

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Feminism is one of the interesting issues to discuss, as up to know people still discuss the matter. The problem dealing with feminism that always be discussed is the inequality between the two sexes, woman and man. This is always discussed as, in this world, there only those two sexes, which have physical difference.

To understand further about the problem of feminism it is better to understand the meaning of the word feminism itself. “Feminism is a struggle to correct laws and practices that prevent woman from achieving full equality with men in all aspects of domestic and public life. But the deeper struggle is against attitudes that sustain such discriminatory practices (Murphy, 1995)”.

Recognizing that women are concentrated in the lowest level and are sometimes treated as the second class, feminism begins with premise that women and men’s position in society is the result of social factors and natural ones.

Actually the feminism existence was forced by the oppression caused by the patriarchy system, a system that places men as the ones who rule women in every aspect of their life. Patriarchy the rule of fathers, is the basic cause of woman oppression (Murphy, 1995). Male domination is every where, when women exist, men’s system will follow and accompany.

Feminist literary criticism departs from the phenomena that men dominate the literary theories and critics. It rejects the present theories and method, because they are considered patriarchal. Seldon (1985: 129) points out the reason of feminist in rejecting the theory.

Some feminist do not wish to embrace theory at all. There are many reasons for this. In academics institutions, “theory” is often male, even macho: it is hard intellectual, and avantgarde of literary studies. The manly virtues of rigor, thrusting purpose and rampant ambition find their home in “theory” rather than in the often-tender art of critical interpretation.

Though feminist rejects theories, feminism has an intrinsic relation with particular man theories whose work is questioning the basic basement of the dominant tradition of western thought. Based on the definition above, any works of female’s issues can be analyzed from a womanly point of view, which is called as feminist literary criticism.

The Scarlet Letter, one of Hawthorne’s novels, picture of phenomena in the past at a certain time and place. Hawthorne’s best work usually has a strong feeling for the Puritan past of seventeenth-century New England. This is the setting of *The Scarlet letter* (1850), considered his masterpiece. It is the study of the effects of the adultery of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, a Puritan minister (High, 1984). Hester’s adultery in *The Scarlet Letter* contains a debate on feminism. Hester’s conflict is one of the problems debated by many prominent thinkers. They began to discuss the possibility of the changing of woman subordination at home and society in politic and other social matters and even in religion. Hester

seems to be a symbol of feminist fighter who is against the construct that woman is always weak and dependent on man. She seems to fight for a better society.

From this point, Hester is interesting to be discussed from feminism point of view. A woman in the 17th century, who tried to survive in a very strict Christian Puritan society, is supposed to be subordinated by patriarchy, which dominates the society. For Hester, a woman who committed adultery with the minister will find difficulties to meet people in her society. Hester's strength to struggle alone shows how powerful this woman is. Her ability to regain respect from society is a marvelous and surprising phenomenon.

A. Literature Review

These are some reports on the study of *The Scarlet Letter* conducted by some students for their thesis. Among others are Cynthia Laksmi Dewi, Nunuk Isnadhiyah Cahyaning Tyas Agustin, Murni Supatmi, Giyatmi, and Akbaruddin Arif.

Cynthia Laksmi Dewi, in her paper entitled "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Concept In the Punishment of Hester Prynne". She uses sociological approach. She tried to reveal relation between the moral and social condition of the American society and the American history.

Another researcher is Nunuk Isnadhiyah with the title "An Analysis of Complex Sentence Translation In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The scarlet Letter*". This research belongs to a descriptive research. She tried to describe the translation of complex sentence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Cahyaning Tyas Agustin in her paper entitled “Human Nature In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*” uses structural analysis emphasizing on human nature and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s rejection against formed theology of Christianity in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Then Murni Supatmi with the title “Reflections of Guilty – feeling in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*”. Analyzes the novel based on Jung’s Psychoanalysis, giving the focus on the guilty – feeling of one of the major characters, Dimmesdale.

Giyatmi in her paper entitled “A Comparative Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* in Original and movie versions : A structural Approach” focuses on the structural elements on both version. The thesis aims at analyzing the structural element on both version and reveal the similarities and differences between both of them.

Thus the last research is Akbarudin Arif with the title “Misled Feminist In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*”. The research is to find how Hester Prynne the main character of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* to be seen from feminism point of view.

From the literature review above, the writer assumes that there is no researcher who analyzes “A Revolt Against the Christian Concept of Woman In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*: A Feminist Approach. So, the writer wants to analyze the subject above.

A. Problem statement

The major problem of this research is how the revolt of the major character against the Christian concept of woman is reflected in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

B. Research Limitation

There are many theories about feminism. To limit the subject matter and to avoid complexity in this research, the writer focuses her discussion on theory of feminism, based on feminist perspective.

To intensify the analysis, the focus of analysis was on the main characters in this novel. Other characters are also included as far as they have contribution to the research.

C. Research Objective

The research is aimed to study how the revolt of the major character against the Christian concept of woman is reflected in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

D. The research Significance

The significance of this thesis are :

1. The study is expected to contribute to the larger body of knowledge, particularly the literary studies on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

- 2 The study is expected to enrich the writer's knowledge and experience either dealing with library research, feminism, or *The Scarlet Letter*.

G. Research Methodology

The writer analyzes, "how the revolt of the major character against the Christian concept of woman is reflected in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Study of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and to express feminist perspective in this research paper will cover :

1. Subject the Research

Subject of the research in this case is literature. The writer is going to analyze a novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. In conducting this research she will analyze it by using theory of feminism.

2. Data Sources

The writer attains the data from some books that have relation to the study, those are:

- a. Primary Data

The sources are taken from the novel itself , including dialogues, events, and narrative expressions. The dialogues consist of the dialogue between the main figure and other, the main figure and himself, and others figures that talk about the main figure that becomes a useful source to be considered by the writer. The events are members of facts happening in the novel. These may be taken from the behaviors and the experiences

undergone by the characters. Narration is what the author has said about the character or just the situation described.

b. Secondary Data

These data cover several criticisms other articles, and books about Nathaniel Hawthorne and his works. The writer also takes many ideas from the theory of feminism that will be used in analyzing the novel.

3. Method of The Data Collection

The method of the data collection in this research paper is documentation. The writer collects and records the evidence from the primary data and secondary data.

4. Technique of Data Analysis

The technique of the data analysis in this research paper is descriptive. She wants to observe how the revolt of the major character against the Christian concept of woman is reflected in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

H. Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter I deals with introduction covering the background of study, literature review, problem statement, research limitation, research objective, the research significance, research methodology, and thesis organization. Chapter II underlying theory containing, the Christian concept of woman. Chapter III social background in the nineteenth century. Chapter IV deals with structural analysis containing plot, characterization, setting point of view, style and tone. Chapter V presents feminist analysis. Chapter VI conclusion and suggestion.