

**HESTER'S EFFORT ATTAINING LOVE IN ROLAND JOFFE'S *THE SCARLET LETTER* MOVIE (1995):
AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

A man comes to the world like a white clean sheet of paper; he is empty and pure. God gives him an opportunity to live and to exist in his society. And since that time, this newly born baby will learn to live among his community. Life requires struggle. A happiness can be achieved when people live their lives with kindness.

Sometimes life is not in the line like what people want . First rule in life is never give up, and the second rule is to remember the first rule. But people still have to try and get what people want. Love is deep feeling for another person. Love brings them to the happiness; but also love brings them to grief.

The Scarlet Letter is a drama movie adaption of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel. This version was "freely adapted" from Hawthorne and deviated from the original story of the same name. The movie was directed by Roland Joffe, and written by Douglas Day Steward. It is starred by Demi Moore as Hester Prynne, Gary Oldman as Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale, Robert Duvall as Roger Chillingworth, Edward Hardwicke as Gov. John Bellingham, Robert Prosky as Horace Stoneham and Joan Plowright as Harriet Hibbons. *The Scarlet Letter* Movie was shot in British Columbia near [Vancouver](#) and in the [Nova Scotia](#) towns of [Yarmouth](#) and [Shelburne](#) in 1994. This movie was distributed by Hollywood Pictures (USA) and Cinergy Pictures (Foreign Markets). The movie was released on October, 13 1995. The Scarlet Letter movie has running time 135 minutes or 2 hour 15 minutes. U.S. Box Office \$ 10,378,982. The film was also box office bomb. It was nominated for seven Golden Raspberry Awards at the 1995 ceremony, winning "Worst Remake or Sequel."

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in 1804, in the city of Salem, Massachusetts, United States. Hawthorne attended Bowdoin College, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1824 and graduated in 1825. Hawthorne anonymously published his first work, a novel titled *Fanshawe*, in 1828. He published several short stories in various periodicals which he collected in 1837 as *Twice-Told Tales*. His four major romances were written between 1850 and 1860: *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and *The Marble Faun* (1860). Another novel-length romance, *Fanshawe* was published anonymously in 1828. He died in May 1864 (aged 59) Plymouth, New Hampshire, United States

Roland Joffé was born in November 17, 1945 in London, England, UK. Steeped in the traditions of British stage and television, director Roland Joffé has fashioned a career which veers between highbrow, left-leaning historical epics and sexually charged high camp, sometimes within the same film. Born and raised in Manchester, England, Joffé leapt into the theater scene with the Young Vic troupe; after graduating from Manchester University, he found a career with the troupe's counterpart, the aptly named Old Vic. In the late '70s, the director began to dabble in documentary and dramatic television.

The journalistic style he developed on the small screen would brilliantly inform his feature debut, *The Killing Fields*, in 1984. Joffé followed up on his auspicious debut with *The Mission* (1986), a tragic story of two disparate but equally disastrous attempts to settle 18th century Latin America. 1992's film adaptation of Dominique Lapierre's novel City of Joy seemed a return to form, as it touched upon many of the director's pet themes: culture clashes, the sometimes-disillusioning effects of altruism, and the splendor of nature. *The Scarlet Letter* on the public in 1995. In 1999, Joffé meekly emerged from his own Hester Prynne-like exile to

attempt a hip, youthful neo-noir, *Goodbye Lover*. As star-studded as it was convoluted, the film received the briefest of releases before its appearance on cable television. The 54-year-old director also decided that same year to lend his name as executive producer to the MTV network's vapidly explicit teen soap opera *Undressed*.

The Scarlet Letter tells much about the adulterous love between two early Puritans, When she refuses to name the father of her child, she is shunned by the community and forced to wear a red letter "A" on her bodice as a symbol of her sinful act. It is begun with Hester (Demi Moore) arrived in town with a group of settlers by boat from England. She has come ahead of her husband to prepare their home for his arrival. The local dignitaries immediately take offense to her traveling alone and are even more shocked when she informs them that she will be living alone until her husband arrives. Hester stays to herself with her new servant, Mituba. One day as Hester drives her cart into town for Sabbath services a wheel falls into a muddy hole. She is trying to get it to budge when a stranger rides up behind her, introducing himself as Arthur, and offers to help. When Arthur is unable to pry it from the mud, he gives her his horse and he rides the horse that has been hitched to the cart. They both gallop into town parting as they go in opposite directions.

When Hester arrives at the services, Reverend Stonehall tells everyone that the Reverend Dimmsdale is going to give the service. As Hester looks up she is surprised to see the very man has just rescued her in the woods. After the sermon, everyone retires to the Stonehall home for a picnic and Hester is formally introduced to Reverend Arthur Dimmsdale. They both feel the attraction between them but when Arthur finds out she is married he tries to dismiss his feelings. He soon realizes that it is not going to be that easy. In the following months, every time they run into each

other the same feelings are always there no matter how hard they both try to deny them.

In the meantime, Hester's husband's boat has been attacked by Indians and everyone is presumed dead. Arthur brings Hester a wig found at the site of the attack with the name tag "Pyrnne, Roger R." When Arthur suggests to let her mourn, she says "No" as she pulls him into her arms. There is no turning back now for either one as they consummate their love for eternity.

The main character in this film is Hester Prynne, a young, beautiful English woman. Having been sent to Boston by her husband who would later join her once he took care of financial matters, Hester delivers the child of an unknown father. Her punishment for adultery is that she has to wear a scarlet (red) *A* on the front of her dress. She is shunned by the town because of her dreadful sin and because she refuses to reveal her lover's identity.

