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# Queering Eriko: Trans Identity, Address, and Paratext in Two Indonesian Translations of Yoshimoto's *Kitchen*

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**Abstract**

*Eriko, the trans woman who raises Yuichi Tanabe in Banana Yoshimoto's* Kitchen*, is portrayed with warmth and without pathology. In Indonesian, a language without grammatical gender, her identity must be rebuilt through address forms, kinship terms, labels, and the book's packaging. This article compares the two Indonesian translations of* Kitchen*, Dewi Anggraeni's 2009 edition from Penerbit KPG and Ribeka Ota's 2021 edition from Penerbit Haru, with three objectives: to describe how each translation renders the resources that construct Eriko's trans identity, to identify how each edition's paratext presents that identity, and to relate both to each publisher's position. The study is a qualitative comparison of the Japanese source text with both translations. Thirty-two aligned scenes featuring Eriko were coded for address, kinship, gender labels, voice, and queer vocabulary, and the paratexts as flagging, framing, or backgrounding queer content. Haru keeps the source's honorific* Eriko-san *and loanword* gay *and turns its neutral "parent" into "mother", but its cover and blurb leave Eriko's trans identity unmentioned. KPG drops the honorifics, introduces* Mama *and* Papa*, absent from the source, renders queer references in clinical Indonesian, and names Eriko on its back cover as a transsexual woman who is "in essence" Yuichi's father. Neither edition is uniformly affirming; each distributes affirming and attenuating choices across textual levels. In a genderless target language, address terms, kinship terms, and paratext carry the gendering work that pronouns perform elsewhere, and these are the points at which translators and editors can handle trans characters with care.*

***Keywords**: paratext; queer translation; trans identity; Japanese–Indonesian translation*

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## Introduction

Early in Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* (1988), the orphaned narrator Mikage Sakurai meets the woman who will become her unlikely host. Eriko is beautiful, immaculately styled, and present in the apartment as Yuichi's mother. A few pages later, Yuichi explains that Eriko is also his father: after the death of Yuichi's biological mother, the parent who had been his father transitioned to live as a woman, raised Yuichi alone, and now runs a gay bar. The disclosure carries no melodrama and no invitation to judgment; she is presented simply as who she is. This article refers to Eriko with she/her throughout, a choice explained in the Methodology.

*Trans*, the concept that organizes this article, is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression departs from the sex assigned to them at birth, and translation is one of the processes through which such identities are named, recognized, or misrecognized across languages (Gramling & Dutta, 2016; Roy, 2016). For a literary character, trans identity is assembled from textual resources: the names and address forms used for her, the labels attached to her, the temporal framing of her history, her own voice, and the thresholds through which readers first meet her (Rose, 2016). Eriko's understated portrayal has invited queer readings of the novel (Rodrigues, 2020), and each of these resources must be recoded when the text crosses into a new linguistic and publishing ecology.

The recoding is especially fraught in Indonesian, a genderless language. Its third-person pronouns *dia* and *ia* ('he, she') carry no gender. However, corpus evidence shows that they acquire masculine or feminine readings from context (Hernina & Puspitasari, 2024), and studies of other genderless languages report a male bias in how nominally neutral pronouns are understood (Renström et al., 2023). Gender is therefore marked lexically, in nouns such as *perempuan* ('woman') and *laki-laki* ('man') and in kinship and address terms such as *ibu* ('mother; Mrs.') and *bapak* ('father; Mr.'). Indonesian also has a contested vocabulary for trans women, including *waria*, *banci*, *bencong*, *transeksual*, and *transpuan*, which the official dictionary defines in markedly different ways (see Methodology).

Two complete Indonesian translations of *Kitchen* exist. The first, by Dewi Anggraeni, appeared from Penerbit KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia) in 2009, seven years before the anti-LGBT moral panic that erupted in Indonesia in early 2016 (Rodríguez & Murtagh, 2022; Thajib, 2022). Sexual and gender minorities were already policed, notably under the 2008 Pornography Law (Hegarty, 2022). However, public knowledge of trans lives was shaped above all by *waria* communities and by HIV programs that, from the late 1980s, made *waria* a "key population" (Hegarty et al., 2025). The second, by Ribeka Ota, appeared from Penerbit Haru in 2021, after five years of campaigns that cast LGBT people as a threat to national values (Thajib, 2022; Wijaya, 2022). The same period brought new visibility: young activists organized through social media (Ridwan & Wu, 2018), queer knowledge circulated through teaching initiatives outside academic institutions (Wijaya, 2025), and Norman Erikson Pasaribu's stories of queer Indonesian lives, translated into English as *Happy Stories, Mostly*, were longlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize (F. Lee, 2023).

Indonesian discourse on trans identity has two intersecting genealogies. The first is the category of *waria*, an acronym of *wanita* ('woman') and *pria* ('man'): in Jakarta, *waria* communities received the patronage of Governor Ali Sadikin from 1968 (Al Fikri, 2024), and state medical and legal experts defined transgender femininity between 1968 and 1978 (Hegarty, 2019). The second is the transnational vocabulary of *transgender*, *gay*, and *transpuan* ('trans woman'), which circulates through media markets, NGO discourse, and the feminist press (Hegarty, 2017; Iswarini, 2021; Wijaya, 2025). Borrowed terms can signal cosmopolitan belonging, yet rendering local categories in global terms can also displace the meanings that communities attach to them, as Roy (2016) shows for *hijra* in India and Bao (2021) for the competing Chinese renderings of "queer". Indonesian translators of trans content thus face a choice that is at once linguistic, political, and generational.

