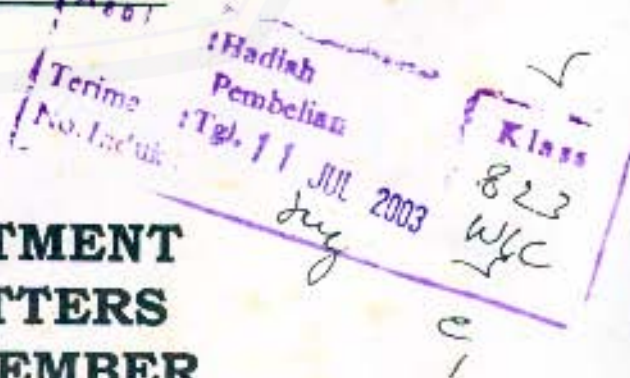


**A STUDY ON THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC MORALITY  
OF THE MAIN CHARACTER  
IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S THE SCARLET LETTER**



A Thesis Presented to the English Department  
Faculty of Letters, University of Jember  
As One of the Requirements to Get  
The Award of Sarjana Sastra Degree  
In English Studies

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2003**

APPROVAL SHEET

Approved and received by the Examination Committee of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University.

Jember, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2003

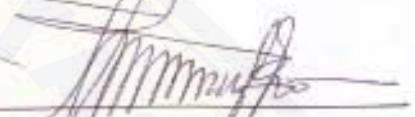
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In loving remembrance of

My beloved father: **S. Tjipto Suroso**  
Dad, I have learnt numerous great things from your figure  
I always remember the countless beautiful moments we used to share

and

My little nephew: **Haikal Alif Fikri**  
I bless the five miraculous days with you

\*\*\*

Whofeheartedly this thesis is dedicated to:

My dear mother: **Sri Djuwitaningsih, S.Pd.**  
Your genuine love, sweet care, tender guidance,  
everlasting encouragement and sacrifice are extremely worth.


My brother: **Ir. Yuana Kridha Leksana, M.Si.**  
and my sister-in-law **Cici Suciati, SP.**  
In far- away distance, you both mean everything to me

My dearest sister: **Yunita Kridha Laksmi, S.TP.**  
I trust you to be my confidante!

My smart cousin: **Bramantyo Pandhito Bayu Sabrang**  
and his innocent brother **Musthafa Kharis Syaiful Yahya**

Someone whose existence is far but the presence is closer in my heart.  
We ever arrange a nice rhythm of love, care and affection.  
Sometime, I realize that you are my blessing in disguise.  
Thanks for being my extraordinary friend.

MOTTO :



