends her review by asking whether the punishment for underage teens who have been convicted of crimes, particularly those that resulted in the deaths of or harm to other people, should simply be to rehabilitate them and enable them to rejoin society. I found the capacity and willingness to ask these questions, which drew out viewers’ opinions in the comments section, as well as the vloggers’ closing statements which aim to engage viewers in thinking through their opinions, to be a trait that is unique to these BookTuber members. I believe that this feature of these videos is strongly related to the purpose the readers established for their channels and how they view themselves in terms of encouraging greater interest in literature and of making a contribution to informed debate online. This subject will be further discussed below.

Reader Self-identification and Social Media Channels

When asked about their favorite book genre, the readers’ answers varied. Kanaya was the only one who described herself as a hardcore mystery novel fan. Fathiyah mentioned romantic comedy as her first preference and mystery as her second. Sherry said mystery was not her particular favorite, while noting that she disliked the horror and historical fiction genres. Murni and Esti stated that their choice of reading material depends on the type of theme they are partial to at a given time. Nisa admitted that she rarely reads mystery novels and preferred to enjoy such plots through movies.

Their desire to share their reading experience, to attract more people to reading, and to contribute to a more literate debate were the motivations for vlogging of the

majority of the readers. Nisa added that her goal was to give people information about things that are under-discussed. Sherry said that she enjoyed meeting other people through her channel who share a similar interest in books, particularly because she is shy in her offline life. It is noteworthy that none of the readers were comfortable with being described as YouTubers, and preferred to be called “content creators” instead. Esti reasoned that this preference was related to the negative image of YouTubers in Indonesia, as they are mainly seen as being focused on materialism and as profit-oriented. Murni confirmed this by quoting the opening lines of each of her posts : “Hi, I’m not a YouTuber or an influencer. It’s not who I am. My name is Murni Katenni, and I’m a book nerd who is trying to spread the literacy virus. It starts with you” (some of this translation is mine).

This idealism was their main motivation to join the book fan community BookTube. Except for Nisa, all of the other readers are members of BookTube Indonesia, a book fan online community (IG : bookstubeid, YouTube : BookTubeID). Kanaya joined the community in 2017 and was its Head of Community in 2018-2019. Membership is granted after someone posts three book reviews on his/her YouTube channel, contacts the community admin in order to be invited, then joins the BookTube Indonesia WhatsApp group. Esti joined in 2018, becoming its secretary in early 2020 before she resigned due to pregnancy. Sherry joined in 2017 when she was still in high school, Fathiyah in 2017 and Murni later, in 2019. The Indonesian BookTuber community was established in 2016, and includes a number of dedicated committees and an organizational structure consisting of the internal, general affairs, and creative development units or divisions. Committee members are elected and/or volunteer annually. In addition to proselytizing for their favorite books, community members also engage in various activities including training sessions to update newer members’ skills in producing material for YouTube, reviewing books, engaging in consistent reading habits, and discussing book piracy. Some of the videos of these activities are posted on the BookTubeID Channel. There are online community activities (e.g. “posting bareng”—group postings with assigned themes, live discussions, and design training) and offline (e.g. a variety of BookTubing 101-related types of training, ABC meet ups, and group reading initiatives). One of the offline activities that attracted Esti is keREADta, which are group readings that are engaged in while riding Jakarta’s MRT, entailing that members sporadically ride the MRT, read books to arouse the other passengers’ attention, and engage them in conversation if they are asked about

the books. She believes this activity is in line with her passion for promoting an interest in books, as it helps to spread the reading habit.

