



Tragedy, Memory, and Suffering: How Indonesian Readers on Goodreads Interpret Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle*

《悲剧、记忆与苦难：印尼读者在 Goodreads 上如何解读余华的《在细雨中呼喊》》

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Abstract: This study investigates how Indonesian readers interpret tragedy, memory, and suffering in Yu Hua's novel *Cries in the Drizzle* (Indonesian translation: *Tangis di Rinai Gerimis*). While Yu Hua is widely read in Indonesia, no prior research has specifically examined Indonesian readers' spontaneous reception of this novel. The study employs a qualitative reader-response approach combined with thematic analysis. Data are collected from 16 self-identified Indonesian reader reviews on the Goodreads platform, selected through purposive sampling based on self-disclosed location or identity. Reviews are analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic coding framework to identify recurring interpretive themes. Three major findings emerge. First, Indonesian readers strongly connect the novel's depiction of family dysfunction and childhood trauma to their own cultural understanding of suffering, often expressing emotional catharsis through words like "cried," "heartbroken," and "sad." Second, readers demonstrate cultural bridging, interpreting the novel's tragedy through both Chinese cultural logic (filial piety, familial duty) and Indonesian local contexts. Third, readers express mixed evaluations, appreciating Yu Hua's literary craftsmanship while critiquing the slow pacing and, in some cases, the Indonesian translation quality. This study concludes that Indonesian readers receive *Cries in the Drizzle* not merely as a foreign literary work but as a text that resonates with universal human experiences of family, memory, and loss. The findings contribute to the limited body of research on the reception of contemporary Chinese literature in Southeast Asia and demonstrate the value of spontaneous online reviews as data for cross-cultural reader-response studies.

Keywords: Yu Hua; *Cries in the Drizzle*; Indonesian readers; reader-response; thematic analysis

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摘要: 本研究旨在探讨印尼读者如何解读余华小说《在细雨中呼喊》（印尼文译本 *Tangis di Rinai Gerimis*）中的悲剧、记忆与苦难主题。尽管余华的作品在印尼广为阅读，但目前尚无研究专门考察印尼读者对这部小说的自发接受情况。研究采用定性读者反应分析与主题分析相结合的方法。数据来源于 Goodreads 平台上 16 位自认印尼读者的评论，通过目的性抽样筛选。评论数据运用 Braun 和 Clarke（2006）的主题分析六步框架进行编码，以识别重复出现的诠释主题。主要发现有三。第一，印尼读者将小说中描绘的家庭功能失调与童年创伤与自身对苦难的文化理解紧密联系，频繁使用“哭了”、“心碎”、“悲伤”等词汇表达情感宣泄。第二，读者展现出文化桥接能力，既从中国文化逻辑（孝道、家庭责任）理解小说的悲剧，也将其与印尼本土语境相联系。第三，读者对小说的评价褒贬不一，既赞赏余华的文学技巧，也批评叙事节奏缓慢以及部分印尼文译本的质量。本研究结论认为，印尼读者并非将《在细雨中呼喊》仅视为外国文学作品，而是将其视为与家庭、记忆和失落等普遍人类经验产生共鸣的文本。本研究为东南亚地区对中国当代文学的接受研究提供了新的实证资料，并展示了自发在线评论作为跨文化读者反应研究数据的价值。

关键词: 余华；《在细雨中呼喊》；印尼读者；读者反应；主题分析

1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine reading a novel that makes you cry not because the plot is melodramatic, but because the pain feels real. That is how many Indonesian readers describe their experience of reading Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle*, published in Indonesian as *Tangis di Rinai Gerimis*. But who exactly is Yu Hua? And why should Indonesian readers — or researchers — care about a Chinese writer who wrote about suffering, memory, and broken families?

Yu Hua is one of the most influential contemporary Chinese writers. His most famous novel, *To Live* (Hidup), has been translated into many languages and widely read in Indonesia. However, *Cries in the Drizzle* is different. It is less known academically, yet it has quietly gathered a small but passionate following on platforms like Goodreads. Some Indonesian readers there have written heartfelt reviews, using words like "cried," "heartbroken," and "trauma." Others admitted they struggled to finish the book because it felt too slow or too dark. These spontaneous responses caught my attention because they reflect real, unsolicited reactions — not those guided by classroom assignments or research questionnaires.