The writer is interested to analyze this movie because this movie really interesting. First reason is *The Scarlet Letter* movie is a romantic film that the experience of Hester and Dimmesdale recalls the story of Adam and Eve because, in both cases, sin results in expulsion and suffering; but it also results in knowledge of what it means to be human.

The second reason is about adultery and punishment. Hester's punishment for adultery, being forced to wear a scarlet letter as a mark of shame upon her breast for life, may seem harsh and unusual. But the punishment is extraordinarily lenient in comparison to the Biblical and legal punishments that were available at the time. In Puritan society, adultery was not seen merely as a matter between the two parties but as a breach of contract between those individuals and the community.

The third reason is the effort of Hester to attaining her love with Arthur till their daughter born. She was willing to be punished for maintaining her love and did not want to see Arthur sentenced to death by the government because of their mistakes. She knew what she was doing wrong but she goes round to protect the person she loves. Every people will always face many choices in life, and will decide what they want to choose based on belief in their experience.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe *The Scarlet Letter* movie by using existentialist Perspective . So the writer constructs the title **HESTER'S EFFORT ATTAINING LOVE IN ROLAND JOFFE'S THE SCARLET LETTER MOVIE (1995) : AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH.**

B. Literature Review

The first study about *The Scarlet Letter* conducted by Denny Parhan, a Gunadarma University student (2005), entitled “STUCTURAL APPROACH IN ROLAND JOFFE'S *THE SCARLET LETTER MOVIE*”. He uses structural approach to analyze the data. The writer wants to know further about how people value the morality of Hester Prynne and her adultery Arthur Dimmesdale. The writer is interested in moral aspects in this novel, because it is surrounded by something sinful and lies. It is occurred in Puritan community which is very religious.

The second study about *The Scarlet Letter* conducted by Ardi Darmawan, a Diponegoro University student (2009), entitled “*THE CONSEQUENCES OF REPRESSED EMOTION OF ARTHUR DIMMESDALE'S PERSONALITY IN ROLAND JOFFE'S THE SCARLET LETTER MOVIE.*”. *He uses psychoanalytic to analyze the data. The aim of the study is to find the character of Arthur Dimmesdale and understand the effects of emotions, thoughts, or feelings are repressed in a person's personality.* The result of the data shows that human emotions and desires

can not be suppressed completely disappeared and it will cause certain traits that make up a new personality. Arthur Dimmesdale new personality can be seen in the form of action and interaction with surrounding environment.

The differences of study and two previous studies are in theme and the perspective. The writer uses existentialist perspective to analyze the data using *The scarlet Letter* movie (1995) as an object while Denny Parhan writes about how people value the morality of Hester Prynne and her adultery Arthur Dimmesdale by using structural approach and Ardi Darmawan writes about how *to find the character of* Arthur Dimmesdale and understand the effects of emotions, thoughts, or feelings are repressed in a person's personality using psychoanalytic perspective, while the writer means to analyse *The Scarlet Letter* movie based on Existentialist Perspective. The writer analyses Hester's Effort attaining love in Roland Joffe's *The Scarlet Letter* movie by using Existentialist Approach.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of the study is "How is Hester's effort attaining love, reflected in *The Scarlet Letter* movie ?"

D. Limitation of the study

The researcher focuses this research in analysing Hester's effort attaining love in Roland Joffe's *The Scarlet Letter* movie based on Sartre's theory of existentialism.

E. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are mentioned follows:

1. To analyse Roland Joffe's *The Scarlet Letter* movie based on the structural elements of the movie.

2. To describe Hester's effort attaining in Roland Jofee's *The Scarlet Letter* movie based on an existentialist perspective.

F. The Benefit of the Study

The benefit of the study are :

1. Theoretical Benefit

The study is expected to give a new contribution and information to the larger body of knowledge, Particularly the literary studies on The Scarlet Letter movie and novel.

2. Practical Benefit

The study is expected to enrich knowledge and experience of the researcher and another students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta or another Universities who have interest with literary study on the movie from existentialist Perspective.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the study

The type research is qualitative in which the writer does not need statistic to collect, to analyse, and to interpret data.

2. Object of the Study

Object of the research is Hester in “*The Scarlet Letter* movie”.

3. Types of Data and the Data Source

In this research, the writer takes two kind of data:

a. Primary Data

The primary data sources are taken from Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* movie and its manuscripts that are downloaded from http://sfy.ru/?script=scarlet_letter_1926.

b. Secondary Data

Secondary data is the supporting data taken from literary books, criticism, and some articles related to the movie.

4. Technique the Data Collection

In this research, the methods for collecting data are library research and documentation. These are six techniques of data collecting. They are as follows:

- a. Watching the movie repeatedly
- b. Reading the script to get more understanding
- c. Reading more related references to observe the theory, data and information.
- d. Making notes of important part and both primary and secondary data sources.
- e. Classifying the data into some categories.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique of data analysis is descriptive in which the researcher uses existentialist approach and adds structure analysis of this data work at *The Scarlet Letter* movie and draws a conclusion.

H. Research Paper Organization

In studying literary work, writer needs a theory as a basic theoretical framework for the analysis of the problem that interested to analyse. This study uses existentialism perspective to know the meaning of existence reflected in *The Scarlet Letter* movie. This part presents the underlying theory which is engaged in the study, that is existentialism. The researcher divides this part into three points. In the first the researcher explains about the notion of existentialism, the basic concept of Sartre's

theory on existentialism, and the last point the researcher discusses the structural element of the movie.