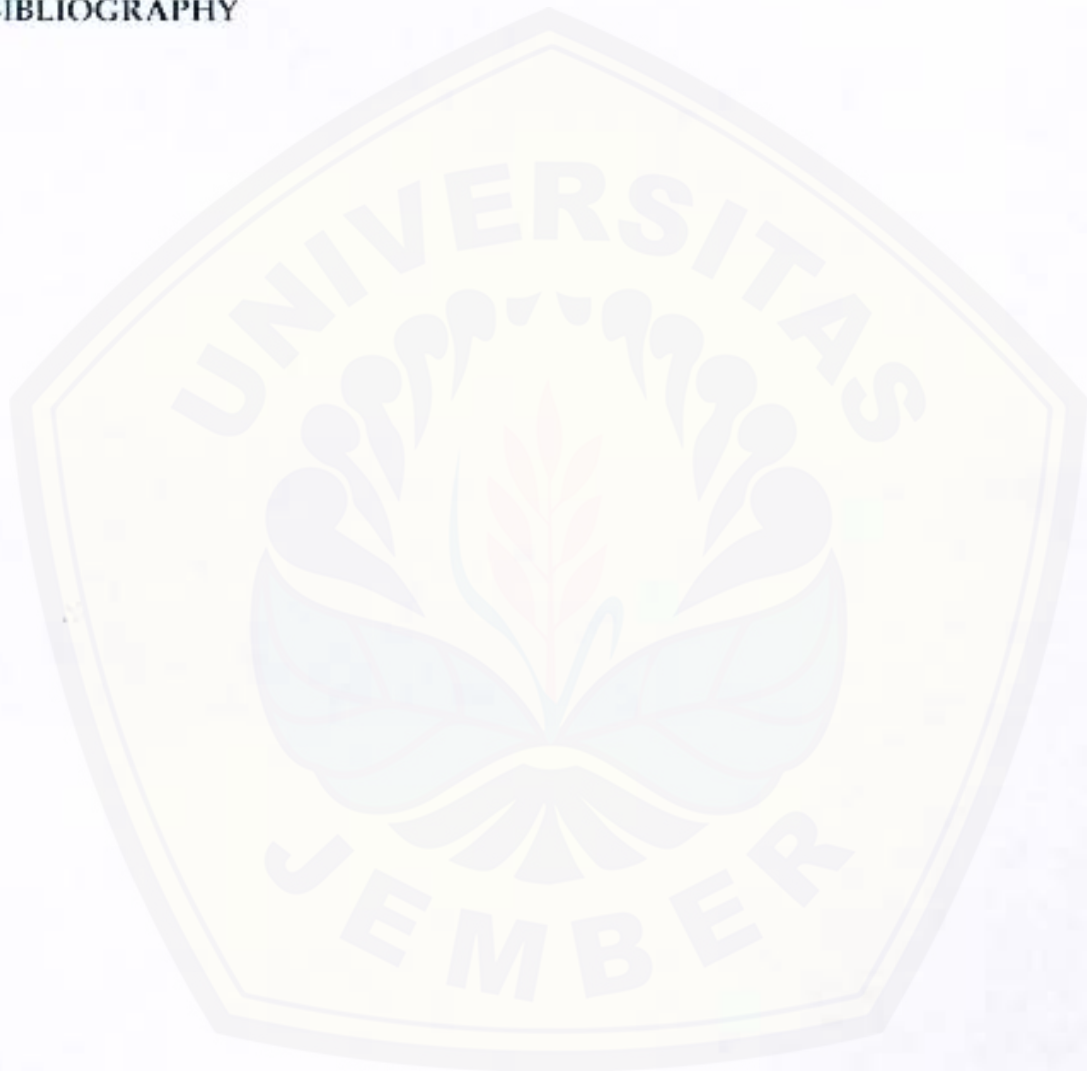
وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَةَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِجْشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا  
(الْإِسْرَاءُ : ٣٢)

“ Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed)  
and an evil, opening the road (to other evils) ”  
(The Holy Qur’an, Al Israa’ : 32)

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I hopefully, this work will be the useful contribution for those who concern in studying the literary works. Thank you.

Jember, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2003

Juwita Kridha Wicaksini



## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION



### 1.1 Rationale

Literature relates to all written works in a beautiful form that give us such expression or appreciation of life. It depicts some elements of actual events in the certain time and society.

Kennedy in Preface of his book, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama* states that literature, in the widest sense, is just about anything written (1991:xxxix). Along with Kennedy, Hudson in *An Introduction to The Study of Literature* gives a description of literature as a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us (1965:10).

By reading a literary work, of course, we will appreciate and furthermore criticize certain social condition of certain society. Both processes not only offer us pleasure but also great satisfaction after deeply having involved in such activity. Cole and Jeft Lindemann state in their book entitled *Reading and Responding to Literature* (1990:v) that there is a deep satisfaction to understanding literature through the study of genres, the elements of literature, and various critical approaches to literature, and through discovering a writer's purpose and craft.

Again, Kennedy briefly emphasizes that the novel is a picture of real life and manners and of the time in which it is written. By so specifying that the novel depicts life in the present day, the critics were probably observing the derivation of the word novel (1991: 213).

Dealing with Kennedy's statement above, it should be noted that the novel is an imitation of true life; it is formed by the way how the characters are presented according to the time it is written. In this case to

achieve the sense of actual of a novel, an author's role to elaborate the historical background of their works is very important. Nathaniel Hawthorne in his introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* gives a minute account of his finding documents in which he claims to base his novel, tied with a faded red ribbon and gathering dust in a customhouse (Kennedy, 1991: 214).

Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American novelist, whose works are deeply concerned with the ethical problem of sin, punishment, and atonement, wrote *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. It is regarded as masterpiece and one of the great works of American literature. *The Scarlet Letter* offers extraordinary insight into the norms and behavior of 17<sup>th</sup> century American Puritan Society. The basic conflict and problem of its main characters however are familiar to readers in the presents (Gross, et al., 2002: 1).

The attitude of Hester Prynne who has committed adultery with Dimmesdale concerning with Puritan doctrine and morality is sinful. In the resource notes of *The Scarlet Letter - A Romance*, Cockcroft briefly states that: as mentioned in the doctrine, for the sinner who had broken God's law will be punished and suffered from eternal damnation (1997: 289).

The essence of Puritanism itself is an intensive commitment to a morality, a form of worship, and a civil society strictly conforming to God's commandments. Puritan theology is a version of Calvinism. It asserts the basic sinfulness of humankind; but it also declares that by an eternal decree, God has determined that some will be saved through the righteousness of Christ despite their sins (Anonymous, 2002: 1).

Hester Prynne has borne a child out of marriage and has refused to reveal the identity of the child's father - her secret lover, to prevent him from punishment and keeps his reputation as a Reverend. Later she has

been jailed and sentenced to wear a symbol of her adultery, the scarlet letter "A" on her dress at all times.

Besides Hester Prynne, there are Arthur Dimmesdale, who is a young Reverend, and Roger Chillingworth, who is a physician, whose moral conflicts are the same as Hester Prynne's sense of sin. As a source of much critical interest and prejudices of her Puritan society, Hester Prynne is the great character of *The Scarlet Letter*. Frederick I. Carpenter in Cockcroft (1997:301) gives comment on Hester's role that:

The greatness of *The Scarlet Letter* lies in the character of Hester Prynne because she dared to trust herself and to believe in the possibility of a new morality in the new world, she achieved spiritual greatness in spite of her own human weakness, in spite of prejudices of her Puritan society and finally, in spite of the prejudices of her creator himself.

Actually, *The Scarlet Letter* is not a realistic novel. In the introduction of *The Scarlet Letter, An Annotated Text Backgrounds and Sources Essays in Criticism*, Hawthorne called his book 'a romance', as it truly is, not because it is an idealization but because its vision turns inward upon the mysterious realities of the human soul (Bradley, et.al, 1962:viii).

Leo Marx in the foreword of *The Scarlet Letter* supports the uniqueness of Hawthorne's work. Marx says, entering the world of *The Scarlet Letter* is like walking into a large, many-sided hall of mirrors. Unlike novels in the realistic tradition, *The Scarlet Letter* has a moral and only in its moral significance it is firmly linked with the world we inhabit. In fact, the setting bears directly on the story of Hester Prynne (Hawthorne, 1959:viii-xi). It is reasonable why *The Scarlet Letter* is chosen to be discussed in this thesis.

## 1.2 The Problem to Discuss

*The Scarlet Letter*, the novel discussed in this thesis, deals with many subjects, for example, the relationship between Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth and Pearl, the nature of sin, guilt and personal responsibility, women's role in society, and the conflict between private and public morality (Cockfort, 1997:289).

Since it is the moral significance of the main characters, the problems discussed in this thesis are:

1. What factors creating the morality of the main character?
2. Does the main character's private and public morality have any effects in shaping her personality?

Whatever presented in Hester's morality, as an action or conduct, is the realization of her character.

It is already known that character is one of the elements of literature and becomes an important component of fiction. Hudson says that character deals with person presented in the novel. Through the character, we can imagine the realization of the appearance and behavior of the people in the novel (1965: 146).

Hester Prynne is one of the main characters in the novel with a strong-willed characteristic. Her firmness to be condemned to death and to wear the shameful scarlet letter "A" and the acceptance of two realities in her life, Pearl and shame, indicate her private moral quality conformed to the rules and doctrines as religious principle of Puritanism.

