

Reading Surabaya at Close Range: Port Underworlds and Revolutionary Memory in Eko Darmoko's Fiction

Zakridatul Agusmaniar Rane^{1,2} | Rojil Nugroho Bayu Aji³

zakridatul.rane@uho.ac.id

¹Universitas Halu Oleo Kendari, Indonesia

^{2,3}Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Received February 15, 2026

Revised March 31, 2026

Accepted May 16, 2026

Abstract

This article reads Surabaya at close range through two short stories by Eko Darmoko, examining how anomalous details and named urban sites disclose port commerce, revolutionary memory, and the continuities and ruptures between early maritime violence and the conflicts around 1945. Rather than treating Surabaya as a fixed historical background, the article approaches the city as a literary construction shaped by objects, places, affect, focalization, and narrative irregularities. Methodologically, it combines close reading with selective contextual triangulation. The analysis focuses on narrative anomalies, micro-topographies, material objects, affective registers, and named sites in the two stories. Secondary materials, including paratexts, port toponymy, cartographic references, scholarly studies, theses, and relevant historical documents, are used to clarify Surabaya's urban, historical, and cultural contexts without treating fiction as historical documentation. Nusantara Abad 16 foregrounds port underworlds, counterfeit authority, coercive exchange, and gendered vulnerability. Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby organizes revolutionary memory through crowds, rumor, mobile perception, and volatile objects. Across both texts, coercive infrastructures persist, while commodity logics and forms of authority shift. The article contributes to Indonesian literary criticism, Surabaya studies, and debates on fiction, space, and urban historical imagination.

Keywords: Surabaya; literary microhistory; Eko Darmoko; urban memory; micro-topography.

Abstrak

Artikel ini membaca Surabaya dari jarak dekat melalui dua cerita pendek Eko Darmoko dengan menelaah bagaimana detail-detail anomali dan situs-situs urban bernama menyingkap perdagangan pelabuhan, ingatan revolusioner, serta kesinambungan dan keterputusan antara kekerasan maritim awal dan konflik sekitar 1945. Alih-alih memperlakukan Surabaya sebagai latar sejarah yang tetap, artikel ini memahami kota sebagai konstruksi sastra yang dibentuk oleh objek, tempat, afek, fokusasi, dan ketakteraturan naratif. Secara metodologis, kajian ini memadukan pembacaan dekat dengan triangulasi kontekstual secara selektif. Analisis berfokus pada anomali naratif, mikro-topografi, objek material, register afektif, dan situs-situs bernama dalam kedua cerita. Bahan sekunder, termasuk parateks, toponimi pelabuhan, rujukan kartografi, kajian ilmiah, tesis, dan dokumen sejarah yang relevan, digunakan untuk memperjelas konteks urban, historis, dan kultural Surabaya tanpa memperlakukan fiksi sebagai dokumentasi sejarah. *Nusantara Abad 16* menonjolkan dunia bawah pelabuhan, otoritas palsu, pertukaran koersif, dan kerentanan gender. *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* mengorganisasi ingatan revolusioner melalui kerumunan, rumor, persepsi bergerak, dan objek-objek volatil. Kedua teks memperlihatkan persistensi infrastruktur koersif, meskipun logika komoditas dan bentuk otoritas mengalami pergeseran. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada kritik sastra Indonesia, kajian Surabaya, serta perdebatan tentang fiksi, ruang, dan imajinasi sejarah urban.

Kata kunci: Surabaya; mikrohistori sastra; Eko Darmoko; ingatan urban; mikro-topografi.



This article is open access distributed under the terms of the, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Surabaya's past is often narrated through the spectacle of 1945, yet Eko Darmoko's *Nusantara Abad 16* (2022) redirects attention to an earlier shoreline where port authority is brokered rather than legally secured. At Kalianak, a self-appointed harbor master fabricates jurisdiction and converts a shipwrecked woman into exchangeable property. The bargain over coins and opium from northern Swarnadwipa becomes a clue to circuits of violence, credit, and extraction that sustained maritime commerce (Souza, 2009; Xu, 2025). By making cruelty appear procedural, Darmoko's story exposes how informal brokerage joined imperial economies to local moral orders, and how sexual threat and honour regulated bodies before the nation existed. *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* (2024) returns this shadow genealogy to the Republic's founding turbulence. The Yamato flag incident is folded into jealousy, slogans, gunpowder, and crowd movement. A photographer, shifting bodies around the hotel, stakeout near Jembatan Merah and Internatio, and Mallaby's burned Buick compresses the revolution into unstable micro-scenes where agency is improvised and misread (Springhall, 1996). Through Qomar's wavering perception, public memory emerges from alleys, façades, and thresholds, not proclamations alone, and within Surabaya's contested colonial urban fabric (Colombijn, 2022). Idioms of duty and restraint hover at the margins, shaping what crowds permit.

Recent works have mapped Surabaya's large-scale transformations, from colonial spatial ordering to revolutionary violence, but it often uses literature as illustration rather than as a disciplined historical interlocutor. Studies of the city's built inheritance explain how colonial forms are reworked within changing political settings (Colombijn, 2022), while imperial and military histories clarify the British occupation and the disputed circumstances of Mallaby's death (Springhall, 1996). In another field, microhistorical theory shows how anomalous details, treated as clues, can link micro and macro scales without collapsing their difference (Peltonen, 2001; Szijártó, 2002). Other studies on global-micro history and scale-play refine the movement between scene, community, and city (Garg, 2024; De Vries, 2019). However, these tools are rarely applied to Indonesian fiction through paired cases that place early maritime violence beside the 1945 street conflict. Affect (shame, fear, jealousy) also remains underused as a social index tested across levels (Ghobrial, 2019; De Vito, 2019; Magnússon, 2017). This study addresses that gap by treating Darmoko's oddities as archival dialogue rather than metaphor alone.