What strikes the author is that no researcher has closely examined these reviews. Previous studies on Yu Hua in Indonesia have focused almost exclusively on *To Live*. For instance, Erwani and Julina (2020; 2024) studied how Chinese language students at the University of North Sumatra responded to *To Live* using structured questionnaires. Their findings indicate that students generally received the novel positively. However, their method relied on elicited responses—students were asked to read the novel and then answer specific questions. This approach differs significantly from analyzing unsolicited reviews written by ordinary readers on their own initiative. To date, no study has specifically analyzed Indonesian readers' spontaneous responses to *Cries in the Drizzle*. This gap is worth addressing for at least two reasons.

First, *Cries in the Drizzle* heavily engages with tragedy, memory, and suffering—themes that may resonate differently across cultures. Second, the availability of spontaneous reviews on Goodreads allows for an understanding of what readers genuinely care about, rather than what researchers assume they should care about. This is particularly important for understanding how Chinese literature travels across borders and reaches readers who do not necessarily share the same cultural background as the author.



Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how Indonesian readers on Goodreads interpret the themes of tragedy, memory, and suffering in Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle*. Specifically, this study aims to identify the emotional responses the novel triggers, how readers connect the story to their own cultural understanding, and what evaluations they make about the novel's literary quality and translation. These three focuses directly reflect the three keywords in the title: tragedy, memory, and suffering.

This study is qualitative in nature. Reader-response theory is used as a general framework, combined with thematic analysis to organize the data. The data come from 16 Goodreads reviews written by self-identified Indonesian readers. It is not claimed that these 16 reviews represent all Indonesian readers. Rather, they are treated as a small but rich case study that can offer insights into how a group of ordinary readers in Indonesia engage with a work of contemporary Chinese literature.

This study is not just about Yu Hua or one novel. It is about a bigger question: When Chinese literature travels to Southeast Asia, how do local readers make sense of it? What do they keep? What do they question? And why does a story about suffering in rural China still make someone in urban Indonesia cry decades later? By answering these questions, I hope to contribute not only to the study of Yu Hua's reception in Indonesia but also to the broader field of cross-cultural reader-response studies, which remains underexplored in the context of Southeast Asian readership of Chinese literature.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design. The goal is not to measure or count, but to understand how Indonesian readers make sense of Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle* in their own words. A qualitative approach is appropriate here because I am exploring meanings, emotions, and interpretations — not testing a hypothesis or generalizing to a large population.

2.1 Research Design

This study combines two approaches: reader-response theory and thematic analysis. Reader-response theory, particularly the work of Iser (1978) and Fish (1980), argues that a text does not have a single fixed meaning. Instead, meaning is created when a reader interacts with the text. Different readers, coming from different cultural backgrounds, may read the same novel very differently. This fits my interest in Indonesian readers specifically because they bring their own cultural expectations, life experiences, and reading habits to a novel originally written in Chinese about Chinese society.

Thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. It is flexible and does not require commitment to a specific theoretical framework, which makes it suitable for exploratory studies like this one. The analysis follows their six-phase guide: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report.

2.2 Data Source

The data come from Goodreads, a social cataloging website where readers post reviews, rate books, and interact with each other. Goodreads was chosen for three reasons. First, reviews are spontaneous — written by readers on their own initiative, not in response to a researcher's questionnaire or classroom assignment. This makes them more natural and



authentic compared to elicited responses. Second, Goodreads allows users to create public profiles, some of which include location or identity information. This makes it possible to identify reviewers who are likely Indonesian. Third, the platform has an active Indonesian user base, though not all Indonesian users write in Indonesian.

I collected reviews of the Indonesian translation of *Cries in the Drizzle*, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2021 under the title *Tangis di Rinai Gerimis*. Only reviews that met the following criteria were included:

- 1) The reviewer self-identified as Indonesian, either by stating their location (e.g., "Jakarta," "Surabaya," "Indonesia") in their profile or by explicitly writing "I am Indonesian" or "as an Indonesian reader" in the review text.
- 2) The review was written in either Indonesian or English (since many Indonesian readers write reviews in English on Goodreads).
- 3) The review contained at least one substantive comment about the novel's content, themes, emotional impact, or translation quality. One-line reviews such as "good book" or "I liked it" were excluded.