The most distinct case of morality in the novel that becomes the central issues of the plot development is adultery. The sin of adultery committing by Hester and her lover Dimmesdale constitutes Hester's public morality being an adulterous woman. Her rebellion against Puritanism contributes on it, which later determines the consideration of

the heroine in *The Scarlet Letter*. So, it will bring the writing of this thesis to an interesting discussion.

### 1.3 The Scope of the Study

The limitation of the study is needed to avoid more complicated and misleading discussion of the thesis. It is necessary to determine the scope of the study on moral studies of the area of sociology of literature that is the value of moral in the society, in this case Puritan society when the novel was written. Furthermore the directed discussion of this thesis will be reached.

### 1.4 The Goal of the Study

In writing this thesis, it is important to state the goal of the study. There are some goals of the study in this thesis. Firstly is to present the description how the author creates the moral conflicts of the main character. It is supported by several factors such as setting, the role and existence of each character like Roger Chillingworth, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Secondly is to give informations about the novel and the author and the last is to find out the moral lessons of this novel.

Eventually, this thesis is hoped to be effective to understand Hawthorne's work as the great American writer whose masterpiece has regarded remarkable in literary world.

### 1.5 The Approach to Use

Since this novel is regarded as the insight into the norms and behavior of 17<sup>th</sup> century American Puritan Society, in analyzing *The Scarlet Letter*, the moral approach will be applied.

According to Scott in *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*, "The common ground between religion and fiction is behavior" (1962:47). From

this theory, the application of behavior is closely related to the sense of religious fiction and *The Scarlet Letter* belongs to religious fiction. Religion itself is a particular system of worship, behavior and moral values as belief.

Furthermore, T.S. Elliot in Scott states that the "greatness" of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, and probably always will be judged by some moral standards. Moral judgments of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not (1962: 48).

Moral approach is chosen to present Hester's private and public morality. These support the strictness and rigidity of Puritanism in moral and religious matter. Considering this kind of aspect, there is a relation between Hawthorne's work with his religion and the society where this novel takes place.

