

## STORY OF BIG FLOOD IN THE MODERN INDONESIAN LITERARY: AN ECOCRITICISM STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The nature of paper shows that Ecocriticism is not popular issue in the modern Indonesian criticism. Hence, it is very crucial to develop the Indonesian criticism based on the ecological perspective because nowadays the term development is synonym with exploiting the nature. The paper is to find out the ecological issue in the modern Indonesian literary, especially in fiction prose and poems published for late ten years. To analyze the work, researcher is used semiotic method and hermeneutic design of research as an approach. Semiotic will investigate the symbol behind the words and hermeneutic will translated the symbol to actual message. Based on the analysis, the ecological theme in the modern Indonesian literary is crucial interpretation. The meaning appeared in the work has given the important values of increasing care of nature, human kind, and harmonization. For recommendation, in the future researcher should have interpretate the work based on the ecocriticism to increase meaning of human and nature.*

**Keywords:** *ecocriticism, fiction, modern Indonesian literary.*

This literary research based on the ecocriticism perspective in Indonesian is not only popular theme, but also is not require the scientific foundation properly. In the history of Indonesian criticism, ecological issue is not being central discourse. In the 1930's, Indonesia criticism have offered the issue of a new style of Indonesian literature. At least those issue rise up to the last 1940's. One decade later, issue of the identity of Indonesia literary is being actual discourse as appeared by Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana, Sanoesi Pane, and Ulrich Kratz. Suddenly that A Teeuw become a scholar had taken the new issue that is not relevance with the theme appeared before. He called the scientific criticism based on the structural perspective. After years of Teeuw's project, Indonesia criticism can not escape under the shadow of Teeuw perspective. It is a pity that Indonesian criticism mislead to the "scientific criticism" without looking second opinion. We can look Jassin research based on the succinct activity. Jassin had worked properly to make a complete document of Indonesian literature. Public then judge the Jassin research is called subjective role, "unscientific method", and so on.

Nowadays that ecocriticism had not never become urgent issue in the research of scholars. For example, as long as we are being a lecturer of Indonesian criticism, it is rare that the research of literary based on the ecological perspective. Research based on structural perspective is alike trending topic on the shelter of literary research in the library. The paper focuses on the ecological perspective of the contemporary literature.

Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm has collected criticism works in the book entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996). The term "Ecocriticism" used by Glotfelty dan Fromm itu finally operated to the meaning of

the work which has relevance with ecosystem theme. In the discourse of Indonesian criticism, ecocriticism translated to “green literary”. It means “the inspiring work of save on earth” (<http://www.rayakultura.net/sastra-hijau-dan-eksistensi-bumi.html>). Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in the following:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of models production and economic class to its reading of text, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (1996: 75)

Quotation above give us a meaning of earth-centered approach, proved “the physical environment”, “environment”, and “earth-centered approach” . Ecological perspective can be functioned as a deductive thinking and literary work is as a factual data. Reader must find the proof as far as the ecological approach is a basic interpretation. That is called green literary.

Indeed, the matter of “green literary” can not read simply based on the background of ecological damage globally because of exploitation and industrialization. Basic fact in ontological term proved that the author’s awareness of self, nature, and God is relevant with their works. To interpretate the author’s awareness of natural discourse is always part of the author spirit of saving on earth.

**Problem:** Based on the fact, it is urgent to make a question: How can ecocriticism perspective explained the symbol in the fiction and poems? How to explore the symbol in the work that is not always open for reader, but need to reflect the level of symbol?

## METHOD

The paper is used semiotic method to unlock message behind the symbol in the work. In the formalism criticism, symbol is unpopular words or defamiliarization of the work. In Semiotic developed by Umberto Eco (1979), word is not only seen as a denotative meaning, but also offers the connotative meaning. Connotative terminology referred to message behind the metaphor, allegory, and other story. If connotative level can not explore the symbol, semiotic has offered the third level, that is a myth. The myth terminology referred to things, phrase, and moment believed by people. For example, the word “flood”. Denotative meaning is referred to “big water flowing in the land”. The phrase “blood flood” is referred to connotative meaning, that is sadness or human kind destruction. The phrase “Noah Flood” is a myth meaning because reader must have knowledge of the story of Noah derived from holy book.

Material object of this paper is an issue of big flood presented in holy book and symbol of water in a works of precolonial era. Interpretation will be compared with the symbol in modern Indonesian literary. These are the following:

1. Ayu Utami’s novel, entitled *Bilangan Fu* (Discourse of Fu),
2. Sapardi Djoko Damono’s poem entitled “Perahu Kertas” (“Paper Ship”) and poem “Noah” in Daily *Kompas*.