This study reads two Darmoko's short stories as paired microhistorical cases, each a node in a wider port-world. Rather than start from broad themes, it follows troubling outliers (fabricated office, narcotic barter, a roaming camera, a blackened car). It asks what structures emerge when such details are treated as traces rather than ornaments (Peltonen, 2001). Each clue enters a dialogic dossier: toponyms against maps, crowd scenes against press captions, moral claims against legal records. Interpretation is tested across levels, moving from individual perception to neighborhood practice and urban infrastructure, while failures and contradictions remain visible (De Vries, 2019). Attention to quays, alleys, hotel steps, and bridge approaches keeps place analytical (De Vito, 2019). Across two temporal cuts, Surabaya emerges as a city where power moves through intermediaries and choke points. In an earlier story, authority is privatized: a false official sells protection, and opium lubricates exchange (Souza, 2009). In a later story, authority becomes collective yet depends on objects, rumors, and bottlenecks. Smuggling, brokerage, gendered vulnerability, and threat persist; commodity logic and legitimacy shift from imperial profit to scarcity politics and emergency command (Springhall, 1996; Colombijn, 2022). Fiction recalibrates historical explanation without replacing it (Ghobrial, 2019). In that recalibration, port

underworld and revolution become legible.

Surabaya becomes legible “at close range” when microhistory reads narrative oddities as normal exceptions: small disruptions that open paths from textual detail to structures (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001). Treated as paired cases, these two stories turn deviation into archival, not mere style. In Darmoko’s *Nusantara Abad 16*, anomalies gather around fabricated offices and coercive exchange. An impostor harbor master stages legality, then turns protection and honour into negotiable value. The problem is colonial commerce before 1945: brokerage, violence, and illicit goods sustain a port economy beneath official names. In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, anomaly is more perceptual: a street photographer, a crowd’s shift at a balcony, and a burning Buick make revolutionary time appear as misrecognition, where private desire and public command overlap (Ghobrial, 2019). Across the corpus, anomalies form trace types: role imposture, illicit commensuration, vernacular documentation, and combustible objects. Dialogues, commodity lists, images, and damaged materials invite triangulation with non-literary traces (Peltonen, 2001). They do not “prove” history; they guide archival search toward actors, ledgers, captions, and competing accounts (Ginzburg, 1993; Souza, 2009; Springhall, 1996).

Micro-topography, in a microhistorical register, refers to a small spatial assemblage (quay, alley, bridgehead, hotel stair) where relations become thinkable because movement, visibility, and coercion are materially channelled (De Vito, 2019). This study, therefore, treats place not as backdrop but as linked analytical sites in northern Surabaya: Kalianak–Kalimas–Tanjung Perak as a watery corridor of brokerage, and Hotel Yamato–Jembatan Merah as an urban corridor of spectacle and pursuit. In *Nusantara Abad 16*, river mouths, watch posts, and ship-side transactions make authority mobile and easily forged. In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, balconies, lobbies, bridge approaches, cameras, and crowds turn architecture into a medium of memory. Each zone becomes a unit to reconstruct through maps, toponym histories, built-environment studies, historical GIS, and municipal directories, enabling repeatable movement between scene and city (De Vries, 2019; Colombijn, 2022; Handinoto & Hartono, 2007). As mediators of agency, these sites are coded through chokepoints, concealment niches, circulation rhythms, and visibility regimes. They also police thresholds, deciding who may cross, linger, command, or disappear unnoticed. Scenes are isolated, mapped, paired with external traces, and tested at neighborhood and city levels in practice (Colombijn, 2022; Springhall, 1996).

Continuities and disjunctions are treated not as period labels but as hypotheses drawn from micro-clues and tested across scales. This move lets microhistory link singular scenes to wider structures while preserving contradiction (Szijártó, 2002; De Vries, 2019). Read together, Darmoko’s sixteenth-century port underworld and 1945 streetscape share durable infrastructures: brokers, guards, fixers, coercive masculinity, opportunistic authority, and transactions that exchange protection, bodies, and passage. Yet they diverge in purpose and medium of violence. Earlier, the world turned violence into rent extracted from trade; the revolutionary city uses violence to discipline scarcity, rumor, and crowds. The protocol keeps claims provisional, records negative cases, notes provenance limits, and keeps alternative explanations visible (Ghobrial, 2019). Because both stories stage gendered exploitation, literary affect (shame, jealousy, fear) is read beside ethical–legal vocabularies, including Islamic print discourse and courtly languages of order (Burhanudin, 2004). Disjunctions appear in commodity logics, authority forms, and memory media: imperial profit versus wartime shortage, harbor paperwork versus crowd command, ledger versus photograph (Souza, 2009; Springhall, 1996).

Reading Surabaya at close range means treating literature and its traces as a composite archive rather than a closed aesthetic object (Karsono, 2022; Ghobrial, 2019). The primary materials are Eko Darmoko's two short stories (*Nusantara Abad 16* (Jawa Pos, 2022) and *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* (Jawa Pos, 2024) and their paratexts, including publication context and authorial or editorial notes, because these frames shape how port violence and street memory become legible. This layered corpus allows minor narrative irregularities to be checked against heterogeneous traces while preserving archival silences as meaningful. For 1945 Surabaya, triangulation uses local press, municipal directories, and notes on crowd control or casualties. For the earlier port world, it uses toponyms, maps, customs or policing records, pilotage logs, shipping lists, and traveler chronicles. Finally, oral histories and historical GIS help stabilize micro-topography without flattening narrative ambiguity (De Vito, 2019). Together, these materials specify actors, routes, and moral vocabularies so that close reading converses with, rather than replaces, history in a disciplined fashion.

