

**AGAINST THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S
THE SCARLET LETTER: A MARXIST APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Marxist criticism is a type of criticism in which literary works of viewed as the product of work and whose practitioners emphasize the role of class and ideology as they as repositories for hidden meanings. According to Forgacs, Marxism is a living body of thought and a set of real political practices that are influenced by changes in the world as aims to interference to change the world. Marxist approach seeks to expose the dominant class (Forgacs, 1987: 166).

Marxist thought is very popular up to now although its founder have died and the communist countries that apply this thought such as the Soviet Union and the North German have fallen. This popular thought derived from a figure namely Karl Heinrich Marx. He was born on May 5th 1818 in tries city in Rheiland Region of German (Prussia).

Marxism began with Karl Marx, the nineteenth century German philosopher, best known for capital (1867; capital). The seminal work of the communist movement, Marx was also the first Marxist literary critic, writing critical essay in the 1835 on such as Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe and William Shakespeare.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was primarily a theorist and historian. After examining social organization in a scientific way (Thereby creating a

methodology for social science), he perceived human history to have consisted of a series of struggles between classes-between the oppressed and oppressing the supposedly “natural” political evolution involved (and would in the future involve) “feudalism” leading to “bourgeois” capitalism, leading to socialism and finally to “Utopian” communism. In bourgeois capitalism, the privileged bourgeoisie region the proletariat the labor force responsible for survival. Marx theorized that when profits are not reinvested in the workers but in creating more factories, the workers will grow poorer and poorer until no short term patching is possible or successful. At a crisis point, revolt will lead to a restructuring of the system.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the novelists in the nineteenth century. He was born on July 4, 1804 Massachusetts. *The Scarlet Letter* is one of literary works and this is a novel with the happy ending story. The other Nathaniel Hawthorne works are *Twice-Told Tales* published in 1837 and *The House of the Seven Gables* in 1851. *The Scarlet Letter* was published in 1850 having 245 pages divided into 24 chapters.

The Scarlet Letter is novel written by Nathaniel Hawthorne published in the spring of 1850 by Ticknor and Fields. A young woman, Hester Prynne, is leads from the town prison with her infant daughter, Pearl, in her arms and *The Scarlet Letter* “A” represents the act of adultery that she has committed and it is to be a symbol of her sin- a badge of shame- for all to see. A woman in the crowd tells an elderly onlooker that Hester is being punished for adultery. Hester husband, who is much older than her, sends her ahead to

America, but he never arrives in Boston. The consensus is that he has been lost at sea. While waiting for her husband, Hester has apparently has an affair with priest, as she has given birth to a child. She will not reveal her lover's identity, however, and *The Scarlet Letter*, along with her public shaming, is her punishment for her sin and her secrecy. On this day Hester is leads to the town Scaffold and harangues by the town fathers, but she again refuses to identify her child's father. Because of her adultery with priest, she gets many punishments from many cases, especially in aspect of law or government regulation that to be a Dominant Ideology. Besides government punishment there is also punishment from society (custom law). Some punishment were cruel, terrible until expulsion, it makes life of someone suffer. But it forces Hester to pass all of the punishment. Some punishment that Hester gets comes from punishment of government and society (custom law). In the past time there are laws of Christianity that a priest disallows to marry or has close relation with woman, because a priest should be sacred. The priest must give all of his life to serve society in case of religion. He should obey the law of Christianity. The punishment from society custom, which forces Hester to use clothes with symbol *The Scarlet Letter* "A" on her bosom which "A" represents the act of adultery of her sin. Hester Prynne a young woman who feels lonely because she leaves her husband, makes her bravely has an affair with a priest. Hester has an affair because she needs love from man and she gets love from Dimmesdale. Although knowing the risk of her affair with priest, she still passes it. Obstinate she passes all of punishment by using

clothes “*The Scarlet Letter* “A” on her bosom. Her husband tries to separate Hester from Dimmesdale after Roger Chillingworth knows that Hester has an affair with a priest. He has a plan to reveal the Dimmesdale identity, but Hester asks Chillingworth to stop adding Dimmesdale self-torment.

