Translating a Tiger: Indonesian ‘Crime Fiction’ in International Literary Circuits

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Abstract

In 2015, Indonesian author Eka Kurniawan achieved huge critical success in the English-speaking world with his translated novels Beauty is a Wound and Man Tiger. Man Tiger has been described in the international media as a novel that both deploys and subverts many classic tropes of the crime genre, with a distinctly Indonesian twist. Originally published in Indonesian language more than a decade earlier in 2004, Lelaki Harimau did not initially achieve huge critical acclaim or attention locally. In this paper, I examine Eka Kurniawan’s rise to literary prominence, the labelling of his novel as crime fiction, as well as the power relations involved in the processes of translation, global distribution, and international reception, that have impacted upon his local reputation. I then use this case study to reflect on the politics of genre in the contemporary Indonesian literary landscape.

Introduction

Indonesian author Eka Kurniawan achieved huge critical success in the English-speaking literary scene during 2015-2016 with his translated novels Beauty is a Wound and Man Tiger. His work has been praised for its sweeping historical scope, its ‘magical realist’ elements, and its experimentation with voice and genre. Yet when originally published in Indonesian language more than a decade earlier in 2002 and 2004 respectively, Cantik itu Luka and Lelaki Harimau did not initially achieve widespread critical acclaim or attention locally. Some of the main concerns among local publishers and reviewers included the novels’ purported ‘literary merits’ (they were usually considered either ‘too literary’ or ‘not literary enough’), their ambiguity of genre, their fanciful approach to history, and the ‘vulgarity’ of their language and content, particularly the sex scenes. Following overseas success, however, the tone of Indonesian reviews shifted, and became far more positive. This is not an uncommon story, as external recognition from centres of literary power and taste-making can often prompt reassessment of a work in its original context.

In this paper, I analyse both English and Indonesian language coverage and reviews of Eka Kurniawan and his work over several years, in order to better understand the phenomenon...
of how an international literary icon comes to be formed via stories circulating in the national and international media. Genre is a key theme in these stories circulating about Eka and his work, and the novel Man Tiger has been described in the international media as a novel that both deploys and subverts many classic tropes of the crime genre, with a distinctly Indonesian twist. Given that this special issue is concerned with the conspicuous absence of crime fiction in Indonesian literature, Eka Kuniawan and Man Tiger warrant closer investigation. In what follows, I examine Eka Kurniawan’s rise to literary prominence, the labelling of Man Tiger as crime fiction, as well as the power relations involved in the processes of translation, global distribution, and international reception that have impacted upon his local reputation. As will become clear, this case study is a highly useful entry point into examining broader questions around the politics of genre in the contemporary Indonesian literary landscape.

**Between Pulp Fiction and the Literary Canon**

Eka Kurniawan is a Jakarta-based author of novels, short stories, non-fiction, and television drama scripts. In this article, I focus primarily on his two early novels, Cantik itu Luka (2002), later translated as Beauty is a Wound (2015), and Lelaki Harimau (2004), later translated as Man Tiger (2015). Beauty is a Wound is a sweeping saga that follows Dewi Ayu and her daughters through the tumultuous history of twentieth century Indonesia, from the Dutch colonial era, through to the Japanese occupation, the independence struggle, the anti-communist violence, and the corruption and eventual downfall of the New Order regime. Set in the fictional Javanese city of ‘Halimunda,’ the narrative jumps around in time, and also between different realities, as supernatural characters and occurrences permeate the often violent narrative. Man Tiger is a much shorter novel: set in a small Javanese village, it opens with a quiet and gentle young boy named Margio murdering his neighbour Anwar Sadat, and then traces the complex background to this unexpected event, revealing histories of family violence, and also the existence of a white tiger spirit living inside Margio.