This study uses paired-case microhistory: each story becomes a node where dissonant details lead from the anomalous to wider structures (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001). Following Karsono's urban microhistory, it privileges objects and situated perception but extends that method across two moments in a single port city (Karsono, 2022). Its units are not Surabaya as a whole, but clustered actors and sites: port intermediaries, sailors, bordello economies, newsboys, street photographers, and hotel-bridge zones where crowds gather, and authority is improvised. Analysis reduces scale to scenes, then expands toward community and city/region to test whether each inference survives level shifts (De Vries, 2019). The stories supply granular maps. Kalianak appears as a harbor edge of performed titles, forged papers, ship-side bargains, and bodies as cargo, with routes toward Kalimas-Tanjung Perak. Yamato and Jembatan Merah-Internatio turn balconies, stairs, bridges, a camera, and a car into public memory, contextualized by port morphology, colonial urban form, and Mallaby's episode (Handinoto & Hartono, 2007; Colombijn, 2022; Springhall, 1996).

Source gathering follows a five-step, auditable protocol. Close reading isolates ethically charged irregularities: impostor harbor master, opium barter, roaming photographer, and burning Buick. Each is then placed in documentary dialogue with at least two external traces, such as captions and directories, toponyms and policing records, or khutbah pamphlets and public-order circulars. Claims are tested across levels, moving from motive to community practice and infrastructure, with failed inferences recorded beside successful ones (Peltonen, 2001; De Vries, 2019). The narrative remains reflexive, naming gaps, provenance, and alternative explanations while anonymizing testimonies on gendered violence (Ginzburg, 1993). Analysis then proceeds through reduction, display, and verification. Matrices align anomaly, place, social relation, archival trace, and level test. Disconfirming documents guide recoding. Content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and microhistorical synthesis keep interpretation modest yet transferable (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; van Dijk, 1993; Szijártó, 2002).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reading Surabaya "at close range" becomes productive when minor textual irregularities are treated as microhistorical clues: "normal exceptions" that move interpretation beyond the surface of the literary text (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001). In *Nusantara Abad 16*, anomalies gather around false office, narcotic barter, and sexual

coercion. Narrator calls figure “Syahbandar Kalianak”, “lelaki paling jahanam di abad 16”, then rejects his authority with the phrase “*Cuih! Syahbandar gadungan*”. Title “syahbandar” therefore appears less as an institution than as a performed costume. The same logic appears in the story’s procedural details: the fugitive is brought into “*Pos Pantau yang letaknya tak jauh dari Dermaga*”, drugged with “*bubuk biji apel*”, and later exchanged because her pursuers “*...akan menukarnya dengan sekantong keping emas dan sekotak opium.*” This statement that “*sampanmu sudah terisi keping emas dan opium*” turns violence, trade, and bodily vulnerability into one transaction. These details work as trace-objects. They focus on brokerage, informal policing, and illicit commodities that supported maritime commerce (Souza, 2009). Their force is ethical and logistical: who claims protection, who pays for it, and who disappears within the port’s routine economy (Ghobrial, 2019).

In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, anomaly shifts from forged authority to vernacular documentation and unstable material evidence. The Yamato crowd scene is interrupted by “*juru foto yang baru saja berhasil mengabadikan insiden perobekan bendera*”, making the memory appear as an image already awaiting caption. Revolutionary tension then gathers around objects and debris: “*Mereka mengintai mobil Buick*”, followed by “*Mallaby ditemukan tewas dalam mobil Buick yang sudah hangus*”. The burned car becomes a contested surface on which rumor, tactical action, and witness memory converge (Springhall, 1996). Both stories also use dates: “*Di penghujung 1566*”, “*Di pertengahan 1567*”, “*19 September 1945*”, and “*Tanggal 30 Oktober 1945*” to make anomalies appear as recorded events, as though the city keeps a ledger of disruption. When a stone-throwing leaflet announces “*Ultimatum dari Mayor Jenderal Mansergh*”, and is torn with the declaration “*Kita harus mempertahankan kedaulatan negeri ini*”, paper becomes an order that moves bodies and reorganizes space (van Dijk, 1993). Together, these details show fiction as a micro-archive: not equal to historical fact, but capable of locating where authority, value, and public memory are negotiated in Surabaya.

A preliminary coding of the stories may be structured using a Narrative-Anomaly Matrix, treating each irregular detail as an analytical unit rather than a loose thematic marker. The matrix contains five related fields: anomaly token, textual form, spatial anchor, implied structure, and candidate external trace. Anomaly tokens include role imposture, illicit commensuration, vernacular documentation, and combustible objects. Textual forms include direct speech, narratorial report, epistolary accusation, and dialogic banter. Spatial anchors include the quay, watch post, hotel frontage, bridgehead, and riverside camp. Implied structures include brokerage, informal policing, scarcity command, and memory production. Candidate traces include directory entries, map toponyms, press captions, sermon leaflets, and police circulars. Within this grid, the port story concentrates on role imposture and illicit commensuration, repeatedly framed through second-person accusation, “*kamu mengaku sebagai syahbandar.*” Revolutionary story, by contrast, disperses anomaly through dialogue and action, with the camera and car functioning as mobile devices that index memory, violence, and contested authority.