A total of 16 reviews met these criteria. This is a small sample, but for a qualitative thematic analysis, sample size is less important than richness of data. Each review was read carefully multiple times, and longer reviews provided several paragraphs of detailed reflection.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework.

Phase 1: Familiarization. I read and re-read all 16 reviews multiple times to get a sense of the overall content. I made notes on recurring words, phrases, and emotions. Words like "cried," "sad," "heartbroken," "slow," and "confused" appeared frequently.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. Each review was examined line by line and assigned codes to meaningful segments. A code is a label that captures the essence of a specific idea or emotion. For example, when a reviewer wrote "I cried at the end," I assigned the code "emotional crying." When another wrote "I don't understand why the father is so cold," I assigned the code "cultural confusion about family roles."

Phase 3: Searching for themes. Related codes were grouped into potential themes. For instance, codes like "emotional crying," "felt sad," "heartbreaking," and "so tragic" were grouped under the theme "emotional catharsis." Codes like "confused about father's behavior," "is this normal in China?" and "different from Indonesian families" were grouped under "cultural bridging or confusion."

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. The themes were checked whether the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Some themes were merged because they overlapped. Others were split because they contained distinct ideas. After this review, three main themes were confirmed.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. Each theme was given a clear name and definition. The three final themes are: (1) Emotional Catharsis — readers expressing strong emotional reactions such as crying, sadness, or heartbreak; (2) Cultural Bridging — readers interpreting the novel's events through both Chinese cultural logic and their own Indonesian context; and (3)



Mixed Evaluations — readers praising Yu Hua's literary skill while criticizing pacing or translation quality.

Phase 6: Writing the report. The findings are presented in Section 3 below, with each theme supported by direct quotes from the reviews.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

All reviews used in this study are publicly available on Goodreads. No private information was accessed. Reviewer usernames are not disclosed in this paper to protect anonymity. Instead, each quote is attributed to a generic label such as "Reader 1" or "R1." Only the year of the review is noted when relevant. Goodreads' terms of service permit the use of public reviews for non-commercial research purposes, provided that user identity is protected.

2.5 Limitations of the Method

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample is small (16 reviews) and cannot be generalized to all Indonesian readers. Second, self-identification as Indonesian on Goodreads cannot be independently verified. Third, Goodreads users tend to be more educated and more comfortable with technology than the general population. Fourth, the analysis is interpretive and depends on the author's reading of the reviews. Different researchers might identify different themes or emphasize different aspects of the data. These limitations are acceptable for an exploratory qualitative study, but they should be kept in mind when reading the findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the thematic analysis of 16 Goodreads reviews written by self-identified Indonesian readers of Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle* (*Tangis di Rinai Gerimis*). Three main themes emerged: (1) Emotional Catharsis, (2) Cultural Bridging, and (3) Mixed Evaluations. Table 1 summarizes these themes.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme	Frequency	Core Pattern	Theoretical Implication
Emotional Catharsis	12/16	Readers cry because of recognition of universal suffering	Tragedy transcends culture
Cultural Bridging	8/16	Confusion about Chinese family norms leads to curiosity, not rejection	Cross-cultural reading as active negotiation
Mixed Evaluations	10/16	Praise for Yu Hua's craft but criticism of pacing and translation	Indonesian readers as critical consumers

3.1 Theme 1: Emotional Catharsis

Twelve out of sixteen readers mentioned crying, feeling heartbroken, or being deeply saddened by the novel. One reader wrote:



"Saya nggak tahu banyak tentang China tahun 1960-an. Tapi saya tahu rasanya jadi anak yang merasa tidak diinginkan. Perasaan itu nggak punya kewarganegaraan." (R6, 2022)

[Translation: *"I don't know much about China in the 1960s. But I know what it feels like to be a child who feels unwanted. That feeling has no nationality."*]

This quote is striking because the reader explicitly acknowledges a lack of historical knowledge about China, yet immediately asserts that the emotion — feeling unwanted — transcends national boundaries. The phrase *"perasaan itu nggak punya kewarganegaraan"* (*"that feeling has no nationality"*) captures the core of this theme. The reader is not claiming to understand China. They are claiming to understand pain.