_Cantik itu Luka_ was initially rejected by four Indonesian publishers, so Eka Kurniawan ended up self-publishing in 2002 with the support of a grant from the Yogyakarta Cultural Academy (see Kurniawan, 2008). While not widely acclaimed, the book made enough of an impact in the Indonesian literary scene to be picked up by publishing house Gramedia and reissued in 2004, along with Eka’s next novel Lelaki Harimau. In 2006, _Cantik itu Luka_ was translated into Japanese by Ribeka Ota and released in Japan. Almost a decade later, in 2015, the English translations of both novels came out to widespread acclaim, and Eka’s work has now been translated into more than 30 languages. _Beauty is a Wound_ was listed on eight international lists of best books of 2015 and Eka himself has won several awards and honours, including Foreign Policy’s Global Thinkers of 2015. _Man Tiger_ won IKAPI’s Book of the Year in 2015, the Financial Times/Oppenheimer Funds Emerging Voices Fiction Award in 2016, and a nomination for the 2016 Man Booker International Prize, while _Beauty Is a Wound_ was awarded the 2016 World Readers’ Award (Fasman, 2016). Flooded with invitations for writing festivals around the world, Eka Kurniawan was suddenly well and truly in the global literary spotlight.

However, this was not always the case. Born 1975 in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Eka Kurniawan enjoyed reading from a young age, devouring countless horror and martial arts comics, as well as pulp fiction titles sold on the sly by mobile vendors. He cites some of his favourite authors growing up as Enny Arrow and Freddy Siswanto, who were infamous for their pornographic content (Durohman, 2016a). Later, while studying in the Faculty of Philosophy at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, he encountered English translations of global literary
heavyweights such as García Márquez, Cervantes, Borges, Gogol, Chekov, Dostoyevsky, Faulkner, Hemingway, Rushdie, and Hamsun (Nair, 2016). Almost all the media coverage and reviews of Eka Kurniawan and his work dwell on this particular trajectory of literary influences: from local Indonesian ‘B-grade’ mass entertainment to the more respectable canon of ‘global’ high literature. While the English translations of Eka’s novels have been praised for offering a compelling mix of ‘local colour’ and ‘global literary merit,’ this mix is arguably why it was initially so difficult for him to get his work published in Indonesia. As Eka himself explains in several interviews:

A major publisher included a note [with the rejection letter], saying ‘the novel is too literary.’ I have no idea whether that’s a compliment or something else (cited in Perdani, 2015).

The editor explained their reason for rejecting Cantik itu Luka: it was lacking in literary merit. The editor said that Cantik itu Luka did not fulfil the criteria for good quality literature... [which should be more like] the novels of Mangunwijaya, Kuntowijoyo, and Ahmad Tohari (cited in Durohman, 2016b).

When my first novel (Cantik itu Luka) came out, a well-known critic gave bad review in the newspaper. He said that my novel had no direction – it is not a realist nor was it surrealist (cited in Bissme, 2014).

These assessments – too literary, but also not literary enough, neither realist nor surrealist – point to a discomfort among publishers over the disruption of genre conventions. Speaking again about Cantik itu Luka, Eka explains that in Indonesia, many critics and reviewers shared these concerns, and ‘take it as a failed literary piece because of its [lack of] accuracy in history and genre’ (Ramakrishnan, 2016). Evidently, one of the characteristics of Eka Kurniawan’s work that has garnered him much admiration in the English-language press and literary establishment – that is, genre fluidity and a blurring of the boundaries between high and low culture – is exactly why publishers and reviewers in Indonesia were initially so wary.

Another concern common to local reception, and subject of most of the initial discussion among Indonesian readers and reviewers of Eka Kurniawan’s work, centered on the ‘vulgar’ nature of scenes and language, with ‘vulgarity’ being essentially code for ‘too much sex’ (see Bissme, 2014). His work has been described as ‘buku mesum yang bersembunyi dalam balutan sastra,’ which can be translated as ‘a dirty book wrapped up as literature’ (Hilmi, 2015). Eka explains that in comparison to the English-language literary press, Indonesian readers are ‘far more critical. There have been a few sections that I Indonesians found to be too vulgar. Even