As content creators, readers demonstrate their skills in using several social media accounts through their clearness of purpose. All are proprietors of their own YouTube channels and Instagram accounts, but they have not necessarily integrated the contents of their two platforms. Fathiyah, Murni, Esti and Nisa explained that they use their YouTube accounts as their main platform in their efforts to engage people. Fathiyah, Murni and Esti explained that their two accounts are in fact integrated to the extent of using their Instagram accounts to promote their YouTube uploads. Nisa said that she consciously assigns different types of content to her YouTube and Instagram accounts, the latter being more about her personal life. Kanaya and Sherry invest their time in both social media platforms, having the discipline to maintain a regular upload schedule for their YouTube channels, which may explain their high number of subscribers. They include Instagram posts, Instagram stories and story highlights on their bio pages. While intensively using InstaStory, Sherry does not necessarily integrate her Instagram and YouTube content, but does create various videos and posts on activities she has taken part in with her followers such as book auctions, and book fan meet ups. She also uses Karyakarsa.com page as platform to elaborate further behind-the scene production process of her videos and posts. Kanaya engages in similar activities through her InstaStory account, e.g. #BacaBareng reading groups, book and movie reviews, and the promotion of her YouTube channel. Other than YouTube and Instagram, Sherry uses Discord and Karyakarsa.com, and Murni has begun to use TikTok for book reviews.

Another point which shows the readers' savviness in using social media is their awareness of who their subscribers are and of the need to engage with them accordingly. They all know how to monitor their channels' statistics and realize that the majority of their audience are females between 18-34 years of age. Subscribers aged 18-24 years old constitute from 29% to 80% of the total, while those aged 25-34 years old comprise 19% to 70%, with female subscribers comprising from 51% to 80% of total subscribers, a demographic make-up that mirrors the constitution of the group of readers themselves. Referring to their content, they use statements such as, "That is what my subscribers usually want to see" and "That kind of post usually gets a higher number of views." Nisa, Murni, Esti and Fathiyah admitted that currently some pressures in their daily lives have reduced their flexibility. Nisa is a fulltime university lecturer,

Murni is still adapting to her new job, Esti is expecting and Fathiyah has a nine-month-old baby. On the other hand, Kanaya and Sherry are able to consistently manage their time and integrate their social media accounts into their daily schedules. Both understand that this is necessary to maintain and increase their number of views and subscribers. Kanaya explained her content creation process, which begins with her considering a video's or a post's central theme, executing and editing it, and then deciding on the optimal strategic timing of the upload or posting that will gain most attention. She carefully chooses keywords for her titles and tags that will chime with YouTube's algorithm and thereby ensure that her content will be one of the first search results among the content on similar topics. Sherry explained how she maintains a strict monthly schedule in order to ensure consistent uploading and posting, and for this purpose she creates tables for deciding on content, content titles, sequencing and upload and post timing.

Social Issues in the Novels

Similar recurring themes are mentioned in the readers' review posts. Addressing distinctive social issues in the novels' plots, they use words and phrases such as 'social pressure', 'education', 'mother-child relationships', 'the modern family', 'bullying', 'juvenile crime', and 'homosexuality'. Nisa doesn't mention this in her review video, but in her interview with this author, she commented that the presence of these themes in the novels is not surprising, and that Indonesians can relate to them, even in the school context. Esti, Fathiyah, and Murni shared this opinion, saying that these issues are very current in Indonesia, even if against a backdrop of slightly different social and cultural norms. Kanaya, however, expressed her doubts, arguing that even if there is juvenile crime for example in Indonesia, its scale is smaller and its severity is lower than is the case in Japan. Below are the details of the conversations on these topics with each reader.

As in her review video, in the interview Esti again confirmed her concern about *Confessions'* heavy emphasis on the mother's role in nurturing children, and she asked about the father's role. Why should children's deviant acts only be connected to a mother's lack of nurturing? She also noted that although educating and nurturing children may be parents' responsibility as the main caregivers, surely the community and society also have a role to play. She suggested that the focus on mothers in both

novels may be partly because the authors were females, hence their biased focus on mothers. Fathiyah voiced a parallel opinion about how the social environment can genuinely affect someone's mental state, for example in the case of Naoki Shimamura and Shuya Watanabe in *Confessions*. She added that she believes this is not a problem only of Japanese society but of society in general.

In her vlog Murni connects the issue of bullying in *Confessions* with the hashtag #justiceforaudrey, which refers to a 2018 bullying case in Indonesia. She posts content on controversial issues to engage her viewers in the question of who is to blame for cases of bullying. Parents, young perpetrators, teachers or the social system? She goes on to explain her understanding of the Restorative Justice law (Regulation No. 11/2012) in Indonesia. The law stipulates that for cases of juvenile crime the main focus should be rehabilitation and the relearning of moral responsibility on the part of the perpetrator. She ends her review by raising a question : if a child or teenager has done something malicious that resulted in the killing of another human being, is it fair for the perpetrator to only have "restorative" demands imposed on them?