Another reader wrote:

"Buku ini menghancurkan saya. Bukan karena politik atau sejarah. Tapi karena kesepiannya terasa sangat familiar. Saya tumbuh di rumah yang ramai tapi nggak ada yang benar-benar bicara satu sama lain. Yu Hua menulis masa kecil saya tanpa dia sadari." (R12, 2023)

[Translation: *"This book destroyed me. Not because of politics or history. But because the loneliness felt so familiar. I grew up in a crowded house where no one really talked to each other. Yu Hua wrote my childhood without knowing it."*]

Here, the reader makes an even bolder claim: "Yu Hua wrote my childhood without knowing it." This is not empathy. This is identification. The reader does not see the character as a foreign other. They see the character as themselves. This level of emotional identification suggests that the novel's portrayal of family dysfunction and loneliness resonates across cultures not because readers understand Chinese culture, but because they recognize their own experience of pain.

A third reader expressed a similar sentiment more briefly but just as powerfully:

"Selesai baca buku ini jam 2 pagi dan saya cuma duduk di sana nangis. Saya nggak tahu kenapa ini terasa begitu personal." (R3, 2022)

[Translation: *"I finished this book at 2 AM and I just sat there crying. I don't know why it felt so personal."*]

The reader's admission of not knowing why they cried is revealing. They cannot point to a specific plot point or character. They simply felt something deeply. This suggests that the emotional impact of the novel operates below the level of explicit cultural meaning. Readers cry without fully understanding why — and that, paradoxically, is evidence of the novel's universal emotional power.

What this means theoretically: Most cross-cultural reception studies focus on what readers do not understand — cultural gaps, misunderstandings, exoticism. But this finding suggests the opposite. Indonesian readers cried because they found common ground, not because they were confused. The tragedy in *Cries in the Drizzle* is not "Chinese tragedy." It is human tragedy. This challenges the assumption that reading across cultures is primarily about managing difference. Sometimes, it is about discovering sameness.

3.2 Theme 2: Cultural Bridging

Eight readers explicitly expressed confusion about Chinese family norms, particularly the cold or distant father figure. But confusion did not lead to rejection. It led to curiosity, comparison, and reflection. One reader wrote:

"Awalnya saya marah sama bapaknya. Kok dingin banget sama anaknya? Di Indonesia, bapak-bapak miskin pun masih bisa memeluk anaknya. Tapi lalu saya mikir: mungkin cinta itu bentuknya beda-beda di tempat yang beda. Mungkin diam itu juga bentuk perhatian di budaya China." (R5, 2022)



[Translation: *"At first I was angry at the father. Why is he so cold to his son? In Indonesia, even poor fathers still hug their children. But then I thought: maybe love looks different in different places. Maybe silence is also a form of care in Chinese culture."*]

This reader moves through three stages: anger ("I was angry"), comparison ("in Indonesia..."), and finally acceptance or at least understanding ("maybe silence is also a form of care"). This is not passive reception. This is active cultural translation. The reader is doing the work of bridging two cultural logics without any teacher or guide.

Another reader offered an even more reflective interpretation:

"Saya nggak ngerti bapaknya, tapi saya nggak perlu ngerti dia untuk merasa sedih buat dia. Dia juga korban. Bapaknya mungkin juga memperlakukan dia seperti itu. Ini bukan 'budaya China.' Ini siklus trauma. Ini terjadi di mana saja." (R9, 2023)

[Translation: *"I don't understand the father, but I don't need to understand him to feel sad for him. He is also a victim. His father probably treated him the same way. This is not 'Chinese culture.' This is the cycle of trauma. It happens everywhere."*]

This reader refuses to essentialize the father's behavior as "Chinese culture." Instead, they interpret it through the lens of intergenerational trauma — a concept that applies universally. This is sophisticated reading. The reader is not simply projecting their own culture onto the text, nor are they passively accepting an exoticized image of China. They are thinking critically about causation and refusing easy cultural stereotypes.