3. Short story presented in this paper is “Banjir” (Flood) by Bambang Joko Susilo (Source: Daily *Republika*, March 30, 2008);
4. “Dahaga Setetes Air dalam Banjir” (Thirst of Water Drop in the Flood) by A Kohar Ibrahim (Source: Daily *Batam Pos*, April 1, 2007);
5. Aba Mardjani in the short story entitled “Banjir di Cibareshah”(Source: *Kompas*, Oktober 28, 2012) (The Flood in Cibareshah).

Explored the sign, symbol, and structure, the result is a theme of the work. They must have reflected to the actual problem. Hence, the paper used to hermeneutic approach. Indebted Hans Georg Gadamer view (1994), hermeneutic has interpreted from the theme to factual issues. These are called the cycle of hermeneutic, that is from text to context and from context to text.

It is selected in ontological, axiological, and epistemological perspective to find out a humanity message. Based on the message, researcher will explain a message that is useful for increase human values, that existence, essence, and belief.

## RESULTS

In the world folklore of the holy text, there were written that the big flood has destroyed fully a civilization. The big flood signified the new era of human kind civilization. For example, concept of Atlantic civilization located in Sunda Land has been erased by the big flood. For this moment, the verses of the Holy Book has taken the big flood as part of the God destiny. The big flood destroyed the infidel community. For the same argument, the story of prophet has taken them all. Based on the story, the prophet has prepared the big flood by constructing of ship.

The historical fact of Nusantara proved that ecosystem is important part of developing a civilization. The story of Watugunung in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, for example, that is written in the beginning of the 19 century, shows the succinct information of ancestor activity in relevance with nature. The name “Watugunung” means “mountain stone”. It is title given to Syailendra Wamca. Poerbatjaraka’s notation of Syailendra Wamca strengthen an argumentation of the title of Watugunung. Syailendra reach out for the title of the King of Mountain Stone because he has developed the prayer place derived from stone which taken from the mountain for 10th century. The place is called Barabudur. The wall of Barabudur has given the carved story of journey of human kind, from powerless to the powerful surviving. In the modern architectural perspective, the stone of mountain conceived the new construction of civilization functioned as a medium of message. The message is over the time-space. Thousand years later, the stone will tell again. The story of Watugunung can be read in the contemporary work of new interpretation.

For example, Ayu Utami announced the Watugunung in the novel entitled *Bilangan Fu* (Discourse of Fu, 2008) as a myth and logos of meaning of the togetherness of life and natural. In deep, in the context of modern Indonesian literary, author’s interpretation of water, river, and flood from age to age has offered the crucial reflection, especially of the difference of human kind activity and ecological movement. They are become to be framework of the way which has changed the basic meaning. For example, river of Ciliwung in the colonial era of Jakarta is a part of developing the fictional structure of work. That is proved by the story told by G

Francis in the work *Njai Dasima* (1900). The story started from Nyai Dasima is wife of Edward, Nederland citizenship. The life of Nyai Dasima is so happy till the native come to the her life. The native people named Haji. Haji had tried to deceive Dasima in order to take her asset. His trick appeared by marriage between Haji and Nyai Dasima. Hence, Nyai Dasima is divorce from Edward because of race and religion. By deceived and married her, Dasima's asset is lost and then killed. Dasima corpse has been thrown to the river. Someday, Edward found the Dasima corpse in the river Ciliwung located behind the Edwards' house.

From the story above, Nyai Dasima characterized by author as a victim of deception as while the actor is a man called "slam community". The term referred to the "slam", from "Islam", a religion which believed by the people of Nederland Indisch. The river is a important part of plot developing. It is why the plot can not operate them unless the river does. The ending is never been in case of the water does not. In the other word, the river is synonym with the plot of the structure of the story.

Even in the pracolonial perspective, the water flows through Ciliwung is a part of developing a strategy of war between Sultan Agung and Nederland. It is proved that the river Ciliwung is a bridge of destroying the JP Coen defence. JP Coen is one people derived from little town in Nederland. He works by the way of killing and making the native of Nederland Indisch as a slave in VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indisch Compagnie). JP Coen has been killed in the attack of Sultan Agung Mataram for the 17 century, that is September 21 1629. In the formal announcement of VOC, JP Coen is dead because of cholera. But, in fact that the date of Coen's dead is at the encirlement of JP Coen Fortress in second time. In the second opinion, Sultan Agung soldier spread cholera epidemic in the water flows in the river Ciliwung.