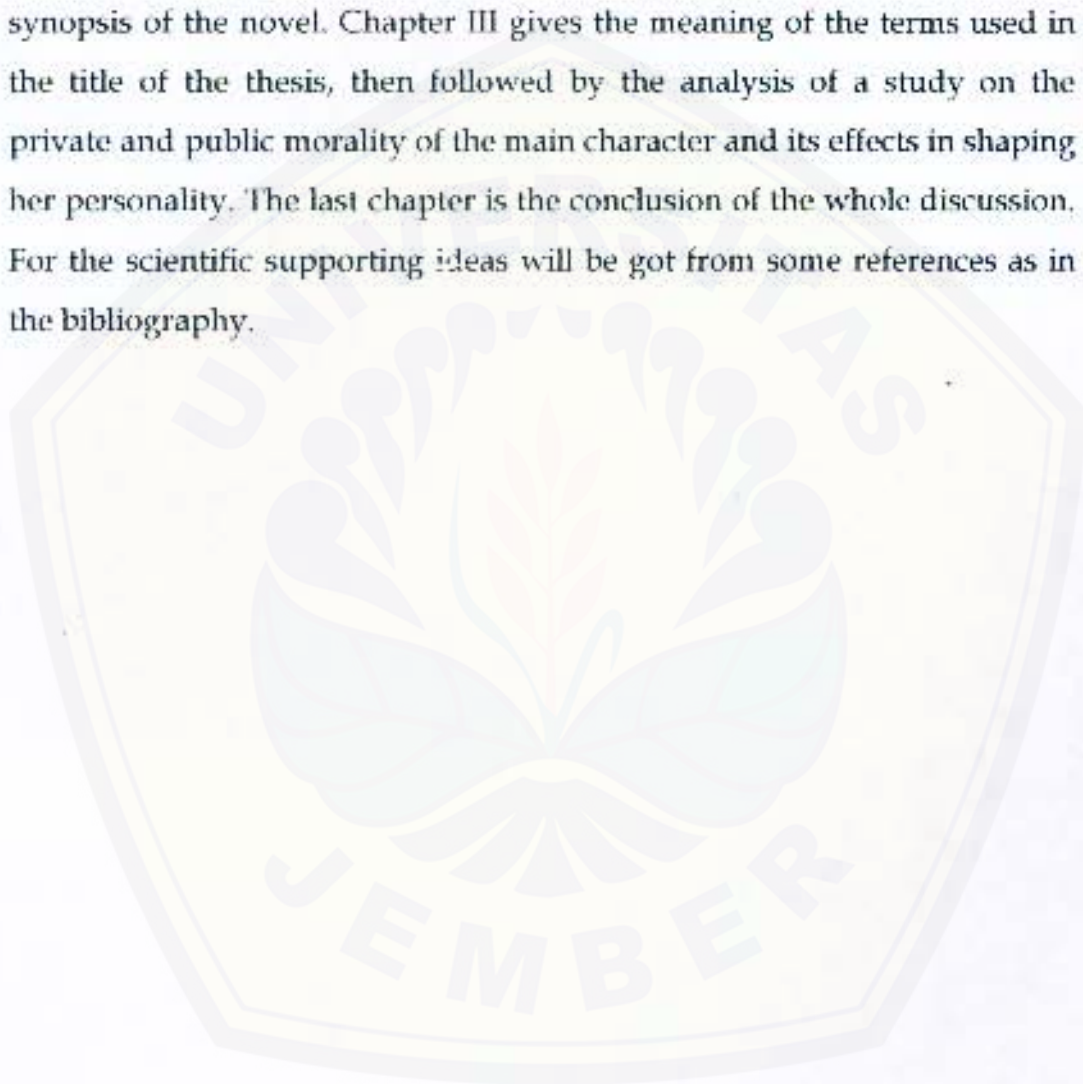
#### 1.6 The Method of Analysis

The method of analysis used in this thesis is a deductive method. Hadi says: Deductive method gives a way to reach a conclusion by reasoning from general laws to a particular case (1981: 36). It means that the writer explains the material roughly and then determining the details about Hester's private and public morality and its effects in shaping her personality follows it.

The library research is done in this thesis in which the materials, data and information are collected from several books, dictionaries and internet. The primary datum is the novel itself; while some appropriate source materials concerning with the topic of the study are used to support the analysis as well.

### 1.7 The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. Chapter I deals with rationale, the problem to discuss, the scope of the study, the goal of the study, the approach to use, the method of analysis and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II explains the short biography of the author and the synopsis of the novel. Chapter III gives the meaning of the terms used in the title of the thesis, then followed by the analysis of a study on the private and public morality of the main character and its effects in shaping her personality. The last chapter is the conclusion of the whole discussion. For the scientific supporting ideas will be got from some references as in the bibliography.





## CHAPTER II

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND THE SYNOPSIS OF *THE SCARLET LETTER*

#### 2.1 The Biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1804 into an old Puritan family, Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of the greatest American novelists whose works are deeply concerned with the ethical problem of sin, punishment and sense of atonement.

His father, Daniel Hawthorne, was a sailor. Daniel died because of yellow fever and left his wife, Elizabeth Clarke Manning and three children-- Elizabeth, Nathaniel and Louisa. Soon after the death of Daniel Hawthorne, the family moved to Manning's house. His grandfather also named Nathaniel and his uncle rather than his own mother cared Hawthorne. She didn't give much attention to her children any longer since her husband's death because she was always in sorrow.

When he was 17, they moved to Maine where he attended Bowdoin College and had some close friends, such as Henry Wardworth Longfellow, Franklin Pierce and Jonathan Cilley. In 1825 he graduated from the college and returned to Salem, producing a weak first novel *Fanshawe* (published in 1828) with his own expense. Unfortunately, it failed. During this period he also contributed articles and short stories to periodicals. Several of stories were published in *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), which although not a financial success, established Hawthorne as a leading writer.