A third reader expressed discomfort but also a willingness to understand:

"Saya merasa terganggu dengan cara bapaknya memperlakukan anaknya. Tapi semakin baca, saya mulai paham. Dia juga korban dari pola asuh yang sama. Mungkin di China dulu memang seperti itu. Tapi saya nggak mau menghakimi. Saya coba mengerti dulu." (R11, 2023)

[Translation: *"I was disturbed by how the father treated his son. But as I read more, I started to understand. He was also a victim of the same parenting pattern. Maybe that's how it was in China back then. But I don't want to judge. I try to understand first."*]

The reader explicitly chooses understanding over judgment. This is a conscious ethical stance. They are not saying "Chinese culture is wrong." They are saying "let me try to understand before I judge." This is precisely the kind of cross-cultural openness that educators hope literature will cultivate.

What this means theoretically: Previous studies on cross-cultural reading have often framed confusion as a problem to be solved (e.g., "readers need more background information to understand"). But this finding suggests that confusion can be productive. Confused readers ask questions. They compare. They reflect on their own culture. They develop empathy for characters they do not fully understand. This study proposes the term "productive confusion" — a state where not understanding something fully leads to deeper engagement rather than disengagement. In cross-cultural reading, productive confusion is a sign of an active, curious reader. It should not be seen as a failure of comprehension, but as an opportunity for reflection and growth.

3.3 Theme 3: Mixed Evaluations

Ten readers expressed mixed feelings about the novel. They praised Yu Hua's literary craftsmanship but criticized the pacing, structure, or translation quality. This theme is important because it shows that Indonesian readers are not passive admirers of Chinese literature. They are critical consumers.

One reader praised Yu Hua's distinctive style:



"*Yu Hua itu master dalam menunjukkan kesedihan tanpa drama berlebihan. Dia nggak butuh tragedi besar. Cukup kehidupan biasa yang hancur perlahan-lahan, dan itu lebih menghancurkan daripada adegan perang apapun.*" (R2, 2021)

[Translation: "*Yu Hua is a master of showing sadness without excessive drama. He doesn't need big tragedies. Just ordinary life falling apart slowly, and that is more devastating than any war scene.*"]

This reader recognizes Yu Hua's distinctive literary technique — showing ordinary pain rather than dramatic suffering — and appreciates it as an artistic achievement, not just as an exotic window into Chinese life.

However, the same reader also criticized the novel's pacing:

"*Tapi bagian tengahnya terlalu lambat. Saya dua kali berhenti baca sebelum akhirnya selesai.*" (R2, 2021)

[Translation: "*But the middle part was too slow. I stopped reading twice before finally finishing.*"]

Another reader focused on translation quality:

"*Terjemahannya terasa kaku di beberapa tempat. Ada kalimat yang kedengaran nggak natural dalam Bahasa Indonesia, kayak diterjemahkan terlalu harfiah dari Bahasa China.*" (R8, 2023)

[Translation: "*The translation felt awkward in some places. Some sentences sounded unnatural in Indonesian, like they were translated too literally from Chinese.*"]

This criticism is significant because it shows that Indonesian readers are sensitive to translation quality. They are not just reading for story. They are reading for prose. And they notice when something feels "forced" or "unnatural." This suggests that the Indonesian readership for Chinese literature is maturing. Readers are becoming more sophisticated.

A third reader criticized the novel's non-linear structure:

"*Jalan ceritanya loncat-loncat maju mundur. Saya jadi bingung siapa tokohnya dan kapan kejadiannya. Mungkin ini memang disengaja, tapi bikin saya frustrasi baca.*" (R14, 2022)

[Translation: "*The timeline jumps back and forth. I got confused about who the characters were and when things happened. Maybe this was intentional, but it made me frustrated while reading.*"]

This reader acknowledges that the structure might be intentional ("maybe this was intentional") but still finds it frustrating. They are not rejecting the novel outright. They are engaging with it critically, weighing artistic choices against their own reading experience.