We can see, flowing water of Ciliwung in the prakolonial era is a part of developing effectively a war strategy. It is not different with the colonial era when flowing water is part of plot of the prose structure. If the meaning is reflected in the time dimension then the meaning of water adn river flow inversely in the meaning of pascakolonial era; flowing water in the pascakolonial era is a attack for the people. The water in the river is like a monster when rain falls.

Government of Jakarta has reported that the begining of 2015 rainfall in jakarta is arise in case of compared by Desember in a year ago. Hidrological study proved that the river Banjir Kanal Barat and Banjir Kanal Timur can not anticipate the flood. Dredging of sedimentation of the bottom of river can not help solving the the problem of flood. In the planological perspective, the hinterland of Jakarta has attacked them through the big flood. So Jakarta is shinkable.

Reflection of fact and fiction above offered a message that ecosystem where human kind lived is being place of danger because they attack human by itself. In the formal perspective, that is why the work seen as artefact of culture because it means social order of forgotten era. The way of life in the pracolonial era can be found in the ecology study. In the same cases the scholar had studied ecosystem through quantitative way. Hence, it is important to develop hermeneutic design in order to find out the meaning in the work. Ecosystem has recorded a symbol in the work and investigated the meaning of collective quotient.

The way of life of flood can be found in the world folklore in the ritual and remembering mechanism. It is fact that the holy book has told Noah preparing the ship in order to anticipate the big flood. The folklore said that Noah has got

abashment through trowing of feces to the ship. When the north pole is being water, surfaace of the sea is arise, and land is divided to the many areas. One land has become a island.

The story of Noach is a searching of inspiration in writing the work. In relation of theme, Sapardi Djoko Damono has interested with the epos of Noah. He has written poems which imagined as a ship belong to Noah. He mentioned his poems not “Noah Ship” but “Paper Ship”. The poems has written in the beginning of his period. The poet who has influenced by Sanusi Pane said that human message extracted in the Noah Ship. He told by the verses in the following:

Akhirnya kau dengar juga pesan si tua itu, Nuh, katanya  
Telah kupergunakan perahumu itu dalam sebuah banjir besar  
dan kini terdampar di sebuah bukit (*Perahu Kertas*, 1983)

(Finally you hear a message from the old man, Noah, said  
I have used your ship in the big flood  
And now that ship has stranded on the hill

Do change the word “ship” with the “meaning”, the sound become the following: “And now that meaning has stranded on the hill”. They mean that ship is a part of meaning discourse can be investigated to get a message. Damono said that the ship is used as a metaphor of meaning in discourse of the big flood in the last time ago.

It means that meaning derived from Noah folklore to reflect the current situation. But the poem mentioned the ship is “stranded” on the hill. The term “stranded” referred to something attacked in the future time. Hence, the “ship of meaning” can prepare the danger in the future day. It reflected to the knowledge of ship, ashore, and the big flood, or a conception of the meaning of ship. So does the life principle and technical terminology everyday.

It seem that ideas Noah ship will be inspiration of Damono’s writing. Noah ship is a message for time to time. The poem of ship has been written for 30 years later, June 3 2012, entiteld “Noah”. The ship assumed that something has written when he said:

Susun dalam sebuah kalimat yang kedap air  
agar kita sampai ke sebuah bukit  
(Source: Daily *Kompas*, June 3, 2012).

Tranlation:  
conceive them in the water resistance sentence  
and let us arrive to the hill.

Reader has been ordered to conceive the ship through words. It is succint that the poem above appeared “the ship” as not only a metaphor of meaning construction, but also a story of “ship of words”. Phrase “conceive them in the water resistance *sentence*” reflected the phrase “conceive them in the water resistance *ship*”. There is difference of *sentence* and *ship*. According to Damono’s verse, the ship is a literary economy becoming in the whole of his way of life. Ship reffered to the intelligent,

belief, and the journey of life. Damonos's life can be summarized in the phrase "From the ship of meaning to ship of word."

Dialogue of folklore in the holy book and interpreting of author in poems shows the signs of discourse of ecology. The poems appeared the sign as learning medium to increase human values. If the meaning referred to actual problem, it is important that water, river, and ecosystem surrounding human kind has changed to attack human self. It is proved in prose, poems, and literary sources in the last decade. The meaning above can not be found the precolonial era.