Actually, throughout those twelve years, from 1825 to 1837 Hawthorne performed many activities. Some of his anonymous works, which were published in *The Token* and *The New Magazine*, were *The*



*Haunted Quack, The Modern Job, The Gentle Boy, Young Goodman Brown, The Young Provincial and The Devil in the Manuscript.*

Unable to earn a living by literary works, in 1839 Hawthorne took a job as a measurer of coal and salt in the Boston, Massachusetts's customhouse. Two years later he returned to writing and produced a series of New England history for children, *Grandfather's Chair: A History for Youth* (1841). In the same time he also joined the communal society at Brook Farm.

In 1842, Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody and settled in Concord, Massachusetts; in a house called "The Old Manse". Una, the first child of Hawthorne was born in 1844 and the second son, Julian was born in 1846. The record of the four years lived in Concord published as *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), which contains the story *The Young Goodman Brown*.

Again, Hawthorne could not make a living from his writing. To survive, he returned to government service as a surveyor and Revenue Inspector of the Salem Customhouse. However in 1849, he had dismissed from the post because of a change of government. By then, it seems a blessing in disguise. He had already begun writing *The Scarlet Letter*. His experience in the Salem customhouse became the element of the introductory section to this novel. This novel itself was set in 17<sup>th</sup> century Boston and explored the history of Puritanism in great detail.

He published his masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. It was the top most of his literary involvement with the New England past and especially Salem. This work improved that Hawthorne was able to discover the meaning of the past and the 'sin of the father' both for himself and for his fellow Americans. Shortly after its publication, *The House of The Seven Gables, The Snow Image* and other *Twice Told Tales*, which includes

such stories as *Ethan Brand* and *My Kinsman Major Molineux*, published in 1851, rapidly followed it.

In the same years, Hawthorne and his family moved to Lenox, Massachusetts and began simultaneous friendship with Herman Melville who wrote *Moby Dick*, an admirer of Hawthorne's works. Melville had written a glowing review of Hawthorne short story collection *Mosses From An Old Manse*. In May 20, his second daughter Rose was born.

He wrote *The Blithedale Romance* at West Newton as a novel of his experience at Brook Farm and published in 1852. Since Rose birth, Hawthorne concerned for loving his children, observed them frequently and had the habit of writing down the history of their life in his journal.

In 1853, he was appointed United States Consul at Liverpool, living in England for four years and in Italy for two years (1858-1860). Not so long after the publication of *The Marble Faun* (1860) as his final novel, which published on his return to the USA, the Hawthornes returned to "The Way Side" in Concord where Hawthorne spent the remaining four-years of his life. These were the years of sadness, frustration and failing health. His political isolation managed him to bring out a fine collection of essay about England, *Our Old Home*, which published in 1863 and it dedicated to Franklin Pierce, who had become highly unpopular because of his support of the Southern slave owners.

Nathaniel Hawthorne died on May 18, 1864 in Plymouth, New Hampshire on trip taken to restore health. He was buried in Concord. Mrs. Hawthorne eventually devoted her widowhood to the publication of her husband's journals. Four unfinished novels are *Septimius Felton* (1872), *The Dolliver Romance* (1876), *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret* (1883) and *The Ancestral Foot Steps* (1883). His wife also edited his notebooks as *Passages From The English Notebook* (1870) and *Passages From The French and Italian Notebooks* (1871).

Thus, by understanding Hawthorne's life and his works then, we know that he is one of important writers of American literary works. His life is so colorful as well as his works especially *The Scarlet Letter*.

Actually, most of his works are seen clearly as a criticism of life and a dramatization of the dilemmas and ambiguities which beset the human condition. Hawthorne everywhere is concerned with moral problems, which are also personality problems. Therefore, *The Scarlet Letter*, as the greatest work of Hawthorne gives me much impression.