What this means theoretically: Most reception studies on Chinese literature in Southeast Asia focus on appreciation — how much readers like the work, what themes they find meaningful, how they connect to Chinese culture. Few studies highlight criticism. But criticism is equally important. It shows that readers are treating Chinese literature as literature, not as a cultural artifact to be admired uncritically. When Indonesian readers criticize Yu Hua's pacing, structure, or translation quality, they are judging his work by universal standards of literary quality. This suggests that Chinese literature has been integrated into the Indonesian literary landscape — not as a foreign object to be exoticized, but as something that can be praised and criticized like any other literature. Criticism, in this sense, is a form of ownership. It says: "This book is mine to judge."

3.4 Comparison with Previous Studies

Previous research on Yu Hua in Indonesia (Erwani & Julina, 2020; 2024) focused on *To Live* and used questionnaires with Chinese language students at the University of North Sumatra. Those studies found positive responses from students. However, they did not capture three things that this study captures.



First, previous studies did not capture spontaneous emotional expression. Students were asked to respond to a questionnaire. They may have felt pressure to give positive or "correct" answers. In contrast, the readers in this study chose to write reviews on their own initiative. No one asked them to cry or to share their emotions. They did so because the experience was memorable enough to share.

Second, previous studies did not capture confusion about cultural norms. Their questionnaires focused on appreciation, not confusion. But this study shows that confusion is not a negative outcome. It can be productive. Confused readers ask questions, compare cultures, and develop empathy.

Third, previous studies did not capture criticism of translation quality. Their participants read *To Live in Indonesian* translation, but no one asked them about the translation. This study shows that Indonesian readers notice when translations are awkward. They care about prose quality, not just story.

Moreover, previous studies measured responses (e.g., percentages of students who liked the novel) but did not interpret why readers responded the way they did. This study offers interpretation. It does not just say "readers liked the novel." It says why they liked it, what made them cry, how they made sense of cultural differences, and what they disliked. This is the value of qualitative thematic analysis over quantitative questionnaires. Numbers can tell you how many readers cried. But only words can tell you why.

3.5 Summary of Key Contributions

Table 2. Summary of Key Contributions

Contribution	Description
Empirical	First study on Indonesian readers' spontaneous responses to <i>Cries in the Drizzle</i>
Theoretical	Introduces concept of "productive confusion" in cross-cultural reading
Methodological	Demonstrates value of spontaneous online reviews over elicited responses (questionnaires)
Practical	Offers insights for publishers (translation quality matters) and educators (start with emotion, not cultural background)

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study set out to explore how Indonesian readers on Goodreads interpret the themes of tragedy, memory, and suffering in Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle (Tangis di Rinai Gerimis)*. Based on the thematic analysis of 16 spontaneous reader reviews, three main findings emerged.

First, Indonesian readers experience strong emotional catharsis when reading this novel. Twelve out of sixteen readers mentioned crying, feeling heartbroken, or being deeply saddened. What makes this finding significant is that readers did not cry because they understood Chinese culture. They cried because they recognized universal human experiences — loneliness, family dysfunction, the feeling of being unwanted. One reader put it simply: "*Perasaan itu nggak punya kewarganegaraan*" ("*That feeling has no nationality*"). This suggests that the emotional power of Yu Hua's novel transcends cultural boundaries. Readers do not need to be experts in Chinese history or family norms to feel the weight of the story. Pain is pain. Loneliness is loneliness. And great literature, even when it is deeply rooted in a specific time and place, can speak to readers who know nothing about that time or place.

Second, Indonesian readers engage in active cultural bridging when encountering unfamiliar Chinese family norms. Eight readers expressed confusion about the cold or distant father figure. But confusion did not lead to rejection. It led to curiosity, comparison, and reflection. Readers asked questions like "*Apakah*



ini normal di China?" ("Is this normal in China?") and "Mungkin cinta itu bentuknya beda-beda di tempat yang beda" ("Maybe love has different ways in different places"). Some readers even refused to essentialize the father's behavior as "Chinese culture," instead interpreting it through the lens of intergenerational trauma — a concept that applies universally. This finding challenges the common assumption that confusion is a problem to be solved in cross-cultural reading. This study proposes the term "productive confusion" to describe moments where not understanding something fully leads to deeper engagement, not disengagement.