Queer translation studies treats translation as a site at which queer identities are reconstructed, foregrounded, attenuated, or erased (Baldo et al., 2021), with a vocabulary indebted to feminist translation studies. Godard (1990) introduced *womanhandling* for a feminist practice in which the translator displays, rather than conceals, her manipulation of the text in order to make women's meanings visible, a practice that Muñiz (2018) traces in a 1917 Spanish translation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Badenes (2024) adapts the term as *queerhandling*, the affirmation of a text's queer difference through translatorial intervention, within a model of how translations affirm, attenuate, or efface queer content in body text and paratext. Studies of gender-fair translation document misgendering and erasure in renderings of non-binary people (Lardelli, 2024; Lardelli & Gromann, 2023; Lardelli et al., 2025), and machine translation defaults to masculine forms when the source leaves gender unmarked (Savoldi et al., 2021). In Asian contexts, scholars have traced how queer literature and theory travel through translators, publishers, and paratexts (Bao, 2021; Chen, 2023; M.-C. Lee, 2021). For Indonesian, Wahyuningsih (2023) shows how a translator's habitus steers domesticating and foreignizing choices, and RS (2018) examines Japanese adverbs in the KPG *Kitchen*. None of these studies follows a trans character from Japanese into a genderless language, and none compares the two Indonesian renderings of the novel against the Japanese source.

This article compares how the two Indonesian translations construct Eriko's trans identity on three levels: the textual surface, measured against the Japanese source text; the paratext; and the publishing institution. Three research questions guide the inquiry: (1) How does each translation render, relative to the Japanese source, the resources through which Eriko's trans identity is constructed, namely address and kinship terms, gender labels, Eriko's own voice, and queer vocabulary? (2) How do the paratextual elements of each edition (covers, blurbs, front and back matter, glossary, and footnotes) flag, frame, or background Eriko's trans identity? (3) How do these choices relate to the positions of the two publishers in the Indonesian field of translated literature, as visible in the books themselves?

The study has three implications. For queer translation studies, it tests queerhandling in a genderless target language, where the work of gendering falls on address terms, kinship terms, and vocabulary rather than on pronouns, and it extends a subfield that has worked mainly with European language pairs. For Indonesian translation studies, it offers a queer-political frame alongside the prevailing analysis of techniques and ideology. For translators and editors, it identifies where decisions about a trans character are made, often unrecognized: honorifics, kinship terms, narratorial labels, and blurbs.

## Methodology

### 1. Research Design and Corpus

The study is a qualitative, product-oriented comparison of one source text and two target texts. The Japanese source text (ST) serves as the baseline: each Indonesian rendering is compared first with the ST and only then with the other translation, so that a difference between the two can be traced to a shift in one of them.

The ST is the Gentōsha e-book of *Kitchin* (Yoshimoto, 1988/2013), which carries the afterword and cover of the 2002 Shinchōsha paperback, the edition named in the Haru colophon. The 27 distinct Japanese sentences that RS (2018) aligns with the KPG translation all occur in it, one with apparent transcription errors. Because the e-book has no fixed pagination, ST passages are located by novella and paragraph number, counting each line of dialogue as one paragraph: K227 is paragraph 227 of *Kitchen*, and M73 is paragraph 73 of *Mangetsu*.

The target texts are the KPG edition (Yoshimoto, 1988/2009), translated by Dewi Anggraeni, and the Haru edition (Yoshimoto, 1988/2021), translated by Ribeka Ota. Both were translated directly from Japanese: Haru names its Shinchōsha source in the colophon, and KPG gives the original title as *Kitchin* and

marks Japanese words in its footnotes with "(Jp)" (pp. 12, 81). KPG and Haru page numbers refer to these editions.

The analysis covers the two Eriko narratives, *Kitchen* and its sequel *Mangetsu* (Indonesian *Bulan Purnama*, 'Full Moon'); the third novella, *Moonlight Shadow*, in which Eriko does not appear, is excluded. Table 1 summarizes the corpus, including the paratexts analyzed.

**Table 1**
*Corpus of the Study*

| Item | ST | KPG edition | Haru edition |
|---|---|---|---|
| Publisher and printing | Gentōsha, 2013 (e-book) | Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009 (first printing) | Penerbit Haru, 2021 (fourth printing, 2022) |
| Translator | n/a | Dewi Anggraeni | Ribeka Ota |
| *Kitchen*; *Mangetsu* | paras. K1–K549; M1–M653 | pp. 1–56; pp. 57–142 | pp. 13–70; pp. 71–160 |
| Paratexts | Not analyzed | Covers, colophon, 20 footnotes, afterword, related titles | Covers, colophon, publisher's essay, author's note, glossary, reader notice |

## 2. Terminology and Pronouns

This article uses she/her for Eriko throughout, including for the years before her transition, for three reasons. The ST narrator refers to Eriko with the feminine pronoun 彼女 (*kanojo*, 'she') both before and after the disclosure of her history (e.g., K89, K206, K334); Eriko identifies herself as a woman and as Yuichi's mother in her letter (M73); and misgendering, that is, referring to a trans person by the gender assigned at birth, can function as anti-trans aggression (Simpson & Dewaele, 2019) and is treated in research on gender-fair translation as a harm to be avoided (Lardelli, 2024; Lardelli & Gromann, 2023). Her former name, Yuji, appears only in quotations, and the English back-translations render Indonesian *dia* and *ia* as *she* for Eriko, although the Indonesian does not mark gender.