To mention several proof, short story entitled "Banjir" (Flood) by Bambang Joko Susilo (Source: Daily *Republika*, March 30, 2008) is important work. The story presented Markonah as the main character in moment of big flood in the town. When people scream and save their asset, Markonah even scared happily so that she is assumed as the crazy women. Markonah screams that the flood is a necessity of nature so that every man should have accept as it is. Once more time, Markonah said: "Biar semuanya sadar bahwa banjir ini bukan semata kehendak Tuhan. Banjir ini adalah banjir kutukan, terjadi akibat ulah manusia yang rakus memperkosa alam!" (Source: *Republika*, March 30, 2008). Translation: Let all people aware that the flood is not only God order. The flood is a curse. The flood is effect of greedy human who exploitate nature! In the end story, Markonah becomes a victim of flood. From the story above, the author shows the flood is blame it on human kind. Man has killed the other human by never ending exploitation. The author does send a message to reader by Markonah who scream and think of nature because the nature destroyed by human kind. As the main character, Markonah is a symbol of thinking about nature, human kind, and wisdom.

On the other story, short story entitled "Dahaga Setetes Air dalam Banjir" (Thirst of Water Drop in the Flood) by A Kohar Ibrahim (Source: Daily *Batam Pos*, April 1, 2007) has given the sign of nature punish because of human action. The splendid fiction narrative appeared succesively issues those of ecosystem case being expressed through satire way. On the other story, Aba Mardjani shows the natural issue in the short story entitled "Banjir di Cibaresh" (Source: *Kompas*, Oktober 28, 2012) (The Flood in Cibaresh). It not different with the message of Bambang Joko Susilo, but Mardjani is used metaphor in smart way. Maksun and Kasdul is a active narrator of water that flows the place. Habitat of crocodile, tiger, snake, cockroach, worm, and wolf has lost. The animal above become a part of human ecosystem. There is a chaos because there is no difference of human and animal habitat. Natural damage can being happen decisively. The flood is effect of human action developed mall, villa, building, and ways. Author remember us that the sign of God almighty will harmonize the natural damage. Message of harmonization, circle, and satire of human action are the main theme of this story.

Novel entitled *Bilangan Fu* (2008) (Discourse of Fu) by Ayu Utami presented ecosystem as a part of plot. Parangjati and Yuda is the main character described as a climber of montain. The story needs a setting of good circle to develop a sequence by sequence of enviroment. So does Utami need a metaphor "sexual intercourse" when author described relation between human and nature. Steep hill described as "open vagina" should be nursed by the phalus spirit. The result is orgasm of meaning. Hence, according her, a climber of montain should not injure the wall of hill through drilling to attain the top of montain. Nursing of the hill is a activity of the good climbing without injuring the body of hill in every inch.

Table 1. Schema of Ecological Point of View

Author	Title	Character	Ecological Point of View
Ayu Utami	<i>Bilangan Fu</i>	Watugunung	Mountain-man is like sexual relationship
Sapardi	Perahu Kertas	Noah	Sea and flood
	Noah	Noah	Sea and Flood
Bambang Joko	Banjir	Crazy women	Flood and cursed
A Kohar	Dahaga Setetes	Man	Flood and irony
Aba Mardjani	Banjir di Cibaesah Maksam		Destroyed Habitat

Note: *This schema based on the analysis by researcher.*

Based on the schema above, the point of view is starting point to develop the plot. In other words, point of view does confirm the new character, the new place, and to appear the shaped conflict.

## DISCUSSION

Question of how ecology issues described in the work has been proved in the structure of story. Ecological cases in the work is functioned as plot in the prose. Author has sent an ecological message by the focalisator of the main character. In poem, ecological issues expressed in the metaphor and mythical story. Poets referred to the myth in order to give us an unforgettable moment in the last time.

Literary fact in poems and novel as explained above offered that important information of relationship between human who creates a meaning and nature where they live. Author agreed that there are degradation meanings of destroyed ecosystem. When we compare interpretation of flood in the work and other, from time to time, make dialogue of ecology in fiction, we have got the big meaning of ecosystem. Comparison of the holy text and contemporary work has proved that there is degrading condition of human kind in relation with ecological view.

Table 2. Comparison of The Structural Analysis of Holy Text and Literary Text

	Holy Text	Literary Text
Point of View	God and Prophet	The third one
Character	Noah	People
Plot	Anticipate the big flood	The flood had cursed
Setting	Mythological place	Commonly place
Theme	Ecological strategy	Rationality strategy
Background	Mythical society	Contemporary society

Note: *The resume is based on the structural analysis of literary.*

## CONCLUSION

Based on the interpretation above, we have conclusion that there is new interpretation of ecological approach in developing of human values related with Indonesian criticism.

1. Chronological issue explained that in the beginning human kind had been spoiled by nature. The nature had given anything man want so that man has forgotten.
2. Human is so lazy, and in the ending story the nature has cursed human kind. Big flood in the beginning is only written in the holy book, but it not impssible that in the end time these will be happen.

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