To clarify narrative distribution, focalization may be mapped as a two-layered sequence across the order of scenes. The first story remains largely bound to an accusatory epistolary “you,” with brief ethnographic insertions on routes, offices, and port jurisdictions. The second shifts between Qomar’s interior perception, street-level exchange, and panoramic crowd movement. Peaks of focal intensity appear around object-handling episodes (camera, leaflet, and Buick) and around coercive thresholds such as Pos Pantau and Jembatan Merah. These peaks indicate where textual density invites contextual triangulation. This procedure follows qualitative content-analysis principles: segmenting

text, assigning codes, visualizing co-occurrence, and revising categories when disconfirming traces emerge (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Because authority is repeatedly produced through speech, matrix also marks evaluative lexemes such as “jahanam” and “lancang.” These lexical tags help trace moral judgment, linking discourse-sensitive reading to microhistorical movement across scene, community, and city scales (van Dijk, 1993; De Vries, 2019).

This pattern is deliberate, not incidental. Each text builds credibility through a quasi-forensic voice that adopts a reportorial approach. The sixteenth-century narrative turns epistolary accusation into documentary form. This narration repeatedly inserts temporal markers: “Di penghujung 1566, Maria Anna San Jose kabur...” and later “Di pertengahan 1567...”. The letter reads more like a case record than a confession. Since the addressed “you” is already positioned as guilty, the anomaly becomes a rhetorical instrument. A more precise mechanism (watch-post, drugging, barter) invites more readers to imagine supporting documents, maps, and ledgers (Ghobrial, 2019; Peltonen, 2001). *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* works differently. This story invests public scenes with documentary afterlife; thus, anomaly gathers around media, objects, and archival residues. Report-like statements: “Brigadir Jenderal Mallaby datang ke Surabaya, 25 Oktober 1945,” “Tanggal 30 Oktober 1945,” and “Keesokan harinya, 10 November 1945” operate like headlines, reducing complex causality to legible coordinates. When Qomar reads, announces, and tears ultimatum, the story shows how texts become commands and how affect (jealousy, fear) organizes action in wartime neighborhoods (van Dijk, 1993). This reading follows urban microhistory, which traces historical change through situated perception and mobile objects rather than abstract periodization (Karsono, 2022). The anomalies, therefore, reflect genre-work: one story manufactures evidence through accusation; the other reactivates a city already saturated with images, rumors, and commemorative scripts. In both, news-like cadence opens dialogue with local press, captions, and municipal notes, while also exposing the archive’s unevenness.

Microhistory’s spatial turn insists that place is not background but a mediating device: small corridors, thresholds, and sightlines that channel what people can do and what can be recorded (De Vito, 2019). Across the paired corpus, Surabaya is assembled through such micro-topography, named with a concreteness that invites mapping and archival triangulation. Each toponym works like a pin on an archival layer. In an early-modern story, the city appears as a hydrographic edge. “Teluk Kalianak” is not only a site; it is a jurisdictional gap, a “*teluk kerdil di pedalaman*” where authority can be forged and refuge can turn into capture. The narrative anchors coercion in a built node: “*Pos Pantau yang letaknya tak jauh dari dermaga di Teluk Kalianak*”. Watch-post becomes both shelter and trap. Story then widens port geography through comparative place names: “*jabatan syahbandar terdekat ada di Selat Kamal Perak yang memisahkan Jawa dan Madura, serta Pelabuhan Tandes*”, and through a route that moves from “Samboanga” past “Celebes” and “Borneo” toward “*utara Jawa sisi timur*”. These sites are useful microhistorical units because they can be checked against maps, pilotage logs, and policing records while remaining small enough to keep brokers and intermediaries visible (De Vries, 2019; Souza, 2009).

In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, micro-topography shifts from tidal margins to urban optics. Conflict unfolds “*di depan Hotel Yamato*”, where bodies “*menyemut menutupi permukaan jalan*” and a flagpole balcony creates a vertical politics of visibility. Escape becomes displacement toward “*pinggiran sungai yang terletak di Asemrowo*”, a refugee edge where intimacy and rumor circulate under pressure. Militarized action then tightens around “*sekitaran Jembatan Merah dan Gedung Internatio*”. The bridge operates as a choke point, concentrating surveillance, noise, and sudden death, before the

narrative moves toward shelter “*di dekat Stasiun Kota*”. These sites echo studies of Indonesian colonial and postcolonial urban fabrics, in which built forms gather competing meanings across political ruptures (Colombijn, 2022). They become spatial units: named, traversed, affectively charged places where fiction and history can meet without being collapsed into each other.

This study makes spatial evidence legible by grouping stories’ key locations into a Micro-Topography Matrix, covering Kalianak, Pos Pantau, Kamal Perak/Tandes, Yamato frontage, Asemrowo riverside, Jembatan Merah–Internatio corridor, and Stasiun Kota. Each site is read through three linked dimensions: function, actor, and traceability. The function identifies whether a place operates as a shelter, a brokerage zone, a surveillance point, a spectacle, or a choke point. Actor identifies social figures associated with the site: harbor brokers, translators, vulnerable travelers, photographers, militia units, refugees, and preachers. Traceability indicates how a site may be traced beyond the literary text through map-ready toponyms, directory entries, photo captions, sermon leaflets, or court records (De Vito, 2019). This matrix clarifies a shared spatial logic across two stories. Both periods depend on threshold spaces where protection can be negotiated, sold, withdrawn, or redirected. Yet the dominant regime of visibility changes. The early port world is shaped by dim watch-post interiors and opaque shoreline transactions. At the same time, *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* moves toward exposed balconies, bridge lines, crowds, and public spectacle.