The researcher is interested in analyzing *The Scarlet Letter* novel, because it is a controversial novel. It is a controversial because the content of *The Scarlet Letter* is a great problem which has done by a priest to a woman to district or disobey the law or government regulation, in which it is contrast with human life. *The Scarlet Letter* novel also talks about the capacity of the major character regains love and justice through the sacrifice and struggle. Beside that the writer is also interested the struggle of Hester Prynne (major character) against The Dominant Ideology, especially in law or government regulation to get justice, love, and freedom.

From the background above, the writer is interested in analyzing the novel on the major character Hester Prynne fighting Dominant Ideology and seeing how struggle gets justice and freedom from the pain of punishment from law in social life and in relation love between a priest and a woman in order to allow in government regulation or law in social life and receives by society. The writer uses Marxist Approach to analyze the novel.

B. Literature Review

As long as the writer knows, there are two researches that had been conducted on the same novel. The writer found that the novel had been

analyzed by Yulia Widiastuti, student of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta in 2006. She conducted a research entitled “Struggle for Woman Right’s“in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*: A Feminist Approach. She focused on the analysis of woman rights. She analyzed the woman rights in Hester prynne, such as sacrifice to get equality position in society and working. She also analyzed how hard the struggle of Hester prynne’s life, her bravery, and sacrifices to get again her love.

The other researcher is Sriwahyuni, Gunadarma University in 2001, entitled “The Anxiety of Hester prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*”. She analyzed the expression of human internal battle in overcoming the anxiety and confusion when she disobeys the culture and religion to get love.

Different from two previous researchers, this study focuses on struggle of the major character named Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* using a Marxist Approach.

C. Problem Statement

Related to the title and the background of the study, the problem statement is “how the struggle of Hester prynne against the Dominant Ideology (law/government regulation)”?

D. Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is how struggle against Dominant Ideology is done by Hester Prynne reflected in *The Scarlet Letter*, especially viewed by the Marxist Perspective.

E. The objectives of the study are as follows

- A. To analyze the novel in terms of its structural element.
- B. To analyze the novel based on Marxist Approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

Two kinds of benefits which can be gained from the study are as follows:

A. Theoretical Benefits

This study is purposed to improve the body of knowledge in studying literature and give contribution to literary studies on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

B. Practical Benefits

The study is expected to enrich the knowledge of the researcher and the readers about Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* based on Marxism Perspective.

G. Research Method

In analyzing Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the researcher uses qualitative method. Dealing with research method, there are four points that need to be involved as follows:

A. Object of the study

The object of the study is *Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter*.

B. Data sources

In doing the study, the researcher uses two sources of data, namely:

a. Primary data source

The primary data source is the novel of *The Scarlet Letter* it self
Written by *Nathaniel Hawthorne*.

b. The secondary data sources are some material related to the data
required, such as the writer's biography, related theories, history of
USA.

C. Technique of data collection

The method of data collection in this study is library research. The
researcher collects a record the data from both primary and secondary data
analysis.

a. Reading the novel

b. Identifying the topic of the novel

c. Looking for the secondary data

d. Classifying and determining the relevant data

e. Arranging, researching, and developing the selected materials into a
good unity toward the topic of the study.

D. Technique of the data analysis

The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis, in which the writer
tries to describe structural elements of the novel and identifies the
relationship.

H. Research Paper Organization

This paper is being divided into six chapter that is introduction which
explains the background of the study, literary review, problem statement,

objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method and paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory of Marxist approach. The third consists of social historical background of American society at the seventeenth century includes social, economic and political, science and technology, cultural and religious aspect. The fourth chapter consists of structural analysis of the novel and discussion. The fifth chapter consists of analysis based on Marxist Perspective. The last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion.