the global landscape of pop culture that is no longer America-centred, and how Indonesian-ness could be built through a reference to a Taiwanese TV drama. The strength of the Indonesian people remains in their camaraderie and dynamics, which allow popular cultures to become a model for them to regain or articulate their voice.

The power of the people (in other words, democracy) in popular cultures is expressed through the power of popular vote in Indonesian Idol and the concept of “anyone can be famous” promoted by this talent show (Coutas p. 113). As the creation of popular cultures lies in the hands of the people, television programs such as News dot com could appear after the New Order. Through parody, News dot com shows politicians discussing national issues with actors that resemble existing political figures, copying their ways of talking and behaving, and thus offering a hyper-reality that breaks down the previous simulacrum built by the New Order (Jurriëns p. 221). Through their program, the producers of News dot com managed to mobilize public opinion and gave pressure to those who opposed the criticism inserted in the program.

In general, the discussions of popular cultures in this book remain insightful as they offer some entry points useful for the nation that is in a continuous process of building its identity; therefore, it was only right for Jalasutra to have the book translated into Indonesian, making the issue known by the generation of post-reformasi Indonesia. Popular cultures have become people’s chance for establishing a common space for themselves, much like the Kridosomo Stadium, where musical genres transcended social boundaries and people gathered together despite gender, class, and age differences. For academicians, cultural activists, producers, and artists, a note on how this “common space” should be used was nevertheless also clear; that is, the struggle today does not just represent what was unimaginable during the New Order, but it also questions the existing methods of cultural activism.

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Suharto’s fall was like the opening of a Pandora box. All of a sudden, almost everything that was previously covered up is now disclosed. One of the things that came to the fore was the abundant “imaging” in various forms of the media of female victims of violence. This is the primary concern of this thesis. However, this thesis attempts to associate this phenomenon with the construction of a “new” female identity in post-Suharto Indonesia. This is due to the fact, as Melani Budianta (2003: 147) observes, that the violence perpetrated on women’s bodies during 1997-1998 had raised the consciousness of many women who had been depoliticized before that particular period. The title of the thesis, Representation and beyond, has precisely captured its scope of concern.

The thesis scrutinizes the media presentations of female victims by focusing on five overlapping scenes where women are represented and represent themselves as victims in the interaction with/in the state (Chapter 4), society (Chapter 5), the domestic area (Chapter 7), religion (Chapter 6), and popular culture (Chapter 8). In working with representations, the chosen subjects are discussed in relation to other factors beside the victims themselves such as media actors (for example, those who produce and read media presentations, Chapter 3), contexts (for instance, reformasi, the discourse of female victimization, and media freedom, Chapter 2), and materials (for example print, audiovisual, and electronic media within their mechanisms of production, distribution and consumption, Chapter 3). These factors, as this thesis finds, shape the aspects of the discursive formation of female victimhood. They are crucial in providing the pathway to examine the emergence of the discourse on female victimhood and the canonizing of female victims of violence. Such canonization of “women as victims”, this thesis contends, can be perceived as a precondition as well as an effect of the manifestation of the “new” feminist movement in Indonesia. This is the main aspect of the alternative media’s significant role for the women’s movement that is its capacity to promote a new female identity as it is inseparable from the changes of the context.

By understanding the context, which changes, the reason why there was a sudden abundance of representations of female victims following the change of regime becomes clear. The representations of various images provide examples of how the opening of the media during the initial processes of reformasi prepared the ground for, and was partly boosted by, women’s abundant use of the media to express their ideas and to voice their protests. However, the impact of the freedom of the press for women was twofold. On the one hand, it facilitated the explosion of media products, many of which leaned toward pornography prompting news about violence against women.
On the other hand, the opening of the media landscape also promoted the burgeoning of alternative media with their advocacy for, and empowerment of, disadvantaged groups. This twofold impact on the demand for freedom in women’s lives contributed to the formation of the discourse of female victimhood.

The writer acknowledges that the thesis has one limitation because it only refers to the discussion of representation. As a consequence, only those that get represented are recognized; and since the interpellating process involves the utilization of the ideologies of the image producers and the contexts in which the violence occurred, the operating mechanisms of image production, and the expected audiences, the interpellation through media representations should not be seen as “dominating” the process of formulating subjectivity. In short, with a myriad of choices of identities to model, audiences, to a certain extent, have the autonomy to choose and, thus, refuse being interpellated by particular ideological messages.

In addition, as Sai Siew Min (2006) argues, any effort to represent violence as such is always already problematic. This is because the “truth” as it is represented is always in such a vulnerable state that it runs the risk of being considered a “non-event”. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a space, which is wide enough for women to represent themselves.

As reading is always perspectival (and highly political as well), just as much as the process of the production of the images and the characteristics of the image producers, what this thesis has done is make an attempt to offer an alternative view in reading and understanding the representations of female victims in Post-Suharto media.

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