
THE FUNCTION OF RIVERS FOR SOCIETY IN THE SHORT STORY “GAGAL LANDING” BY ACHMAD SUPARDI

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Abstract

Rivers, being an important element in human life, are often depicted in literary works. One of the literary works that depicts the relationship between rivers and society is the short story “Gagal Landing” by Achmad Supardi. First published in *Jawa Pos* on January 28th, 2018, the short story shows how the Brisbane River and the Martapura River contribute to the local society. This article explains the comparison of the functions of the Brisbane River in Australia and the Martapura River in Indonesia for society's daily lives. The approach used in this research is sociological literature with interpretive analysis as a data analysis technique. The results obtained show that the Brisbane River and Martapura River have an important role in society and can provide positive benefits for their lives. The Brisbane River functions as a place for pastime, relaxation, and gathering, as well as a waterway transportation route. Its existence can relieve stress, improve mental well-being, release tension, and provide the opportunity for urban society to enjoy moments of happiness. Meanwhile, the Martapura River functions as a waterway transportation route as well as a center for economic and social activities in the surrounding society because of the floating market. The floating market on the Martapura River plays an important role in maintaining and promoting local cultural and culinary heritage.

Keywords: *Function, Martapura River, Brisbane River, Society.*

Introduction

From a long time ago, the development of human life could not be separated from water areas, one of which was rivers. River can be interpreted as water flows that flow naturally from higher areas to lower areas (Sembiring et al., 2014; Muzaidi et al., 2018). The river is considered one of the key elements of human civilization. This is because the existence of rivers is very important for human life.

Rivers have many functions, for example as the main source of water for humans' daily needs such as drinking, cooking, bathing, and agriculture. Rivers are also often used as transportation routes for people to transport goods and people, especially in areas that are difficult to reach by land. In fact, before the opening of the land route, the river was the only traffic route (Rochgiyanti, 2011). Furthermore, rivers often become a source of economic life for the surrounding society, either through trade activities, fishing, water tourism, or other industries related to rivers.

Rivers are often depicted in literary works, such as a setting for important events in stories. However, rivers also present various additional meanings in literary works. This is because the function and meaning of a river depicted in literary works are often influenced by the culture and geographical context of the region. The function and meaning of rivers for society in big cities may be different from those in rural or mountainous areas. Likewise with rivers for Indonesians and abroad.

The function of rivers in two different places, namely in Australia and Indonesia, is described in the short story under the title "Gagal Landing" by Achmad Supardi. That short story which was first published in *Jawa Pos* on January 28th, 2018, depicts the narrator sitting alone on the edge of the Brisbane River. Then, He observed the people and scenery around him. The view that what he saw at that time reminded him of his memories of the Martapura River, which he had visited before.

Based on that, this research discusses the function of the Brisbane River in Australia and the Martapura River in Indonesia for society as depicted in "Gagal Landing".

This discussion was held to look at the function of the river and the way society in the two different locations live their daily lives, including social, economic, and cultural activities around the river.

Three studies are quite relevant and related to this research. Firstly, research entitled “Rivers, Rice Fields, and Disputes: An Ecofeminist Review of Literary Works Set in Southeast Asia” by Dewi (2019). This research aims to look at the similarities and differences in the representation of rivers, rice fields, and disputes in novels and short stories from several countries in Southeast Asia, namely Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Environmental issues are the focus of some literary works from these six countries. With their characteristics, these literary works use rivers or rice fields as the setting for their stories. The delineation within the story shows the involvement and concern of the female characters in caring for the river and rice fields.

Secondly, there is research entitled “The Face of the Floating Market as a Tourism Icon in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan in Literature” by Riana (2020). This research aims to describe the attraction and efforts to maintain the existence of floating markets amidst modernization as depicted in literary works. The results show that the attraction of floating markets depicted in literary works is in the form of attractions, accessibility, facilities, and supporting facilities. Various efforts have been made to maintain the existence of the floating market amidst modernization, including regenerating the successor to the floating market, carrying out tourism promotions, and doing creative things to attract tourists.

Lastly, research entitled “Cities in Kalimantan in the short story “Water Cities Behind Water” by Raudal Tanjung Banua” by Sugiarto et al. (2023). This research explains that there have been social changes in society's lives in various cities or regions in Kalimantan. This is evident from the fact that the majority of people are starting to leave life in the water areas or rivers. As a result, cities or areas in Kalimantan that were previously connected to the water areas will disappear.

Three previous studies indicate that this study has never been conducted. Moreover, “Gagal Landing” by Achmad Supardi has not been covered before. Hence, this

article is the only study that covers this short story. This study aims to understand the function of the Brisbane River and Martapura River in society as described by the author in the short story. Thus, this study aims to provide new insights and complement literature studies that focus on rivers in particular.