In relation to social issues, Kanaya identified interesting points in the novels and consistently compared them with cases in Indonesia in her review videos and during the interview. She felt that the novels reflect a cultural difference in that Japan is more 'high context' than Indonesia, so she thought that it is likely that Japanese female students' rivalry would lead to the same outcome as they do in *Girls in the Dark*. The same applies to the dysfunctional mother-son relationships in *Confessions*, about which she expressed her doubts that a case like that could happen in Indonesia. Kanaya continued by saying that by reading these Japanese novels, she noticed the existence of social pressure in Japanese society, which is producing mental disorders or homicidal urges in people. The idea of an intense work ethic which can be transformed into the pressure of high expectations in the sphere of education, as well as bullying and social pressure, was new to Kanaya. In her live stream discussion, she invites her viewers to ask what they would do if they were a parent and knew that their child was being harmed by somebody who was close or familiar to them. She also asks whether Indonesia has the same problem as Japan, and whether the cases in the novels are possible when it comes to Indonesia's middle school students.

In answering Kanaya's questions, viewers give their opinions on parents' natural roles and responsibilities in terms of their children's nurturing and education. Kanaya and her viewers discuss the laws that apply to children and teenagers, and social

strictures such as age restrictions, in light of the legal age for drinking alcohol that is mentioned in *Confessions*. The live streamed discussion grows heated in relation to the vagueness of the relationship between victim and victimizer in the stories. The readers realize the moral challenge involved when someone is a victim and want the perpetrator to be harshly punished by the law, but the law doesn't facilitate such an outcome. The lack of black-and-white situations in both novels, according to the readers, is evident in several ways. For example, in Moriguchi as teacher and mother and Naoki's mother, who as adults should be stable moral compasses but are not; Naoki, who was brought up in an "ideal family", turns out to have repressed mental problems; Naoki's mother denies the problem with her son and convinces herself that he is normal and that he's having a hard time, so it is natural for him to experience some psychological problems; Shuya Watanabe, who is not dealing well with his parents' separation, lashes out by killing people. When reading the chapter which shows us Mizuki's perspective, Kanaya at first felt sympathy for Shuya Watanabe, who was bullied in the first part of the novel. However, she changed her mind when in the later part of the novel Watanabe murders Mizuki and shows no remorse for the killing of Moriguchi's daughter, even until the end of the novel. Kanaya wonders whether, in light of his actions, the punishment that is imposed on Naoki is fair, or whether it should be either more severe or lighter considering his role in Manami's death. The discussion concludes when agreement was reached by Kanaya and her viewers that although similar cases occur in Indonesia, the degree of vitriolic behavior as a result of jealousy is different. Kanaya likes to believe that Indonesians don't go to the same lengths in acting upon their jealousy, to the extent of possibly physically harming other people.

Translation and Japanese-ness

In this section I discuss how the readers de-emphasize the traces of Japanese-ness in both *Girls in the Dark* and *Confessions* in their book review videos. Rather than framing the books they are reviewing as examples of Japan's popular culture, they devote more time to other dimensions of the books, which were discussed in the section "The Book Review Videos" above. I found it interesting that even though words and phrases such as "mystery", "novel" and "book review" are used in most of the selected videos, only one of Kanaya's - "Review & SPOILER Discussion Japanese Mystery Novel - *Confessions*" (See Table 1)- uses the word "Japanese", and none of the others'

videos use it at all. True to the title, Kanaya's live stream video discusses Japan and the various elements of Japanese society addressed in a previous section. Other than the unavoidable reference to the authors' names, the other videos do not mention Japan at all. This was the reason I asked the readers what they thought about the translated novels in the context of Japanese popular culture.