*Trans woman* is the article's analytic term; Indonesian words for trans women are object-language items whose dictionary status matters because translators consult the dictionary. KBBI VI Daring, the official online dictionary, registers all of them (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, n.d.). It defines *waria*, an acronym of *wanita pria*, as 'a man who has the nature and behavior of a woman' or 'the feelings of a woman', and *banci*, without a usage label, as 'a man who behaves and dresses as a woman'; it marks *bencong* as *kasar* ('coarse') and glosses it as *banci*. *Transeksual* is 'a person who emotionally and psychologically wishes to live … like the opposite sex', particularly after surgery, and *transpuan*, an acronym of *transgender perempuan*, is 'a person born with male reproductive organs who identifies as a woman', with *banci*, *bencong*, *waria*, and *wadam* listed as its synonyms. The definitions nevertheless differ. Only *bencong* is flagged as coarse; *banci*, *bencong*, and *waria* define their referent as a man, *transeksual* by a wish to live as the opposite sex, and *transpuan* alone by self-identification as a woman, so a translator chooses between male-anchored and self-identifying descriptions.

## 3. Analytic Procedure

The analysis proceeds in three layers. In the textual layer, every passage in which Eriko appears, speaks, or is spoken about was located in the ST and both translations, yielding 32 aligned scenes (see Appendix). Each reference to Eriko's gender, history, workplace, or relationships was coded on four axes: (a) address and kinship terms, including Japanese honorifics; (b) gender labels and the adverbs of time or truth attached to them, such as *dulu* ('formerly') and *sebenarnya* ('in truth'); (c) Eriko's voice, namely her self-reference, politeness level, and sentence-final particles; and (d) queer vocabulary and the naming of

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her workplace. Each rendering was classified against the ST as retention, omission, addition, substitution, specification (more explicit or more gendered), or generalization (less explicit or less gendered). Honorifics, kinship terms, and particles were counted in the digitized texts and checked manually.

In the paratextual layer, each element was analyzed with Genette's (1997) categories as adapted to translation by Batchelor (2018) and extended to visual and media paratexts (Alblooshi et al., 2025; Bucaria & Batchelor, 2023), and it received one of three codes. An element *flags* Eriko's trans identity or the novel's queer content when it names that content explicitly, as a blurb that calls a character transsexual does. It *frames* that content when it supplies a lens for reading it without naming it, as a preface that promises emotional validation does. It *backgrounds* that content when it occupies a position where the content could be named but is not, so that readers first meet it in the body text.

In the institutional layer, the findings are related to the position of each publisher in the field of translated literature, following Bourdieusian accounts of how publishers' positions shape what crosses borders and in what form (Marin-Lacarta, 2019; Sapiro, 2016; Wahyuningsih, 2023). As no correspondence with the publishers or translators took place, the evidence is restricted to what the books display (colophons, imprint marks, lists of titles, prefaces, and reader notices) and to published research on Haru's readership (Pratidina, 2020), and claims about editorial intention are avoided. All English renderings of Japanese and Indonesian material are the author's literal back-translations.

## Results and Discussion

Each subsection below sets the patterns against the ST and states how they shape Eriko's trans identity, and Table 3 summarizes them.

### 1. Address and Kinship

The ST names Eriko with the honorific *-san* in dialogue and in Mikage's narration alike, 59 times in all, as in example (1).

**(1a) ST, K227.** えり子さんは夜仕事なので
'since Eriko-san worked at night'

**(1b) KPG, p. 28.** *sementara Eriko bekerja malam hari*
'while Eriko worked at night'

**(1c) Haru, p. 39.** *sementara Eriko-san bekerja pada malam hari*
'while Eriko-san worked at night'

Haru retains the honorific: *Eriko-san* occurs 71 times, alongside *Tanabe-kun* (14 times), *Mikage-chan* and *Mikage-san* (7 each), and *Chika-chan* (21), and its four instances of bare *Eriko* match the ST's bare name (K90, K122, M77, M412). KPG omits the honorific, using bare *Eriko* 91 times. Its single *Eriko-san*, in *"Eriko-san sudah kenyang asam-garam ya"* ('Eriko-san has had her fill of salt and sourness, hasn't she', that is, 'has seen much of life'; p. 53), renders an ST line that names no one (K532). Haru's retention resembles the practice, documented for Indonesian manga, of keeping Japanese cultural terms (Idrus, 2021).

This retention shapes Eriko's social position. Japanese *-san* marks respect without marking gender (Oshima, 2023), so the ST lets Mikage honor Eriko without deciding whether to address her as a woman or a man. Indonesian has no neutral honorific for an older person; its respectful options are gendered, as the Haru glossary concedes when it equates *-san* with *ibu* ('mother; Mrs.'), *bapak* ('father; Mr.'), or *kak* ('older sibling'; p. 222). Keeping *-san* thus preserves respect without forcing a choice between maternal and paternal address, whereas KPG's bare *Eriko*, equally neutral in gender, drops the respect. The glossary defines *-chan* only as a form for younger people (p. 221), but between adults it signals intimacy, typically toward women (Oshima, 2023), as in Chika's えりちゃん (*Eri-chan*; M412), which Haru keeps (p. 131) and KPG renders as *Eriko* (p. 115).