## 2.2 The Synopsis of *The Scarlet Letter*

In the summer morning of seventeenth-century Boston, there was a crowd outside the Boston prison-house at which Hester Prynne, with her three months baby would be legally condemned on the scaffold and imprisoned by the Puritan Magistrates. She had to wear an embroidered scarlet letter "A" on her breast of her dress as a symbol of her adultery.

Actually, Hester Prynne got married to the famous physician, Roger Chillingworth in Boston but her husband had left her without any news at all. Being away for more than two years, presumably caused Hester to commit adultery with a young handsome Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. Therefore, she was imprisoned after giving birth to her baby because she refused to pronounce the identity of her fellow-adulterer or the father of her illegitimate baby to prevent him from punishment.

Arthur Dimmesdale himself wanted to continue his duty as usual but his sense of guilt increase after seeing his fellow-sinner suffer alone from his own weakness and the only possible victory lies in public confession of the truth.

Meanwhile, on the edge of the crowd, Hester saw her long missing husband who was no other than Roger Chillingworth. He had just come to Boston from Red Indian Settlement. Being aware that the woman who fell

into disgrace was his wife, and then he asked Hester to tell him the name of her secret lover. She however refused to reveal the name of her fellow sinner. She thought that what her husband's doing toward Dimmesdale was shrouded in devil revenge. Chillingworth asserted that he would find the culprit anyway. Hester took an oath to keep her secret lover's identity from Chillingworth though she feared to hear it.

To survive her life and to enhance the dignity of her presence in the Puritan society, Hester then withdrew herself to the small solitary cottage near the sea and away from the village. She held up herself and Pearl, her daughter by making such artistic handiwork.

Hearing her Pearl who would be separated from her by the authorities, Hester went to Boston in order to know the news in reality. A group of ruling member led by Governor Bellingham worried about the future of the child and made a decision to take away the child from her mother. Then, Hester asked the Minister Arthur Dimmesdale to persuade Governor Bellingham not to take Pearl from her side. Eventually, the Magistrate allowed the Minister expectation but Roger Chillingworth seemed to mocks him.

In the meantime, the disease was sapping Dimmesdale and Chillingworth made endeavors to get close to the Priest. He hoped that he could make an inquiry to find out that the real Hester's partner in adultery was. So, Roger Chillingworth attempted to cure Arthur Dimmesdale but actually he began torturing the Reverend. It made Dimmesdale's illness deteriorated slowly.

Being convinced of Dimmesdale's wrong doing toward his wife, Chillingworth made a blend of poisonous herbal medicine which he got in the learning of the Red Indian traditional cure to torment Dimmesdale's body in order to kill him painfully.

At one night, Arthur Dimmesdale went to the scaffold and stood upon it alone. He thought that there was no one who could see him but Hester and Pearl, on their way back from the Governor's Winthrop's house saw what the Minister doing on the scaffold. While Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne talked about their guilt and sorrow, suddenly Roger Chillingworth called the Reverend's name and took him away from the scaffold to the forest. It caused Hester dislike her husband even more. There upon, she planned to meet Arthur in the forest and revealed that Roger Chillingworth was her legal husband. As the result, Dimmesdale was very shocked. He thought that Chillingworth would ruin his position and reveal his sin to the public. Hester encouraged Dimmesdale with the hope of the new life by asking him to run away with her from the community to somewhere in Europe to get more comfortable life. Then, the Minister responded it and he agreed to go away with his secret lover, Hester Prynne.

On the Election Day, which was also the day they proposed to escape, Arthur Dimmesdale was asked to preach the election sermon. On that occasion, he made public confession of his sin with Hester. He mounted the scaffold up and so Hester and Pearl. Bravely, the Minister asked God's forgiveness for his sinful adultery, embraced his daughter Pearl before dying on Hester's lap. Roger Chillingworth who stood nearby them went away soon after Arthur Dimmesdale died with a deep countenance.