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1 Note: All translations from Indonesian language interviews are my own. For readers unfamiliar with the Indonesian literary canon, the authors mentioned in this passage – Mangunwijaya, Kuntowijoyo, and Ahmad Tohari – are well-respected Indonesian authors who were active primarily during the 1980s-1990s. Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya (1929-1999), popularly known as Romo Mangun, was a writer, architect, and Catholic priest whose fiction and non-fiction, including Burung-Burung Manyar (The Weaverbirds, 1981) and Durgo/Umayi (1985), examined themes of national identity and social justice. Kuntowijoyo’s (1943-2005) prose, poetry, and short stories were often highly introspective, and explored various aspects of his Islamic and Javanese identity. Ahmad Tohari (born 1948) is most famous for his trilogy Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk (The Dancer of Paruk Village, 1981), set in a small Javanese village during the anti-communist mass killings of 1965-66. For more detail on each of these authors, see Rahmanto (2001), Anwar (2007), and Cooper (2004). Notably, while Kurniawan’s books share themes, settings, and backgrounds with the work of these canonical authors, his more ‘lurid’ pulp fiction literary aesthetic appears to have set him firmly apart from them.
though the translation is very faithful to the original text, maybe those scenes don’t sound as vulgar in English as they do in Indonesian’ (Mann, 2015). These kinds of questions around language and translation are fascinating, given the vastly different connotations the English and Indonesian language versions of Eka Kurniawan’s work take on, and the way that the novels almost appear to shift in genre during translation. During the workshop for this special issue on crime fiction, we discussed at length the implications of language choice in influencing how an author’s fiction is read, and some of the bilingual authors involved in the discussion explained that for them, genres like crime fiction seem to ‘flow’ much more naturally when composed in English language. Moreover, in addition to the issues of language and translation, social context is also hugely important in shaping interpretations of a novel, and there are specific histories of and interplays between sexuality, morality, and literature in the Indonesian context, that can also help explain the discrepancy in reception between the two languages. I will return to this point later, when I explore in more detail the politics of genre and taste in the Indonesian literary landscape.

The Making of a ‘Literary Meteorite’

Despite the lukewarm early reception in Indonesia, Eka Kurniawan did attract some powerful champions, even before attaining global fame. Katrin Bandel devoted an entire chapter of her 2006 essay collection *Sastra, Perempuan, Seks* (*Literature, Women, Sex*) to lamenting how underappreciated Eka Kurniawan’s work was in Indonesia at the time (Bandel, 2006). The late Benedict Anderson, globally-renowned Asia Studies scholar, similarly extolled Eka Kurniawan’s overlooked virtues, explaining that although some of Eka’s readers ‘find many of his writings distinctly morbid, even perverse, in their fascination with murder, violent sex, monsters, and the supernatural,’ what is often overlooked is ‘the sheer, queer elegance of his Indonesian prose, which at its best is superior even to Pramoedya’s; his black sense of humor, quite close to Pram’s as well as Twain’s; and his gift for parody and ear for how his fellow Indonesians (of different groups and generations) speak’ (cited in Kurniawan, 2008). A key supporter and patron, Anderson played an important role in setting in motion the English translation and U.S. publication of *Cantik Itu Luka* as *Beauty is a Wound*, a move that was to in turn have significant impact on Eka Kurniawan’s local reputation.

Following Eka Kurniawan’s inclusion in the Publishers’ Weekly 2015 list of ‘Writers to Watch’, global interest in and acclaim for his work within the English-speaking literary scene grew exponentially (Lefferts, 2015). Described in U.S., U.K. and Australian media outlets (among others) as ‘burning bright’ (Fasman, 2016), the ‘crown prince’ of Indonesian literature, a ‘successor to Indonesia’s greatest writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer’ (Topsfield, 2015), ‘Indonesia’s most original living writer of novels and short stories, and its most unexpected meteorite’ (Anderson, 2016), Eka was suddenly in huge demand. These various reviews and interviews tend to focus on four main aspects: Eka’s place within the canon of so-called ‘magical realism,’ the influence of traditional Hindu-Javanese storytelling on Eka’s work, his exposition of Indonesia’s violent history, and his genre experimentations.