The ST names Eriko as a mother, 母親 (*hahaoya*) in Yuichi's speech and お母さん (*okāsan*) in Mikage's narration; paternal terms occur only in Yuichi's rhetorical question whether anyone could call her 父さん (*tōsan*,

'Dad'; K120) and in his words after her death (M9, M55), and the ST has no ママ (*mama*) or パパ (*papa*). KPG's four uses of *Mama* for Eriko are therefore additions or substitutions. Twice KPG adds it where Yuichi uses no term of address, as in *"Mama sudah tua, jadi percuma saja"* ('Mama's old already, so it's useless'; p. 40) for 「もう歳だから無駄だよ。」 ('It's useless, [you are] too old'; K371), where Haru adds *Ibu* ('Mother'; p. 52). Japanese can leave the addressee unexpressed, whereas Indonesian speakers often address a person with a kinship term in place of a second-person pronoun (Foster & Welsh, 2023). Hence, an explicit address requires a gendered choice. Reporting her death, Yuichi corrects himself, 「母親……ああ、父親って言うべきかあ。」 ('Mother… ah, I guess I should say father'; M9). Haru keeps the referential nouns, *"Ibuku… eh, semestinya disebut ayahku, ya"* ('My mother… uh, she should be called my father, right'; p. 73), whereas KPG turns them into terms of address, *"Mama…. Ah, seharusnya aku menyebut dia Papa"* ('Mama…. Ah, I should call her Papa'; p. 58).

The ST's gender-neutral 親子 (*oyako*, 'parent and child') reveals a tendency of Haru's own. Where Mikage watches an ordinary 親子 conversation (K373), KPG has *orangtua dan anak* ('parent and child'; p. 40) and Haru *ibu dan anak* ('mother and child'; p. 52), and the contrast recurs at K144 and M399. Haru also renders Yuichi's idiom 女手ひとつで ('single-handedly, as a woman'; K137) as *sebagai seorang ibu tunggal* ('as a single mother'; p. 29), where KPG's literal *tangan perempuan* ('a woman's hand'; p. 18) loses the idiom. KPG thus keeps the ST's neutral kinship nouns but introduces *Mama* and *Papa*, whereas Haru specifies that kinship as motherhood.

## 2. Disclosure and Narration: Truth, Time, and the Gendered Head

Example (2) gives the core of the disclosure scene.

> **(2a) ST, K117, K123.** 「あの人、男なんだよ。」…「うそ。本当は雄司っていうみたい。」
>
> '"That person is a man, you see." …
> "No way. In truth it seems to be Yūji."'
>
> **(2b) KPG, pp. 16–17.** *"… dia itu laki-laki." … "Bukan. Sebenarnya Yuji."*
> '"… she is a man." … "No. Actually it is Yuji."'
>
> **(2c) Haru, p. 27.** *"Dia itu laki-laki." … "Bohong. Nama aslinya Yuji."*
> '"She is a man." … "A lie. Her real name is Yuji."'

Both translations keep the ST's present-tense *otoko nan da yo* ('is a man, you see') and its adverb of truth *hontō wa* ('in truth'), KPG as *sebenarnya* and Haru as *nama aslinya* ('her real name'), and both drop the hedge *mitai* ('it seems'). Neither can carry the name itself: the character 雄 ('male') in 雄司 (*Yūji*) also opens 雄一 (*Yūichi*), inscribing a masculine lineage in the names of father and son.

Beyond this scene, the ST frames Eriko's maleness in two ways. Eriko's own accounts are temporal, as in あたしまだ男だったわ ('I was still a man'; M362), whereas Mikage's narration twice uses the epistemic 実は (*jitsu wa*, 'in fact'), for Eriko as Yuichi's 実は男であるお母さん ('mother, who is in fact a man'; M25) and for her staff (M26). Where Yuichi says that Eriko was popular 男だった頃でも ('even back when she was a man'; K135), both translations insert *masih* ('still'; KPG, p. 18; Haru, p. 28), extending Eriko's own stage model to Yuichi's report. At M25, KPG keeps the truth frame, *ibunya yang sebenarnya seorang laki-laki* ('his mother, who was in truth a man'; p. 60), whereas Haru substitutes a temporal one, *ibunya yang dulunya laki-laki* ('his mother, who used to be a man'; p. 74), aligning Mikage's narration with Eriko's account. At M271, where the ST has the simple past 男だった ('was a man'), both add a frame of revelation: KPG *yang ternyata laki-laki* ('who turned out to be a man'; p. 98) and Haru *yang sebenarnya laki-laki* ('who was in truth a man'; p. 113). *Sebenarnya* and *ternyata* treat Eriko's maleness as a hidden truth revealed, *dulunya* as a stage that has passed.

Punctuation adds a further layer. KPG places *perempuan* ('woman') in scare quotes three times for trans women. Only one has a

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basis in the ST: Mikage's hedge on her own pronoun for Chika, 彼女、とはいうが ('I say "she", but'; M384), which KPG moves to a noun, *bisa disebut 'perempuan'* ('could be called a "woman"'; p. 111), and Haru to Chika's name, *nama Chika-chan pas untuk cewek* ('the name Chika-chan suits a girl'; p. 127). The other two are KPG's own: where the ST has plain 彼女 ('she') for Eriko (K334) and 女の子たち ('the girls') for her staff (M27), KPG writes the *'perempuan'* who lives by impulse (p. 37) and the *'perempuan-perempuan'* from the bar (p. 61), and Haru uses no quotation marks (pp. 49, 75). Scare quotes hold a word at a distance, so KPG twice questions, without warrant in the ST, the womanhood that its narration elsewhere grants.