To answer these research problems, a sociological of literature approach was used. The sociological of literature is an approach to literature that considers social aspects (Damono, 1978). This approach departs from the fact that it is impossible for literary works such as short stories to be released and separated from society (Sugiarto & Martini, 2022). Sociological of literature is the right approach to answer the research problem because it allows an in-depth analysis of how the short story “Gagal Landing” reflects the function of rivers in the daily lives of the people around the Brisbane River and the Martapura River.

Method

This research is library research with a sociological of literature approach. The data source for this study is the short story “Gagal Landing” by Achmad Supardi, which was first published in *Jawa Pos* on January 28th, 2018. The data from this short story will later be supported by various references related to the research topic.

This research began by collecting various data both from short story texts and from supporting references. This data was obtained by reading carefully, thoroughly, and shrewdly. Interpretive analysis is the data analysis technique that was used in this research. This technique can be used to understand the meaning and intent expressed by the author in the short story. The analysis results obtained were prepared using descriptive methods so that they can be understood well. Additionally, short story excerpts will be included to strengthen the research findings.

Result and Discussion

The first part of the short story shows the daily activities of society carried out in the Brisbane River and Martapura River areas. In this description, there are differences regarding the function of rivers for society. However, there are similarities in the way society uses rivers. This is interesting because the two rivers are in different countries and cultures.

To take note, the Brisbane River is a river that flows through the city of Brisbane. It is the longest river in southeastern Queensland, Australia. The Brisbane River flows through a variety of land uses, including natural areas, residential areas, commercial areas, and industrial areas (He et al., 2020). The Martapura River is a river that bisects the city of Banjarmasin and flows through the center of the city. It is a tributary of the Ballito River (Angriani et al., 2021; Afdholy, 2017). These two rivers play a vital role in the surrounding area.

In the short story, the color of the water in the Brisbane River is not specifically described. However, the Brisbane River can be assumed to have fairly clean and clear water. This can be seen from the narrator who can see the reflection of his face through the river water. It tends to be different, the water of the Martapura River is brownish in color. This comparison shows the differences in water characteristics between the two rivers mentioned in the story.

Brisbane River for Society

The Brisbane River in the city of Brisbane is a place that the narrator of the short story visits during his stay in Australia. The story depicts various events that occur around the river through his observations. These observations can show how the Brisbane River serves the local society. One of the functions of the Brisbane River for society is as a place of recreation and relaxation, as can be seen in the following short story extract.

“Banyak orang ingin menyedap kopi di sini. Menikmati harum moka, sebersit kayu manis, sambil melemparkan pandangan pada feri yang berjalan pelan.

Dari meja ini—meja untuk dua orang, namun hanya ada aku sendiri—bisa kulihat jalur pesepeda di tepian Brisbane River. Sebagian mengayuh sepeda mereka berombongan, banyak sekali yang bersepeda berdua-dua.” (Supardi, 2018)

This location on the banks of the Brisbane River seems to be a popular place for people to relax. Many people like to enjoy a cup of coffee while enjoying the river view, including the ferries passing by and the city of Brisbane. This view creates a relaxing and calming atmosphere for visitors and the surrounding society.

The existence of supporting infrastructure such as bicycle paths on the banks of the Brisbane River as well as tables and chairs are supporting elements for people who are interested in visiting the Brisbane River. With these facilities, people can enjoy various activities such as cycling, walking, gathering for drinks, chatting, or enjoying the beautiful views around the Brisbane River. It makes this river a comfortable public space for the society and visitors of the City of Brisbane

“Di seberang sungai, pasangan-pasangan menyenderkan tubuh mereka pada pagar pembatas sungai. Mereka seperti tak pernah kehabisan cerita. Di belakang mereka, keluarga-keluarga datang dengan anak-anak mereka. Sebagian antre menaiki bianglala. Mereka menyebutnya The Wheel of Brisbane.” (Supardi, 2018)

The quote above also shows that the Brisbane River is a place where people gather to relax and socialize. The couples leaning on the river railing show that the Brisbane River is a place where they sit together, talk, and share stories. This reflects the importance of the river as a public space where social relations can be strengthened.

The existence of a Ferris wheel called *The Wheel of Brisbane* around the river is also an important element for people who visit the Brisbane River. As we know *The Wheel of Brisbane* is a Ferris wheel located on the banks of the Brisbane River. Visitors can enjoy views of Brisbane City if they ride this ride (Wardhani, 2018). *The Wheel of Brisbane*

is often a tourist destination for visitors who want to enjoy views of Brisbane City from a height.