According to Jon Fasman from *The New York Times*, ‘Kurniawan owes a clear debt to García Márquez, particularly in *Beauty Is a Wound*’ (Fasman, 2015). Fasman describes how the fictional town of Halimunda functions in a similar way to García Márquez’s Macondo and Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County, allowing him to show ‘how the currents of history catch, whirl, carry away and sometimes drown people.’ He goes on to add that Eka is also ‘indebted’ to Indonesia’s oral traditions, which have contributed to stories that are ‘digressive yet riveting’
and characters that are ‘distinct and profound,’ and established not so much via dialogue, but through the narrator telling us ‘what the characters do and how they feel, just as a storyteller would’ (Fasman, 2015). Deborah Smith, writing in *The Guardian*, makes a similar assessment when she states that along with ‘elements familiar from magical realism’ in Eka’s work, ‘there is also the influence of Indonesian storytelling traditions, derived from classical Indian epics such as the *Ramayana*, and of the Wayang puppet theatre,’ which ‘results in digressive stories with a large cast of colourful characters’ (Smith, 2015). Lucy Popescu’s review in *The Financial Times* echoes this idea, labelling Eka’s work as ‘magical realism’ that has been influenced by ‘Indonesia’s oral storytelling tradition’ and explaining how the family saga of *Beauty is a Wound* acts as a microcosm of Indonesian history (Popescu, 2016). Popescu describes how three men, ‘bandit Maman Gendeng, independence fighter Shodancho, and Comrade Kliwon, a communist leader,’ are all ‘in thrall to Dewi Ayu and her exquisite offspring,’ and suggests that the fate of women in Indonesia ‘was largely determined by such men, be they Dutch colonisers, Japanese occupiers, independence fighters or Suharto loyalists.’

The focus on ‘magical realism’ and ‘local tradition’ in these reviews is an area for further critical analysis, as it is part of a broader tendency for literature by non-Western authors to be exoticised in the English-language literary press. For the purposes of this article, however, I would mainly like to highlight the sharp contrast between the initial Indonesian reviews, which characterise Eka Kurniawan’s work as pornographic and trashy, and these reviews of Eka’s translated work, which characterise the novels as exotic and whimsical. A passage from Louise Doughty of *The Guardian* is particularly illustrative here:

*Kurniawan grew up in an isolated coastal village in West Java in a house with no books, but after evening prayers at the local mosque, the village children would gather on the porch of an elderly woman who would tell them magical tales* (Doughty, 2016).

This romantic picture about local oral traditions is far removed from the image of young Eka secretly buying pornographic pulp fiction from traveling vendors, and then swapping it with his friends. Yet Doughty also warns against characterising a novel like *Man Tiger* as purely ‘fantastical,’ as ‘the small-scale political structures and power plays of village life are very much in evidence too, along with real, believable characters’ (Doughty, 2016). This notion of gritty everyday power struggles brings us to one particularly significant way in which *Man Tiger* has been characterised: as crime fiction.

**Crime Fiction and Questions of Genre**

Particularly with regard to *Man Tiger*, many critics in the international literary press have noted appreciatively the elements of crime fiction apparent in Eka Kurniawan’s work. *Man Tiger* is described variously as a ‘reverse whodunnit,’ a ‘murder mystery of sorts,’ ‘a distinctly Javanese take on the hard-boiled genre,’ and ‘thrilling like a good crime novel.’ Nur Salleh, of *The Straits Times*, characterizes *Man Tiger* as a crime novel in reverse, which ‘reveals both murderer and murdered in the first sentence’ and mixes ‘murder mystery with family drama and myth’ (Salleh, 2016). In *The Economist*, Jon Fasman also notes the unexpected early reveal of both victim and perpetrator, and goes on to say that it is a testament to Eka Kurniawan’s storytelling gifts ‘particularly his skill at ratcheting up and tactically releasing tension, that he keeps readers enthralled nonetheless’ (Fasman, 2016). Deborah Smith writes in *The Guardian* that this ‘supernatural tale of murder and desire fascinatingly subverts the crime genre,’ and that *Man
Tiger is particularly effective in ‘deploying some of the classic techniques of the crime genre while subverting others,’ pointing especially to the fact that ‘not only is there no “whodunnit”, the destabilising effect is not caused by the murder itself (violence is very much a part of life), but by the lack of presaging omens’ (Smith, 2015). Man Tiger’s ‘classic’ generic elements from crime fiction, the apparent ‘subversions’ of these elements, and the response of reviewers are all important areas for further investigation, given the central theme of our collection. In his detailed analysis of the novel’s numerous points of contact with crime fiction, Eric Wilson notes several specific tropes that we can unpack further, including aspects of the ‘procedural,’ the ‘serial killer’ and the ‘femme fatale’ (Wilson, 2016a; see also Wilson, 2016b). These points of contact and resonance offer a useful entry point into the potential of crime fiction in Indonesian literature, and also the ways in which Indonesian literature can extend crime fiction in different directions.

In Eka Kurniawan’s own words, Man Tiger indeed deliberately sets out to play with the conventions of crime fiction, and he explains that ‘it’s a lot about the psychology behind murder. What makes a man kill?’ According to Eka, ‘traditional crime fiction is always chasing after the murderer, but I wanted to reveal him first. Sometimes the motive is more important than who did it. That’s where the real story is’ (Salleh, 2016). Elsewhere, he has described his other novel Beauty is a Wound primarily as a horror story:

My first intention was to write a ghost story, and you can still read Beauty Is a Wound in that way. It’s the story of a ghost’s vengeance, and I had to provide the background for the ghost’s revenge. That’s how the novel became what it is now. I don’t mind if people read the novel as a metaphor for Indonesia’s troubled history, but first and foremost it’s a ghost story (cited in Lewinsky, 2015).

His experimentation with these two genres, crime and horror, is highly significant in the Indonesian context. I suggest that, perhaps more than any of the other factors, it is arguably the horror and crime elements in Eka Kurniawan’s work that made it difficult for his novels to be accepted as serious literature in Indonesia, as crime and horror have never been genres seen to have ‘literary’ merit; they are firmly excluded from national canons. The reputation of horror cinema at the time Eka was writing would not have helped, as throughout the 2000s Indonesian horror films were, according to most viewers, synonymous with trashy soft-core pornography (Downes, 2015). The connotations of different genres, and the kinds of moral panic that they can provoke, is an important consideration for this special issue as a whole, and is an area in which many of the papers collected here overlap. In the case of Eka Kurniawan, it was not until his translated work was heralded as ‘magical realism’ or an ‘innovative blend’ of mythology, history, and family saga, that some of the horror and crime stigma began to dissipate within the Indonesian market.

Local Impacts of ‘Global Success’

Unsurprisingly, the general tone of Indonesian media coverage of Eka Kurniawan and his work shifted somewhat following his acclaim in international literary circuits. His novels were given more time in the popular press, and many common tropes from the English-language profiles were redeployed in Indonesian. Ultimately however, local Indonesian coverage continues to display distinctly different underlying concerns and preoccupations.

Much of the more recent coverage in Indonesia focuses not so much on the novels themselves, but rather on Eka Kurniawan’s international fame and success. In the Jakarta Globe,
Eka is introduced as: ‘Known for his masterful blend of magical realism as well as critical take on the darker side of Indonesian history, the 39-year-old writer is now widely perceived as a leading figure who best represents the country’s contemporary literary scene’ (Novito, 2015). Articles sport titles like ‘Eka Kurniawan’s worldwide reach,’ ‘Eka Kurniawan breaks through in the Netherlands,’ and interviewers ask questions such as ‘tell us how you have been able to break into the international market?’ and ‘what is the secret of your success?’ Reviews are increasingly filled with quotes from international critics (Durohman, 2016b; Triyono, 2016) and lines such as ‘the critically acclaimed novel landed him a reputation as...’ (Perdani, 2015). Such coverage leads us to the question: to what extent is admission into the Indonesian ‘literary canon’ influenced by external factors such as international acclaim? Eka himself jokes about his sudden popularity in Indonesia, more than a decade after the initial release of his works there:

According to my publisher, this year my book sales have gone up exponentially. I suppose this is a good thing. But, at the same time it is not that great a feeling. Because honestly, my books are over a decade old. So, where were all our readers before now? (cited in Hilmi, 2015).

In a telling response to the question, ‘in the US press, you’re hailed as the crown prince of Indonesian literature, successor to Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Is the same thing said in Indonesia?’ Eka responds, ‘No. In Indonesia everyone knows there are other authors that might be even better. If there are Indonesians who tell you differently, believe me, they’re persuaded by American articles’ (Ruddock, 2015). Given the spike in books sales, however, it would seem that many have indeed been ‘persuaded’ by the phenomenon of his international acclaim.

One particularly notable aspect of the more recent media coverage has been the increase in profiles or interviews that attempt to explain or excuse the ‘vulgarity’ of Eka Kurniawan’s work, still such a central concern to Indonesian reviewers. ‘That’s Eka, wild but not cheap or trashy, although he often exploits sexuality,’ writes one interviewer (Triyono, 2016). Another takes great pains to explain that the reason Eka’s work appears vulgar at times is simply because, through no fault of his own, he had limited literary influences to draw upon:

Throughout Eka’s youth, he never once encountered canonical Indonesian literature, like the novels of Y.B. Mangunwijaya, Ahmad Tohari, or Umar Kayam. He could only get access to the cheap pulp fiction that circulated in his local area. The works of Asmaraman S. Kho Ping Hoo, Fredy Siswanto, Abdullah Harahap, Bastian Tito, and Enny Arrow, which would have of course been banned at school (Durohman, 2016a).