This spatial mapping can also be presented as a narrative distribution graph and a node-edge diagram. The port story shows its highest scene density around Kalianak and Pos Pantau, then disperses into route-summary passages that point toward Kamal Perak and Tandes. The story repeatedly returns to Yamato and Jembatan Merah, while Asemrowo and Stasiun Kota appear as detours of refuge, displacement, and tactical movement. In node-edge terms, Kalianak links outward to Kamal Perak and Tandes as archival prompts, whereas Yamato links to bridge, river, and radio as channels of command and affect. This visual procedure follows recent urban microhistory, which reads modernization and conflict through bodies, objects, and sites while keeping scale-shifts explicit (Karsono, 2022; De Vries, 2019). When overlaid with historical GIS layers, the diagram allows distances, routes, and lines of sight to be checked, so “close range” becomes an empirical rather than a metaphorical concept. Focalization ribbons further sharpen contrast: epistolary narrative fixes the accusation in a single dominant angle, while Qomar’s shifting interiority moves through crowd panoramas and unstable public scenes (Colombijn, 2022).

Urban power in both stories is not located in the city as a whole, but in points where movement can be stopped, redirected, or made visible. The port narrative locates this power in liminal infrastructure. The sequence “*Setelah mengangkut Maria Anna San Jose, kamu membawanya masuk ke dalam Pos Pantau*” establishes the watch-post as an infrastructure of protection that can be instantly converted into a site of captivity, a classic microhistorical site where intermediaries remain visible (De Vito, 2019). The contrast between Kalianak, Kamal Perak, and Tandes further suggests an uneven geography of offices and supervision. False authority becomes plausible where cartographic attention and institutional control are weak. The narrative reorganizes this spatial logic through visibility and crowd movement. “*Situasi di depan Hotel Yamato terasa mencekam*” turns the hotel façade into a public stage where rumor, sight, and collective action intensify one another. Balcony and flagpole work not only as symbols but also as devices that gather and synchronize bodies. Movement toward “*pinggiran sungai yang terletak di Asemrowo*” relocates agency to a refugee edge, where intimacy is shaped by scarcity and surveillance. Around “*sekitaran*

Jembatan Merah dan Gedung Internatio”, the bridge becomes a narrowing device that concentrates panic, decision, and fatal misrecognition (Springhall, 1996). Read through scale play, these micro-topographies do more than provide local color: a single threshold can structure private dialogue, crowd action, convoy movement, and policing practice (De Vries, 2019). This spatial reading directs triangulation toward maps, directories, captions, and mosque records, while keeping interpretation proportionate to available evidence.

Two stories do not produce a simple line of historical continuity. They reveal a more uneven pattern: certain mechanisms of coercion endure, while regimes that authorize and circulate violence change. In *Nusantara Abad 16*, coercion moves through intermediaries, desire, and exchange. The phrase “*Birahi menjelma setan mengerikan dalam benak lelaki*” places sexual violence inside a wider infrastructure of domination, while “*menaburkan bubuk biji apel*” shows how bodily control is routinized through a calculated procedure. The economic logic becomes explicit when pursuers “*...akan menukarnya dengan sekantong keping emas dan sekotak opium*” and when “*harta dan candu membuatmu silau*”. Here, the port’s moral appears calibrated by narcotics, debt, ransom, and conversion of protection into transaction (Souza, 2009). The story relocates this coercive logic into a different political field. Violence no longer depends mainly on privatized imposture of one man performing office; it spreads through crowds, emergency commands, radio, and circulating texts. The street cry “*Belanda memang kurang ajar... Jancok!*” joins anger to sovereignty, while ultimatum, “*Kita semua disuruh menyerahkan senjata... Kita diharuskan mengangkat kedua tangan*”, translates domination into bureaucratic command. Its circulation intensifies effect: “*kertas-kertas berisi ultimatum... langsung menyebar ke seantero kota*”. Gendered violence also persists, though in altered form. Nurdin’s act of “*menyetubuhi gadis bule secara brutal*” echoes earlier fusion of power, sex, and humiliation, but now through wartime barracks rather than a watch-post. Break lies in media and scale of authority: radio, “*pidatonya lewat corong radio*”, crowds, cameras, captions, and propaganda scripts replace the older world of route talk, barter, and harbor impersonation (Springhall, 1996; Colombijn, 2022). Microhistorically, these continuities and ruptures remain hypotheses to be tested across textual, archival, and spatial levels. The protocol, therefore, preserves contradiction, including cases where documents unsettle the fiction, as a necessary safeguard in clue-led microhistory (Ghobrial, 2019).

The comparison between two stories is organized through a matrix that tracks five analytical dimensions: coercive infrastructure, commodity logic, authority formation, media of memory, and gendered regulation. Instead of treating each episode as an isolated narrative incident, coding places micro-scenes from both texts in relation to one another: watch-post, drugging, and barter sequence in the port story; Yamato crowd, Buick ambush, circulating ultimatum, radio speech, and barracks discovery in *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*. Each coded unit is then assessed to determine whether it repeats a mechanism already visible in other temporal settings or marks a regime shift.