Example (3) shows the ST's most compact statement of Eriko's identity, which uses both gendered pronouns.

> **(3a) ST, K206.** 彼であるところの彼女は、にこにこしていた。よくTVで観るNYのゲイたちの、あの気弱な笑顔に似てはいた。
> 'She, who is he, was smiling. It did resemble that timid smile of the gays of NY one often sees on TV.'
>
> **(3b) KPG, p. 24.** *Perempuan yang punya sisi laki-laki itu menyunggingkan senyum. Senyum simpulnya mirip senyum para pria homoseksual dari New York yang biasa kulihat di televisi.*
> 'That woman with a male side smiled. Her faint smile resembled that of the homosexual men from New York I often saw on television.'
>
> **(3c) Haru, p. 36.** *Ayah—yang adalah ibunya itu—tersenyum hangat. Memang mirip juga dengan senyum malu-malu para* gay *di NY yang sering kulihat di TV.*
> 'The father, who was his mother, smiled warmly. It did resemble the shy smile of the gays in NY that I often saw on TV.'

In the ST, feminine *kanojo* ('she') is the grammatical head and masculine *kare* ('he') sits in the modifying clause: Eriko is a woman of whom maleness is predicated. KPG keeps the feminine head and turns *kare* into *sisi laki-laki* ('a male side'), an inner aspect of a woman. Haru converts the pronouns into kinship terms and reverses them, making *Ayah* ('father') the head, as it does again with Yuichi's 父親である母親 ('the mother who was [my] father'; M55), rendered *ayahku sekaligus ibuku* ('my father and also my mother'; p. 80), where KPG keeps the maternal head, *ibu yang sekaligus ayahku* (p. 66). Here KPG stays closer to the ST, and Haru foregrounds paternity. The translations thus locate Eriko's maleness as past (*masih*, *dulunya*), as hidden truth (*sebenarnya*, *ternyata*), or as an inner side (*sisi laki-laki*), giving her transition a history, a secret, or a psychology.

## 3. Eriko's Voice in a Genderless Language

Eriko's speech in the ST is gendered by grammar. She refers to herself with あたし (*atashi*, 'I'), a colloquial form associated with women. She uses sentence-final forms traditionally associated with women's speech (Wang, 2023), such as *no yo* in いいのよ ('it's fine'; K211) and *yo ne* in 「女になるのも大変よね」 ('Becoming a woman is hard too, isn't it'; K527). Indonesian has no gendered slot for these forms, and neither translation invents one: the second becomes *"Susah ya, jadi perempuan"* ('It's hard, isn't it, being a woman'; KPG, p. 53) and *"Repot juga, ya, menjadi perempuan"* ('It's troublesome too, isn't it, becoming a woman'; Haru, p. 66), where only Haru keeps *mo* ('too') and renders *naru* ('become') with unambiguous *menjadi*, so that womanhood remains something achieved. The ST's Eriko also introduces herself formally, as 雄一の母 ('Yuichi's mother') and with humble *mōshimasu* (K90); Haru keeps the register with formal *saya* ('I'), *"Saya ibu Yuichi. Nama saya Eriko"* (p. 25), whereas KPG's Eriko opens with *"Hai"* and *"Aku Eriko, ibu Yuichi"* ('Hi … I'm Eriko, Yuichi's mother'; p. 14). What survives of her feminine voice is informality and calibrated politeness rather than grammar.

The fullest statement of her voice is the letter to Yuichi read after her death, which opens with a remark on language: Eriko had

tried to write it 「きちんと男言葉で」 ('properly in men's language'; M73) but was too embarrassed to go on. KPG keeps *bahasa laki-laki* ('men's language'; p. 69), a register that Indonesian lacks, whereas Haru weakens it to *bahasa yang sedikit maskulin* ('a slightly masculine language'; p. 83). Example (4) gives the realization that follows.

> **(4a) ST, M73.** まだどこかに男の自分が、本当の自分がある、これは役割よって思ってたのに。でも、もう心身共に女、名実共に母ね。
> '[I] had thought that somewhere there was still my male self, my true self, and that this was a role. But now [I am] a woman in body and mind, a mother in name and in fact.'
>
> **(4b) KPG, p. 69.** *... meski sudah lama jadi perempuan tetap saja sisi laki-laki di dalam diriku masih ada. Namun rupanya hati dan tubuhku adalah hati dan tubuh perempuan, panggilanku pun 'Mama.'*
> '... although I had long been a woman, the male side in me was still there. But it seems my heart and body are a woman's, and even what I am called is "Mama."'
>
> **(4c) Haru, p. 83.** *Padahal kukira di suatu tempat masih ada diriku yang laki-laki, diriku yang sesungguhnya, ... dan menganggap ini sekadar peranan saja. Namun, ternyata baik raga maupun jiwaku sudah jadi perempuan, tidak hanya nama, tetapi juga kenyataan, aku adalah ibumu.*
> 'Yet I thought that somewhere there was still my male self, my true self, ... and that this was merely a role. But it turns out that my body and soul have both become a woman's; not only in name but also in reality, I am your mother.'