The queue to ride the Ferris wheel described in the short story can be an indication that many people come to this place. With this Ferris wheel, the Brisbane River will not only be a place for daily activities but also an attraction for tourists or people who want to enjoy views of the city from a height. This fact indicates that the Brisbane River is one of the centers of society's recreation and leisure activities.

The Brisbane River is depicted as also functioning as a water transportation route. You can see the ferry that crosses this river. The existence of ferries can take people from one point to another in Brisbane City. However, this river-crossing ship does not only function as an ordinary means of transportation. However, it can also be an element that enlivens the city with its presence.

According to the description in the short story, it appears that no traders are selling on the Brisbane River. Therefore, visitors who want to enjoy their time at this place usually bring their coffee or snacks. This condition can be an advantage because the atmosphere around the Brisbane River becomes calmer because there is no noise or crowds that might be caused by traders. This makes the Brisbane River a pleasant place to spend time.

Several descriptions above illustrate that the Brisbane River has an important function for society. The Brisbane River provides a space for pastime, relaxing, gathering, and an air transportation route. Therefore, the existence of the Brisbane River can relieve stress, improve mental well-being, escape from daily busyness and tension, and provide opportunities for society or visitors to enjoy happy moments.

Martapura River for Society

The Martapura River in the short story implicitly has several important functions and roles in the lives of the surrounding community. This river is the center of economic and social activities because of the floating market. A floating market is a traditional

market where all activities are carried out on water or rivers using boats (Ardy & Poerbantanoë, 2014; Rahadhian et al., 2022). The existence of a floating market on the Martapura River does not only exist in a reality of short story but also in real reality.

As the name suggests, the floating market on the Martapura River is not only a place for economic activity. However, it is also a place where people meet, gather, and socialize. Social interactions along the river reflect the dynamics of society's communal life and how the river is the heart of everyday life. However, although it is not described in the short story, it can be understood that the floating market can also invite tourists to come to this place. Because floating markets can offer a unique and different experience from conventional markets on land. An overview of the floating market can be seen in the following short story excerpt.

“Sungai Martapura dengan air kecokelatan yang di dua titiknya ada pasar terapung. Sesekali kubeli kudapan di situ. Biasanya *wadai* cincin, kadang *wadai* apam kukus. Kumakan sendiri, seperti saat ini aku menyedap kopi.” (Supardi, 2018)

As can be seen in the short story excerpt, the two snacks sold by many traders on the floating market are *wadai ring* and steamed *wadai apam*. Take note that *wadai* is the name for cake in the Banjar language (Putri et al., 2022; Madina, 2023). It means that what in the short story by *wadai* ring and steamed *wadai* apam steamed is ring cake and steamed apam cake.

Wadai ring and steamed *wadai* apam are two types of traditional Indonesian cakes. The *wadai* ring is a typical Banjar snack which in terms of shape has four holes and is usually red in color. The main ingredients for this cake are rice flour and brown sugar (Alfisyah, 2019; Jahdiah, 2022). Similar to *wadai* ring, steamed *wadai* apam is also a typical Banjar snack (Nengsih, 2016). These two snacks show that in the floating market, many traders have unique local culinary delights that perhaps cannot be found anywhere else.

The floating market on the Martapura River plays an important role in maintaining and promoting local cultural and culinary heritage because it sells snacks such as *wadai* ring and steamed *wadai* apam. The presence of these typical snacks is not only able to satisfy tastes but also attracts the attention of people who visit this area. All because of its distinctive and delicious taste (Arisanty et al., 2019). This can support the local economy and improve the economic level of the surrounding society. All of this proves that the existence and function of the Martapura River are very important for society because this river is where the floating market takes place.

Additionally, the presence of floating markets where traders use boats also indicates that the Martapura River is a waterway. Boats are one of the means of transport used by people to travel from one place to another along the river. This indicates that the Martapura River is not only a source of economic life but also an important means of transportation and social interaction for society living along the river.

Conclusion

The short story “Gagal Landing” by Achmad Supardi shows how the Brisbane River and Martapura River function for society. In the description of the short story, there are similarities and differences regarding the function of rivers. The Brisbane River functions as a place for pastime, relaxation, and gathering with society, and as a waterway transportation route. Its existence can relieve stress, improve mental well-being, escape from daily busyness and tension, and provide opportunities for urban society to enjoy happy moments.

Meanwhile, the Martapura River functions as a waterway transportation route as well as a center for economic and social activities in the surrounding society because of the floating market. The floating market on the Martapura River is a place to meet, gather, and interact with society. Moreover, the floating market on the Martapura River also plays an important role in maintaining and promoting local cultural and culinary heritage. The Brisbane River and Martapura River do have differences and similarities regarding their

function for society. However, both of them have an important role in society and can provide positive benefits for their lives.

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