The pattern that emerges is uneven but legible. Continuity appears most strongly in coercion mediated by intermediaries and in the transformation of “protection” into exchange value. Disjunction appears in the sources of legitimacy and in the technology through which authority and memory circulate. The port story depends on ledger-like route talk, barter, and personalized accusation; *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* depends on camera, leaflet, radio, crowd command, and public spectacle. A paired distribution chart would therefore show the Port narrative weighted toward coercion and commodity. In contrast, the Mallaby narrative is weighted toward mass media and collective mobilization. Focalization further sharpens the contrast. The accusatory epistle makes

continuity feel intimate, targeted, and morally prosecutorial. Qomar-centered narrative makes disjunction feel unstable and situational, shifting between interior reflection, dialogue, and panoramic crowd scenes.

Read together, the matrices clarify how Darmoko's Surabaya functions as both literary construction and analytical proposition. City becomes legible when small material signs (objects, dates, places, fragments of speech) move interpretation from scene to structure. For this reason, this study treats two stories as paired microhistorical cases. Each irregular detail is treated as a unit that may be pursued beyond the text, but only through cautious inference and corroborating traces (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001). First reading identifies anomalies and place names. These units are then placed in documentary dialogue: captions beside directories, toponyms beside ledgers. Level testing follows, asking whether an interpretation remains plausible at the scale of individual action, community practice, and urban infrastructure (De Vries, 2019). Validity depends on provenance checking, attention to negative cases, and explicit reasoning. Ethical caution is also central, especially in reading gendered violence and in anonymizing oral testimony.

The stories themselves already invite this evidentiary posture. Phrases such as "*Perlu kamu catat*" and "*Celebes, 4 Juli 1586*" resemble case annotations, while "*Kesokan harinya, 10 November 1945*" and "*Sekarang tanggal 9 November, kan?*" create a sense of urgent historical timekeeping. These report-like registers do not turn fiction into a chronicle. Rather, they show how fiction can organize clues, expose gaps, and direct historical questioning. This article, therefore, proposes a transferable protocol for reading fiction as a micro-archive of port moral economies. It shows how colonial commerce and revolutionary memory meet in concrete urban corridors (Kalianak, Yamato, and Jembatan Merah) without reducing literature to historical documentation or history to narrative invention (Karsono, 2022; De Vito, 2019). Surabaya's underworlds become visible only when scale is first reduced, then carefully expanded again.

Surabaya is approached here through small fractures in Darmoko's narration, where seemingly minor details acquire disproportionate analytical force. These details do not merely embellish fiction; they operate as microhistorical "normal exceptions," enabling reading to move from textual particularity toward broader social and historical formations (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001). In *Nusantara Abad 16*, most disruptive clue is performance of office: "*Kamu mengaku sebagai syahbandar kepadanya. Cuih! Syahbandar gadungan*". The sentence condemns the figure, but it also defines authority as a costume that must be checked through documents, witnesses, and spatial routines. A second clue makes commerce obscene. The pursuers "*...akan menukarnya dengan sekantong keping emas dan sekotak opium*", after he has "*menaburkan bubuk biji apel*" into tea. Narcotics, money, and violated safety become exchangeable. Port, therefore, appears as a moral economy organized by brokerage and coercion.

In another story, anomaly shifts to media and material remains. A scene is registered by "*juru foto yang baru saja berhasil mengabadikan insiden perobekan bendera*", while later memory gathers around a damaged object: "*Mallaby ditemukan tewas dalam mobil Buick yang sudah hangus*". These details show that revolutionary remembrance forms through captions, rumors, and forensic fragments, not through proclamation alone (Springhall, 1996). This matters because fiction can function as a disciplined micro-archive, revealing infrastructures of trade and memory without becoming chronicle (Ghobrial, 2019). However, clues remain unstable. The accusatory letter produces excess certainty; the burned car produces competing accounts. This tension requires level testing, from individual scene to intermediary community and urban order, so interpretation remains

answerable to contradiction (De Vries, 2019). Surabaya thus becomes an evidentiary field where titles, objects, and memories circulate, injure bodies, organize value, and convert fragmented events into public memory through unstable narrative forms.

Port cities often circulate power through intermediaries rather than through fixed institutions. The false harbor master becomes plausible because coastal governance relied on brokerage, translation, and selective enforcement, in which supervision weakened, and “office” could be performed as a role (Souza, 2009). Opium is therefore not decorative exoticism. It works as an instrument of credit and coercion: concealable, priceable, and quickly exchangeable when law becomes negotiable. In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, the photographer and ultimatum leaflet belong to another infrastructure: emergency mass communication. Authority is assembled through images, slogans, and paper that move through neighborhoods. The burned vehicle then becomes a forensic surface on which competing groups project causality, since revolutionary crises often produce more testimony than verification (Springhall, 1996). A microhistorical reading treats these formations as layered. The same detail is followed into directories, captions, and sermons, then tested across levels without suppressing negative cases (Ghobrial, 2019). Both stories also carry vocabularies of honor, showing how moral regulation moves through Islamic publics and street speech (Burhanudin, 2004).