Third, Indonesian readers are critical consumers, not passive admirers, of Chinese literature. Ten readers expressed mixed evaluations. They praised Yu Hua's literary craftsmanship — his ability to show ordinary pain without melodrama — but they also criticized the novel's slow pacing, non-linear structure, and in some cases, the quality of the Indonesian translation. One reader noted that "*terjemahannya terasa kaku di beberapa tempat*" ("*the translation felt awkward in some places*"). This criticism is significant because it shows that Indonesian readers treat Chinese literature as literature, not as a cultural artifact to be admired uncritically. When readers criticize pacing or translation, they are judging the work by universal standards of literary quality. In doing so, they integrate Chinese literature into their own literary landscape.

4.1 Contributions of This Study

This study makes four contributions to the field of Chinese literature reception in Southeast Asia.

Empirical contribution. This is the first study to examine Indonesian readers' spontaneous responses to *Cries in the Drizzle*. Previous research on Yu Hua in Indonesia focused exclusively on *To Live* and used structured questionnaires with university students. This study offers a different perspective by analyzing unsolicited reviews from ordinary readers on Goodreads.

Theoretical contribution. This study introduces the concept of "productive confusion" to the study of cross-cultural reading. Most cross-cultural reception studies frame confusion as a problem to be solved — readers need more background information, more cultural context, more explanation. This study suggests that confusion can be a productive force. Confused readers ask questions, compare cultures, reflect on their own assumptions, and develop empathy for characters they do not fully understand. Productive confusion is not a sign of failure. It is a sign of active, curious, respectful engagement.

Methodological contribution. This study demonstrates the value of spontaneous online reviews as data for reader-response research. Unlike questionnaire responses, which are elicited by researchers and may be influenced by a desire to please or perform well, spontaneous reviews are written by readers on their own initiative. They reveal what readers actually care about, not what researchers assume they should care about. For studies of cross-cultural reception, this is invaluable.

Practical contribution. This study offers actionable insights for publishers and educators. For publishers: Indonesian readers notice when translations are awkward. They care about prose quality, not just story. If Chinese literature is to find a wider audience in Indonesia, translators need to produce natural, fluent Indonesian, not word-for-word literal translations. For educators: The emotional power of Yu Hua's novel can do much of the cross-cultural work. Teachers do not need to start with lengthy lectures on Chinese history or family norms. They can start with emotion — "How did this book make you feel?" — and then move to cultural analysis. This bottom-up approach may be more effective for engaging students.

4.2 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample is small (16 reviews). Findings cannot be generalized to all Indonesian readers. Second, self-identification as Indonesian on Goodreads cannot be independently verified. Third, Goodreads users tend to be more educated and more comfortable with technology than the general population. Fourth, this study is exploratory and qualitative. Different researchers might identify different themes or emphasize different aspects of the data. These limitations are acceptable for an exploratory qualitative study, but they should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings.



4.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could address these limitations in several ways. First, researchers could collect a larger sample of reviews from multiple platforms, including Gramedia, Periplus, and Indonesian bookstagram communities. Second, researchers could conduct interviews with Indonesian readers to gain deeper insight into their interpretive processes. Third, researchers could compare responses to different translations of the same work to assess how translation quality affects reception. Fourth, researchers could extend this approach to other Chinese writers popular in Indonesia, such as Mo Yan or Eileen Chang, to see whether the patterns observed here hold across different authors and genres.

4.4 Final Remarks

Cries in the Drizzle was written in Chinese, set in rural China, and published decades ago. It tells a story of family dysfunction, childhood trauma, and loss that might seem far removed from the lives of Indonesian readers today. And yet, as this study has shown, Indonesian readers cry. They compare. They criticize. They connect. They find their own childhoods in Yu Hua's words. They wonder about Chinese family norms, but they do not reject them. They ask questions. They reflect. They grow. This is the power of literature across cultures — not to erase difference, but to make difference matter less than shared humanity.

As one reader wrote, and as this study has tried to demonstrate: "*Perasaan itu nggak punya kewarganegaraan.*" ("*That feeling has no nationality.*")

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