Since Esti was the only one who mentions the quality of the translation of *Confessions* in her review video, I initiated a discussion about the novels as translations in the interviews, and all the readers agreed that Haru's translations were commendable. They said that the translations flowed naturally because they read the books quickly, without having to pause because of a confusing word or phrase. I asked whether this was the main reason why the readers downplayed the Japanese dimension in the novels. Kanaya quite quickly answered that her decision to read the books was that they came from Japan, but she said that if she were to pick a novel based on its country of origin, it would come from the UK because she loves themes related to London. She has a large appetite for mystery novels and thrillers, and this is the main reason for every decision she makes in buying and reading books. She added that as long as a book is a good mystery story, particularly a psychological thriller, she will include it in her must-read list. Esti and Murni had a similar perspective on not necessarily making Japanese novels a default choice, but their decisions in buying and reading books are more connected to the type of information they can glean by reading them and on their mood at a given time. Both women were intrigued by the novels because of their treatment of social issues, which was something that they could discuss and invite viewers to think about. They stated that a book's value should not be limited to where it came from, and that although sometimes straightforward and sometimes latent, all books share lessons and through the process of reading them, the readers aim to identify these lessons and share them via their YouTube channels.

Half of the six readers interviewed announced their fondness for Japanese popular culture. Nisa likes Asian horror movies, noting that Japan and Korea are her favorite countries for this type of entertainment. She added however that while reading the novels the image of Japan was somewhat pushed to the back of her mind, because she was deeply immersed in the exciting plots. Fathiyah and Sherry proclaimed themselves to be fans of Japan culture. Fathiyah described her fondness for Japanese culture by saying that she understands little Japanese and always makes an effort to attend Japanese cultural events such as *matsuri* and other festivals, whenever they are

held in Makassar. Sherry said she shared her interest in Japan and Asian culture in general with her father, who loves to watch NHK programs. She taught herself the Japanese language, and enjoys watching anime and Japanese movies such as *Kimi no Na Wa* (2016) and Ghibli's *My Neighbor Totoro* (1981). Sherry explained that she likes learning about Asian culture because every element of it seems to have deeper philosophical meanings, for example the colors gold and red that are so prominent, and its mythical creatures and temples. Sherry likes reading Japanese literature because it contains details of everyday Japanese life, for example commuting on trains to work, going to temples at the dawn of the new year, and so on. This also added to her excitement in reading the Japanese novels that were translated by Haru Publishing.

Regardless of their thoughts on Japan's culture, whether fans or not, the readers generally agreed that the social issues that are dealt with in the novels are not exclusively Japanese and are relatable to Indonesians.

8 Analysis and Discussion

The interviews with the editors at GPU and Haru Publishing revealed that they view Indonesian readers as having a healthy appetite for mystery-themed Japanese novels, and this encourages these firms to select, translate and publish this type of work. Through observation of the readers' social media uploads and posts on YouTube and Instagram, and through confirmation of the data through interviews, this study finds that the publishers' expectations are confirmed by readers' buying and reading practices. Haru carefully chooses titles that it believes have the potential to generate discussion and engagement among readers. This strategy has been rewarded when Indonesian readers have responded positively through their social media accounts, with for example a detective story book fan group utilizing Instagram's IGTV, or a book community inviting the publishers to join their online book discussions through Google Meet, and uploading book review videos on their YouTube's channels, where they share their book reading experiences and interact with fellow readers. In this process, the act of reading shifts from being a solitary activity to a form of shared community engagement and of participatory culture.

In the section "Reader Self-identification and Social Media Channels," the readers' book community displays the traits of online participatory culture, as it allows members to demonstrate creativity and to exercise freedom in creating content for their channels.

Members also support each other in their activities of creating and sharing content with others, and they provide informal mentorship to newer members in communities such as BookTubing 101. Readers strive to make a contribution to the enhancement of literacy and to society in general through their uploads and posts, and they join book communities and gain satisfaction from this because they feel they can develop social connections with people with similar values and preferences (Jenkins et al., 2009, p.5-6). This finding demonstrates that the members of these communities are savvy social media users who display understanding of how to utilize their platforms and engage with their audience effectively, and of how to boost and sustain their engagement rate (the number of views and subscribers). The readers examined in this study also have their subscribers in mind when creating their content, in that they fashion it according to the demographics of their audience.