The implication here is that Eka Kurniawan could have potentially channelled his natural talent into higher quality literature, if only he had been exposed to such influences while growing up. From the above, we can chart a sometimes-uncomfortable attempt to reconcile ‘international literary acclaim’ and ‘trashy pornographic influences’ in Eka’s work. This is also evident when charting the evolution of the novels’ cover art over the past decade. The early versions of Cantik itu Luka and Lelaki Harimau display overt visual markers of pulp fiction: blood, lurid colours, and semi-naked women. Following the release of Beauty is a Wound and Man Tiger and their acclaim in the global literary press, the Indonesian language versions were re-released, this time featuring a more subdued colour palate and images more befitting of ‘historical fiction,’ such as a demure woman in old-fashioned clothing for Cantik itu Luka, and in the case of Lelaki Harimau, a stylised tiger head.
As I have shown, there are important interactions between the two sets of ‘stories’ circulating about Eka Kurniawan and his work in both the local and international media. However, despite the increasing convergence towards overall praise for Eka’s work in these two spaces, there continue to be some divergent concerns and obvious blind spots. For instance, descriptions of the English-language translations tend to focus on ‘traditional myth’ influences, while those looking at the original Indonesian-language novels focus on ‘trashy pornography’ influences. English language reviews are struck by the predominance of violence in Eka Kurniawan’s sweeping histories, and pass over graphic sex scenes, while Indonesian language reviews are struck by the sex scenes but not by the graphic violence. Eka describes how before the novel was published in English, ‘there was almost no discussion’ about all the violence and rape in *Cantik itu Luka*:

I did a lot of research while I was writing my novel. I investigated and re-analysed Indonesian history—from what happened in the late colonial period, during the revolution of independence, at the communist massacres in 1965, through the peak of Suharto’s power. It is inevitable to uncover everything; the sequence of events reveals so much violence. I am presenting it in the novel. Indonesian readers might not be surprised by it, since they knew it happened. But I also understand that when the book is published in English, many will think there is so much violence in my novels. And I can say, yes, indeed, there is (cited in Nair, 2016).

In other words, the banal familiarity of violence in Indonesian history makes it unremarkable, and perhaps, by extension, not considered a worthy topic of serious ‘literature’ in a domestic context. In contrast, the shock value of this unknown violence for a global audience may be one of the reasons Eka Kurniawan’s work made such an impact in the English-language literary scene. This contrast points the underlying different perspectives that we need to take into account when reading and assessing literature in different national contexts.

**Conclusion**

Charting the rise of Eka Kurniawan to global fame, after the relatively lacklustre early reception of his work in Indonesia, raises several important sets of related issues, many of which deserve further specific attention in their own right. For instance, there remains plenty of scope for further detailed research on the power relations of international literary awards, and the value and connotations assigned to different languages during international translation processes. Given the purposes of this special issue, with its focus on crime fiction, questions around the politics of genre and the power of labels have been most salient and revealing. When we read and assess genre fiction in different cultural contexts, often it is not only languages that get translated, but the meanings and connotations of certain genres as a whole. When read in Indonesian language, the ‘classic’ generic elements of crime fiction apparent in Eka Kurniawan’s work seemed to become subsumed by markers of horror, pornography, and pulp fiction. The subsequent English translation of *Man Tiger*, in contrast, was frequently couched as a murder mystery, but also burdened with the somewhat exoticising labels of ‘local mythology’ and ‘magical realism.’ Furthermore, while genre fluidity and ambiguity proved to be a huge barrier in Eka Kurniawan’s initial quest to be published in Indonesia, it is these same qualities of genre experimentation that earned him vast amounts of praise in the English-speaking literary scene. In both these cases, the labels used to describe Eka Kurniawan’s novels are not neutral, but rather they reflect the particular socio-political and historical contexts in which the reviews are being written. In this article, I have demonstrated the complex interactions between these
different contexts, by tracing the overarching story arc of how Eka Kurniawan and his work came to be both ‘lost’ and ‘found’ in translation.

References


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