Haru retains each element of the ST: the male self, the 'true self' (本当の自分), the role, and the double formula 'a woman in body and mind, a mother in name and in fact', which it specifies as *ibumu* ('your mother'). KPG omits the 'true self', turning it into a residual *sisi laki-laki* ('male side'), and keeps only the name in 'name and fact', confirming her motherhood by what she is called, *Mama*. Haru's Eriko thus overturns a male "true self," as the ST does, whereas KPG finds a female essence with a male remainder. Shortly before, Eriko says that she has lived 体を張って (*karada o hatte*, 'staking herself'); KPG's word-for-word *dengan menggunakan tubuhku* ('by using my body'; p. 69) can be read as using the body for gain, a connotation absent from Haru's *mempertaruhkan jiwa dan ragaku* ('staking my soul and body'; p. 83).

## 4. Queer Vocabulary and the Naming of the Workplace

The ST's queer vocabulary is itself borrowed: the smile in example (3) is compared to that of *NY no gei-tachi* ('the gays of NY'), with ゲイ (*gei*) a katakana loan from English, and Eriko works at a ゲイバー (*gei bā*, 'gay bar'; M2). Haru retains both loans as italicized *gay* and *gay bar* (pp. 36, 71). KPG substitutes a formal, quasi-clinical paraphrase: *para pria homoseksual dari New York* ('the homosexual men from New York'; p. 24) and *bar untuk kaum homoseksual* ('a bar for homosexuals'; p. 57). Neither conceals the clientele, but measured against the ST, the transnational register of *gay* belongs to the Japanese text, which Haru retains; the marked choice is KPG's, which domesticates queer reference into the idiom of the newsroom and the clinic. What distinguishes the two texts at this point is not visibility but the social register through which visibility is achieved.

The workplace follows the same lines. The ST's ordinary word for it is 店 (*mise*, 'shop; establishment'; e.g., K60), which Haru calques as *toko* ('shop'; 21 times), a word unusual for a bar in Indonesian, and KPG specifies as *bar* (16 times) or *kelab (malam)* ('nightclub'; 4 times), making the venue legible as nightlife. When Yuichi says that Eriko opened その筋の店 (*sono suji no mise*, 'a shop of that line'; K137), a euphemism that implies the clientele without naming it, KPG generalizes it to *membeli kelab malam* ('bought a nightclub'; p. 18), whereas Haru makes it explicit as *membuka sebuah toko khusus untuk orang-orang macam itu* ('opened a shop specifically for people like that'; p. 29),

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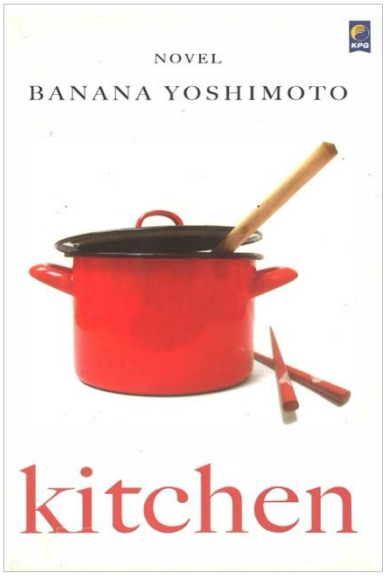
marking the clientele through a distancing deictic.

The only Indonesian-specific category in either translation renders the ST's colloquial オカマ (*okama*). Mikage introduces Chika as the chief of Eriko's shop and やはりオカマの人 ('likewise an *okama*'; M383), which both editions translate as *juga seorang waria* ('also a *waria*'; KPG, p. 111; Haru, p. 127), so that the category reaches Eriko by implication. Neither edition glosses the word or uses *banci*, *bencong*, or *transpuan*, and *transeksual* appears only on KPG's back cover. Both thus place Eriko's professional world within a category that the dictionary defines through maleness, while the vocabulary for Eriko herself remains clinical in KPG and borrowed in Haru.

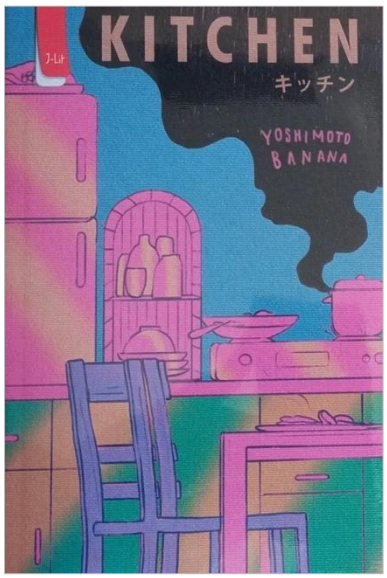
## 5. Paratext: Flagging, Framing, and Backgrounding

The covers (Figure 1) construct different reading horizons, and neither depicts a person.

**Figure 1**
*Front Covers of the Two Indonesian Editions of* Kitchen




(a) Penerbit KPG (2009)




(b) Penerbit Haru (2021)

*Note.* Covers reproduced from Yoshimoto (1988/2009) and Yoshimoto (1988/2021) for the purpose of analysis.

The KPG cover sets a red enamel pot, a wooden spoon, and chopsticks on a white field, labels the book *NOVEL*, and gives the author's name in Western order, presenting *Kitchen* as an international literary novel about domestic life. The Haru cover illustrates an empty kitchen in pink, violet, and teal, with black smoke rising from a pot that can be read as a sign of the loss the blurb announces; its Japanese title キッチン, Japanese name order, and imprint tab J-Lit present the book as Japanese literature within a series. Covers position translated fiction for particular audiences (Alblooshi et al., 2025), but for Eriko the two covers matter for what they share: neither signals queer content, so both background her identity. Table 2 codes the other elements.