In the section “Reader Book Review Videos”, this study shows that the readers responded to the publishers’ invitation to engage, and have proceeded to do so in sync with the intention of the publishers. In their book reviews, they frequently echo the publishers’ themes regarding the mystery and *iyamisu* genres, including the novels’ “mind-blowing” plot twists, and the idea that Akiyoshi’s fans would love Minato’s books. The readers hone in on points to be discussed that have been promoted by Haru Publishing, including the awards the writers have won, the novels’ cover design, and the social issues that are intertwined with their plots. The readers demonstrate their role as an active audience as opposed to a merely passively one when they interpret the social themes in the novels and attempt to relate them to their own surroundings. The resulting discussions center on themes such as the impact of social pressure on a person’s mental health, the family dysfunction that may result from inadequate parent-child relationships, and the injustice of placing the full responsibility for children’s criminal behaviors on mothers.

On a talk show, Rikako Akiyoshi said that that mystery genre allows her to address societal issues in Japan and internationally (Johari, 2020). Indeed, the idea of female writers using mystery or thriller themes as metaphors for their stance on traditional norms has been central to the “female Gothic experience” (Moers, 1974). The notion of “femicidal fears” contributes to the continuing debates on female victimization and agency in society (Meyers, 2001). Dumas (2018) argues that the concept can also be applied to Asian novels, as elements of Japanese popular culture are echoed in Indonesian novels (Downes, 2019; Machali & Nurhayati, 2005). In Akiyoshi’s work,

sisterhood turns into jealousy and rivalry, and in Minato's fiction motherhood becomes monstrous. In both, traditional Japanese female roles are yet again challenged, particularly through the theme of the female as victim and/or victimizer. Despite the novels' gruesome narratives, the Indonesian readers attest that these issues resonate with them in their country's own context, as shown in the "Social Issues in the Novels" section. Therefore, this study demonstrates that novel translations as popular culture texts resemble cultural spaces that serve to affirm readers' social and cultural identities, but also constitute a form of negotiation with them (Martin & Nakayama, 2013). In relation to readers' media use, the study offers insight into the development of reading practices which embody the concept of participatory culture, as readers consume such texts, interpret them from their own perspectives, share their thoughts on social media platforms, and engage with a wide range of other readers within their book community, or outside of it.

As stated above, Haru strategically selects titles that are believed to have the potential to generate discussion and engagement among readers, and the practices of the readers' examined in this study are, to say the least, examples of how well the strategy has worked. In addition to these findings, the readers' channels' high number of views and subscribers shows the potentially wide reach of such communities. This study acknowledges, however, that such statistics deserve scrutiny, as they may not always reflect real-life practices (Bird, 2011; Van Dijck, 2013). The study also shows that as an active audience, readers consume and interpret media according to their own unique social circumstances and background (Katz et al., 1974), and this also means that audience members have the capacity to choose which media they consume and to respond or not to respond to its ascribed content based on their own interests and perspectives. The primary research and the findings of this study suggest promising possibilities for follow up investigation.

9 Conclusions

Research that combines translation studies and media studies in the context of new media is still scarce, and therefore it is hoped that this study can contribute to both fields of study. It explores the motivations and practices of Indonesian publishers and readers in their production and consumption of carefully selected Japanese mystery novels, and focuses on the resulting level of engagement on social media. It asks how

Indonesian publisher preferences translate into readers' responses, particularly in the era of online media. Observation of the social media accounts of publishers and readers, as well as interviews with the involved parties, are the basis for the answer to the research question of this study, and this raw data was analyzed with this in mind.

The findings show that both the publishers and the readers examined in this study are avid social media users and produce a high level of interactions on the online platforms they use. The study's observations and interviews reveal that there is no large gap between the publisher's goals and the readers' perspectives. With this, the study concludes that communicative translations done by both publisher and readers have been established. As savvy social media users, however, they set out to address some distinctive traits of the novels because they understood that this is necessary in order to create unique content, which enables them to engage with and at the same time cater to their audience. Although the study did not examine the activities of a large number of readers, the selected readers, who have a high number of subscribers for their channels and widely-viewed review videos, can give us insights into how Indonesian publishers and readers interact through their mutual focus on translated fiction in the social media era.

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