A close-range reading presents Surabaya not as a single, coherent urban whole, but as a series of thresholds where movement, power, and meaning are negotiated. In *Nusantara Abad 16*, coercion is anchored in one built site: “*Setelah mengangkat Maria Anna San Jose, kamu membawanya masuk ke dalam Pos Pantau yang letaknya tak jauh dari dermaga di Teluk Kalianak*”. The watch-post becomes a hinge where refuge turns into captivity. Story’s reference to other jurisdictions; “*jabatan syahbandar terdekat ada di Selat Kamal Perak ... serta Pelabuhan Tandes*”, also makes micro-topography an index of administrative unevenness. Where oversight is remote, imposture can grow; where shoreline is crowded, violence can appear routine. In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, spatial mediation becomes visual and collective. The crowd gathers before a façade, “*Situasi di depan Hotel Yamato terasa mencekam*”, then moves through corridor-like spaces: “*Pergilah mereka menuju pinggiran sungai yang terletak di Asemrowo*”, before action tightens “*di sekitaran Jembatan Merah dan Gedung Internatio*”. Agency, therefore, does not simply belong to smugglers, sailors, or revolutionaries. It is shaped by chokepoints, sightlines, and shelters that amplify some actors while erasing others (De Vito, 2019). These spaces also fail. A bridge that organizes coordination can also spread rumors; a riverside refuge can increase exposure. Linking literary scenes to port morphology and colonial built environments enables triangulation without treating place as background (Handinoto & Hartono, 2007; Colombijn, 2022). Following recent Indonesian urban microhistory, the method reads things and sites as relays that turn private affect into public event (Karsono, 2022). Each named zone becomes a unit for mapping, description, and cross-checking: toponyms against historical maps, hotel and bridge nodes against press captions, riverside margins against municipal relief notes. This triangulation clarifies what fiction condenses while preserving ambiguity as archival friction rather than analytical failure (De Vries, 2019).

These spatial patterns reveal how infrastructural histories organize possibilities of action, circulation, and memory within each urban corridor. Kalianak and Kalimas occupy watery edges where labor, contraband, and patrol intersect. Such liminal environments historically enabled intermediaries who moved between ships, markets, and policing systems, making watch posts plausible as both shelter and sites of predation (De Vito, 2019).

Yamato and Jembatan Merah operate on different axes. They belong to a colonial urban field organized by visibility: balconies, broad streets, and landmark façades where symbolic acts can quickly become collective mobilization. Movement also narrows toward a bridgehead that can be blocked, stormed, or militarized (Colombijn, 2022). During the 1945 crisis, these sites became tactical and mnemonic centers, drawing press attention, cameras, and reprisals; this explains why narrative repeatedly returns to them (Springhall, 1996). This relation between space and agency must be tested, not presumed. Claims are checked against maps, directories, and captions, then revised when spatial evidence unsettles the scene (De Vries, 2019). This procedure prevents analysis from turning urban space into romanticized local color.

Reading two temporal slices together does not turn them into one continuous historical line. It asks whether small clues reveal durable infrastructures while also marking regime shifts. The strongest continuity lies in the normalization of coercion through intermediaries. In *Nusantara Abad 16*, violence becomes transaction: “*Mereka akan menukarnya dengan sekantong keping emas dan sekotak opium*”. This exchange is supported by bureaucratic performance (“*Syahbandar gadungan*”) and bodily control (“*menaburkan bubuk biji apel*”). In *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby*, coercion persists, but it shifts to crowd control and emergency paperwork. A thrown leaflet can reorganize the street: “*Qomar menangkapnya, dan membacanya... ‘Sekarang tanggal 9 November, kan?’... ‘Ultimatum dari Mayor Jenderal Mansergh*”. When “*kertas-kertas berisi ultimatum... langsung menyebar ke seantero kota*”, Surabaya becomes a distribution network, turning paper into fear, defiance, and coordinated action (van Dijk, 1993). Gendered vulnerability also persists. This scene, in which “*Hanum memergoki Nurdin sedang menyetubuhi gadis bule secara brutal*,” echoes earlier transformation of “*suaka*” into sexual entitlement, though now through wartime barracks.

These disjunctions are equally decisive. Commodity logic shifts from maritime extraction, ransom, and opium exchange to scarcity politics and the surrender of weapons. Authority also changes form: from privatized imposture to ad hoc legitimacy mediated by radio, “*Sutomo... mengumandangkan pidatonya lewat corong radio*”, and by unstable material evidence, especially when “*Mallaby ditemukan tewas dalam mobil Buick yang sudah hangus*” (Springhall, 1996). This matters because port cities’ moral economies can persist across rupture without becoming identical. The same corridor may host different regimes of value, different forms of coercion, and different publics of justification, including Islamic discourses on order and honor (Burhanudin, 2004; Souza, 2009). This article’s analytical contribution lies in a level-tested comparison that allows continuities and breaks to emerge from textual clues, rather than from fixed period labels (De Vries, 2019; Szijártó, 2002). It also shows where close reading reaches its limits: some clues demand corroboration that archives cannot provide. Those absences remain part of the argument. Following microhistory’s clue-based logic, this study records rival explanations, seeks disconfirming documents, and treats affect as an index to be tested rather than simply believed (Ginzburg, 1993; Peltonen, 2001; Ghobrial, 2019).

Surabaya’s persistence and rupture are best explained by its position as a port metropolis where authority is repeatedly remade at interfaces: ship and shore, crowd, command, and street. Intermediaries remain crucial because they translate commodities into value, violence into “order”, and events into memory. What changes is the translation medium. Early-modern brokerage depends on secrecy, tides, and informal policing; the 1945 moment depends on captions, leaflets, and broadcast rhetoric, producing narratives that travel faster but are harder to verify. To capture this shift, this study uses paired-case

microhistory, reducing scale to concrete sites and communities. Literary scenes are triangulated with toponyms and maps, press and photo captions, municipal directories (De Vito, 2019; Burhanudin, 2004). Replicability is secured through unit coding, a two-trace rule for each clue, and level testing that records failed inferences. Validity rests on provenance critique and negative cases; ethics requires a restrained approach to gendered violence and anonymized oral accounts. The result is a portable protocol for reading fiction as a micro-archive that recalibrates urban history without mistaking narrative plausibility for historical proof.