**Table 2**
*Coding of Paratextual Elements*

| Element | KPG (2009) | Haru (2021) |
|---|---|---|
| Back-cover blurb | **Flag.** Eriko as *perempuan transeksual yang sejatinya ayah kandung Yuichi* ('a transsexual woman who is in essence Yuichi's biological father') | **Background.** The characters lose *orangtua, kakek dan nenek, kekasih* ('parents, grandparents, lovers'); Eriko is not named |
| Front matter | None beyond the title pages and contents | **Frame.** Publisher's essay *Kuasa Sebuah Cerita* ('The Power of a Story'); author's note on Bali |
| Notes and glossary | **Background.** 20 footnotes on food, objects, and Japanese words; none on gender | **Frame** for address: glossary of food and honorifics (*-san* = *ibu, bapak, atau kak*). **Background** for queer vocabulary: no entry on gender or sexuality |
| Back matter | **Frame.** Author's afterword; related titles by Barnes, Murakami, Akutagawa, Yourcenar, and Tolstoy | **Frame.** Author biography; informal reader notice with a field for a social-media account |

*Note.* Flag = names queer content explicitly; frame = supplies a lens for reading it without naming it; background = could name it but does not.

The blurbs carry the sharpest contrast. KPG's flags Eriko's identity before the book is opened, in clinical and essentializing terms: *transeksual* is the dictionary's surgical term, and *sejatinya ayah kandung* ('in essence the biological father') locates her truth in paternity, the frame that the body text expresses through *sebenarnya*. Haru's blurb lists those whom the characters lose as *orangtua, kakek dan nenek, kekasih*, so Eriko appears, if at all, under gender-neutral *orangtua* ('parents'). A Haru reader therefore meets Eriko as Yuichi's mother and learns of her transition at the same moment as Mikage, which preserves the novel's order of discovery; a KPG reader knows in advance.

The front matter frames rather than names. Haru's essay tells readers that a book can validate whatever they feel and wishes them *selamat memerdekakan perasaan kalian* ('happy liberating your feelings'; pp. 3–5); it names neither Eriko nor gender, yet its vocabulary of hidden feelings set free offers a lens compatible with a queer reading. KPG has no comparable text; its one authorial paratext, Yoshimoto's original afterword (pp. 201–204), says nothing about Indonesia. Taken together, the Haru paratext provides several sites at which Indonesian readers are supplied with framing for the book's cultural code and emotional terrain. In contrast, the KPG paratext leaves the body text to speak for itself, except in the blurb, where it names Eriko's identity outright.

What these differences mean cannot be settled from the books alone. Haru's silence at the threshold may reflect caution after 2016 (Thajib, 2022; Wijaya, 2022) or a wish to preserve the order of discovery, and KPG's explicit blurb the lower salience of LGBT issues in 2009 or a convention of plot-summary blurbs; without dialogue with the publishers, these remain hypotheses.

## 6. Institutional Positions

A publisher's position is legible in its catalog, paratexts, and relation to readers (Marin-Lacarta, 2019). KPG, part of the Kompas Gramedia group, places *Kitchen* in its list of related titles beside Barnes, Murakami, Akutagawa, Yourcenar, and Tolstoy, a canon of world literature, and credits its author photograph to the website of Faber, Yoshimoto's British publisher, which suggests that the packaging drew on the novel's anglophone circulation, a familiar route across borders (Sapiro, 2016). The translation functions as a world-literature import: queer content enters because the ST contains it, is named in the blurb as part of the plot, and is otherwise absorbed into standard Indonesian.

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Haru's essay presents the press as having introduced new Asian authors, among them Akiyoshi Rikako and Minato Kanae, for more than a decade, and *Kitchen* as an influential work brought back (*dihadirkan kembali*) to Indonesia (pp. 3–5). Its J-Lit imprint, Japanese name order, katakana title, and informal reader notice address readers whom research on Haru's Japanese titles describes as young, mostly female, and active in online book communities (Pratidina, 2020); its honorifics, italicized loans, and glossary serve a source-oriented aesthetic that treats Japanese forms as part of the book's value.

## 7. Distributed Queerhandling and Retranslation

Badenes's (2024) model, which spans interventions that affirm, attenuate, or efface queer content, yields a distributed result here (Table 3).

**Table 3**
*Summary of Patterns by Axis*

| Axis | ST baseline | KPG (2009) | Haru (2021) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Address | えり子さん (*Eriko-san*; 59 times) | Omitted: bare *Eriko* (91 times) | Retained: *Eriko-san* (71 times) |
| Kinship | 母親, お母さん; 親子; no *mama* or *papa* | Added or substituted: *Mama*, *Papa*; retained: *orangtua dan anak* | Added: *Ibu*; specified: *ibu dan anak*, *ibu tunggal* |
| Labels | 彼女 as head; 実は in narration; まだ in Eriko's speech | Feminine head (*sisi laki-laki*); *sebenarnya*, *ternyata*; two scare quotes added | Masculine head (*Ayah*) twice; *dulunya*, *sebenarnya* |
| Voice | あたし; *no yo*, *yo ne*; formal self-introduction; 男言葉 ('men's language') | Neutralized; casual *aku*; *bahasa laki-laki* | Neutralized; *saya* to *aku*; *bahasa yang sedikit maskulin* |
| Vocabulary | ゲイ, ゲイバー, 店, オカマ | Substituted: *homoseksual*, *bar*, *kelab malam*, *waria* | Retained or calqued: *gay*, *gay bar*, *toko*; substituted: *waria* |
| Paratext | Not analyzed | Blurb flags (*transeksual*) | Cover and blurb background; essay frames |

*Note.* Frequencies refer to *Kitchen* and *Mangetsu*. ST = source text.

Neither translation performs consistent queerhandling. Affirming and attenuating choices are distributed across axes and, implicitly, across agents: the translator who selects address forms and labels, and the editors and designers of covers and blurbs. KPG practices what may be called *domesticated legibility*: it renders Eriko in standard and clinical Indonesian, replaces the Japanese address system with the family terms *Mama* and *Papa*, and names her trans identity at the threshold in a vocabulary of surgery and paternal truth. Haru practices *retentive discretion*: it keeps the ST's honorifics and loans, names Eriko as a mother where the ST says 'parent', and leaves her identity unannounced at the threshold, yet twice puts the father first. The ST baseline is decisive for both labels: much of Haru's visibility is retention rather than intervention, and several of KPG's most marked choices are additions. Neither position is more queer-affirming in principle. KPG's domestication normalizes Eriko by absorbing her into Indonesian literary speech. At the same time, Haru's retention presents her as part of a recognizable Japanese queer culture that readers are invited to learn about, partly held in place by foreignization (Venuti, 2008); how one weighs the two depends on the political horizon from which one judges.

The comparison also bears on retranslation. The retranslation hypothesis predicts that later translations move closer to the source text (Berman, 1990); whether the hypothesis is Berman's own or a later codification is debated (Peeters & Van Poucke,

2023), but the descriptive pattern remains useful. Because both editions translate directly from Japanese, their divergences are choices made against a common source. Haru is closer to the ST in address and loanwords, which supports the hypothesis for surface features. However, closeness and affirmation vary independently: Haru departs from the ST in a less affirming direction in example (3) and at M55, and in a more affirming one when it turns neutral kinship into motherhood. The motive for the retranslation lies in the publisher's position rather than in the aging of the earlier translation (Van Poucke, 2017). Published after the anti-LGBT campaigns that began in 2016, the later translation keeps the ST's queer forms in the body text but off the cover and blurb, which suggests that under pressure visibility may be relocated from the threshold to the text rather than withdrawn.

## Conclusion

Using the Japanese source text as the baseline, this article has compared how the two Indonesian translations of *Kitchen* construct Eriko's trans identity. On the first research question, Haru retains the ST's honorific *Eriko-san* and its loanword *gay* and specifies its neutral kinship terms as motherhood. In contrast, KPG omits the honorifics, introduces the family terms *Mama* and *Papa*, and substitutes clinical Indonesian for the ST's borrowed queer vocabulary. Both lose the gendered grammar of Eriko's speech and the ST's pairing of feminine and masculine pronouns, so that gendering shifts onto kinship terms and narratorial labels, which the two editions distribute among frames of time, hidden truth, and inner psychology.

On the second question, the paratexts flag, frame, and background Eriko at different points. KPG's cover backgrounds her, but its blurb flags her as a transsexual woman who is "in essence" Yuichi's father. Haru's cover and blurb background her identity, while its publisher's essay and glossary frame the reading through emotional validation and Japanese address. On the third question, these patterns are consistent with the positions visible in the books: a world-literature import from a major media group in KPG's case, and a source-oriented East Asian imprint addressing a community of young readers in Haru's.

The study contributes the notion of distributed queerhandling, in which affirming and attenuating choices are spread across textual levels and agents rather than concentrated in a single strategy. It shows that in a genderless target language, address terms, kinship terms, and paratext carry the gendering work that pronouns perform elsewhere, and it demonstrates the value of the source-text baseline, without which Haru's retention of the ST's loanwords would be mistaken for foreignization and KPG's *Mama* for a rendering of the source. For Indonesian translation studies, it shows that terms of address and kinship, often treated as matters of cultural equivalence, are where a translation decides a character's gender. For translators and editors, it identifies concrete decisions: whether to keep a gender-neutral honorific, which kinship term to use, which adverb to attach to a character's past, and what the blurb should say.

Three limitations point to further research. First, the ST evidence comes from a single e-book edition, so variation between editions should be checked for the passages analyzed. Second, the study analyzes texts and paratexts, not their reception; reader responses on platforms such as Goodreads and Bookstagram would be a valuable next step. Third, without dialogue with the publishers or translators, the institutional analysis rests on what the books display; interviews with the translators, editors, and designers of both editions would test the hypotheses offered here about the covers and blurbs.

In the source text, Eriko is a figure of unusual equanimity: parent, business owner, and, in the end, the victim of a customer's violence. The translator's task is to find an Indonesian textual ecology in which that equanimity can survive, and the two existing translations meet it in different ways, with different political costs and benefits. As the Indonesian market for Japanese fiction continues to expand, further translations, and further trans characters, will test the strategies identified here.

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## Appendix

Table A1 lists the 32 aligned scenes.

**Table A1**
*Aligned Scenes Featuring Eriko*

| No. | Scene | ST | KPG | Haru |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yuichi first mentions his mother | K32, K60 | 7, 11 | 17, 22 |
| 2 | Eriko's entrance and self-introduction | K85–K101 | 14–16 | 24–26 |
| 3 | Disclosure of Eriko's history | K102–K141 | 16–19 | 26–30 |
| 4 | Eriko's impulsiveness | K142–K152 | 19–20 | 30–31 |
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*Note.* ST locations give the novella (K = *Kitchen*; M = *Mangetsu*) and paragraph number; KPG and Haru locations are page numbers.