CONCLUSION

Reading Eko Darmoko's *Nusantara Abad 16* and *Cinta Absurd di Sekitar Yamato dan Kematian Mallaby* shows that Surabaya is shaped through details that do more than decorate narrative. The impostor syahbandar, opium barter, street photographer, and burned Buick function as narrative clues, exposing how trade, coercion, and remembrance are arranged within city's historical imagination (Peltonen, 2001). The micro-topographies (Kalianak, Kalimas, Tanjung Perak and Hotel Yamato, Jembatan Merah corridor) also mediate agency by defining who can hide, witness, command, move, or disappear within particular spatial regimes (De Vito, 2019). Reading together, two stories reveal continuity and rupture: coercive brokerage endures across time, while governing logic shifts from maritime extraction to scarcity politics, emergency command, and mediated public memory. Here, Darmoko's fiction therefore does not offer a linear or heroic Surabaya. The story presents a layered literary microhistory in which urban space, material objects, and unstable authority disclose the city as a contested field of power, memory, and moral economy (De Vries, 2019).

This study proposes a procedural model for reading fiction as a micro-archive. Each story is treated as one case in a paired design. The analysis isolates "normal exceptions," then places each clue in documentary dialogue with at least two external traces: press captions with municipal directories, toponyms with cartography or port records (Ginzburg, 1993). A level-testing routine checks whether an inference remains valid at the levels of scene, community, and city scales, making interpretive leaps auditable rather than impressionistic (De Vries, 2019). By linking micro-spatial analysis with Indonesian urban historiography, this study contributes to methodological debates on cities, bodies, and things in Southeast Asia (Karsono, 2022; Colombijn, 2022). This research also sharpens moral-economy debates by showing how prose can guide archival searching, not merely illustrate historical context (Ghobrial, 2019).

Several limitations remain. Evidentiary base is uneven: early-modern port records for Surabaya's northern margins are sparse, while materials from 1945 are richer but rhetorically loaded, creating different levels of confidence across the two cases. The corpus consists of only two texts; claims should be treated as methodological propositions rather than broad representational generalizations (Szijártó, 2002). Future studies could address this limitation by expanding the corpus to include other Surabaya fictions and by developing a shared database that records unit codes, alternative readings, and negative cases using a rigorous qualitative protocol. Historical GIS, combined with systematic focalization counts, could also test whether narrative attention corresponds to archival density or instead marks zones of archival silence. Further work on vernacular print may clarify how ideas of honor, order, and legitimate violence move between port underworlds and revolutionary crowds. Since toponyms shift and anachronism remains a risk, collaborative archival checking and transparent inference trails are necessary to preserve microhistory's clue-based caution.

REFERENCES

- Burhanudin, J. (2004). The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika*, 11(1), 23–62. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.652>
- Colombijn, F. (2022). Colonial heritage as bricolage: Interpreting the colonial built environment in Surabaya, Indonesia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 53(4), 617–640. doi:10.1017/S0022463422000807.
- De Vito, C. G. (2019). History without scale: The micro-spatial perspective. *Past & Present*, 242(Supplement_14), 348–372. doi:10.1093/pastj/gtz048.
- De Vries, J. (2019). Playing with scales: The global and the micro, the macro and the nano. *Past & Present*, 242(Supplement_14), 23–36. doi:10.1093/pastj/gtz043.
- Garg, A. (2024). Between global history and microhistory: The case for hybrid historical scholarship. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 66(1), 1–25. doi:10.1017/S0010417523000397.
- Ghobrial, J.-P. A. (2019). Introduction: Seeing the world like a microhistorian. *Past & Present*, 242(Supplement_14), 1–22. doi:10.1093/pastj/gtz046.
- Ginzburg, C., Tedeschi, J., & Tedeschi, A. C. (1993). Microhistory: Two or three things that I know about it. *Critical Inquiry*, 20(1), 10–35. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448699>
- Handinoto, & Hartono, S. (2007). Surabaya kota pelabuhan (“Surabaya port city”): Studi tentang perkembangan bentuk dan struktur sebuah kota pelabuhan ditinjau dari perkembangan transportasi, akibat situasi politik dan ekonomi dari abad 13 sampai awal abad 21. *Dimensi Teknik Arsitektur*, 35(1), 88–99.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Karsono, S. (2022). The city, the body, and the world of things: A microhistory of New Order Jakarta’s accelerated modernization. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 178(2–3), 192–224. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-bja10038>
- Magnússon, S. G. (2017). Far-reaching microhistory: The use of microhistorical perspective in a globalized world. *Rethinking History*, 21(3), 312–341. doi:10.1080/13642529.2016.1252540.
- Peltonen, M. (2001). Clues, margins, and monads: The micro–macro link in historical research. *History and Theory*, 40(3), 347–359. doi:10.1111/0018-2656.00172.
- Springhall, J. (1996). “Disaster in Surabaya”: The death of Brigadier Mallaby during the British occupation of Java, 1945–46. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24(3), 422–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539608582986>
- Souza, G. B. (2009). Opium and the Company: Maritime trade and imperial finances on Java, 1684–1796. *Modern Asian Studies*, 43(1), 113–133.
- Szijártó, I. (2002). Four arguments for microhistory. *Rethinking History*, 6(2), 209–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520210145644>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Xu, G. (2025). Making sugar out of opium: A narco-plantation regime in early modern Southeast Asia. *Past & Present*, 266(1), 113–151.