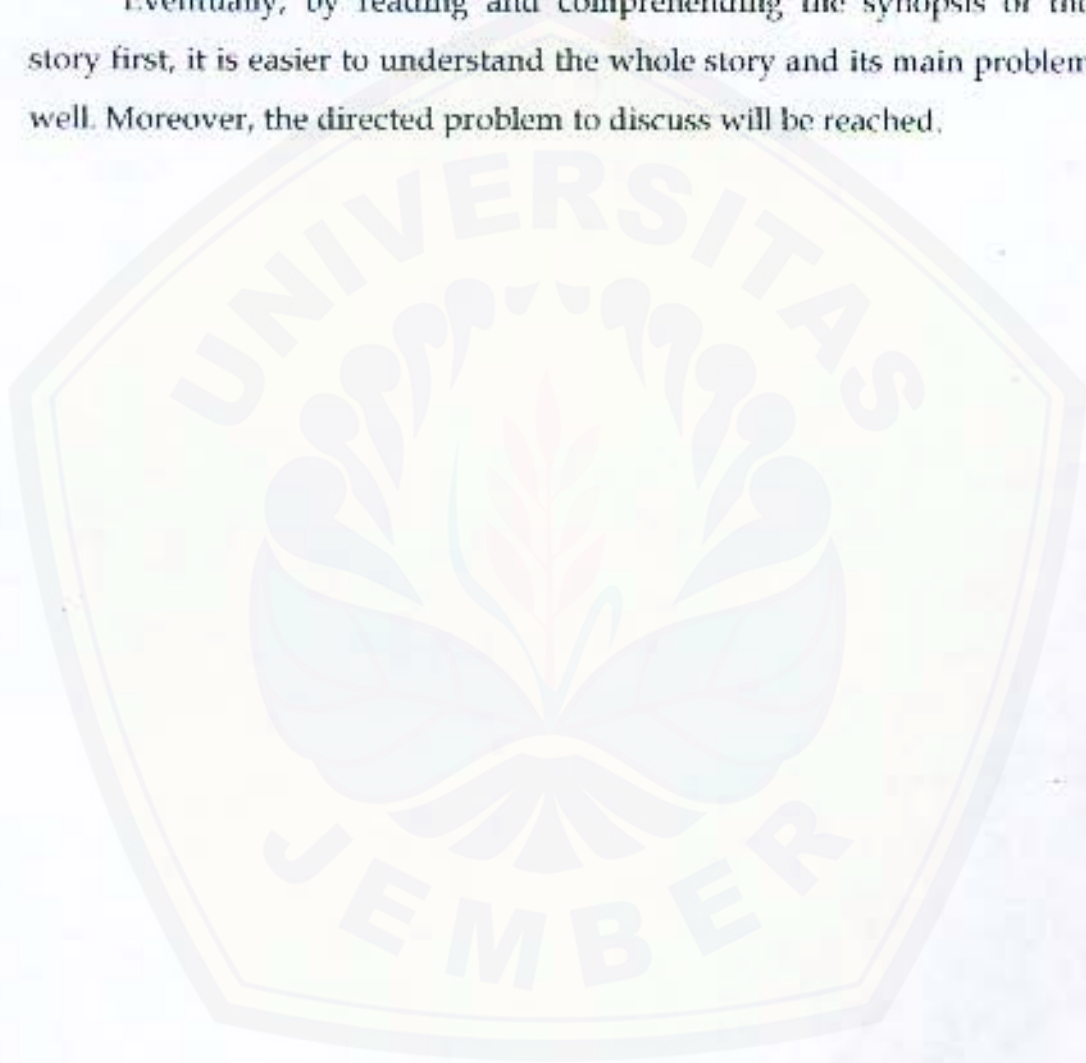
A year later, after the revelation of the scarlet letter, Chillingworth died too. He had left his property to Pearl. So, Pearl and Hester Prynne devoted her life happily in Europe for some years.

Years passed by. Hester Prynne came back and occupied her old house, enjoyed her remaining times by giving advice to those in need and distressed until she died there after her daughter got married. The side of

Dimmesdale's grave buried her. On her tombstone, the scarlet letter was inscribing upon.

The significance of writing the synopsis of the story is to give us a good comprehension of the elements of literature such as the theme, plot, characters, setting, and point of view.

Eventually, by reading and comprehending the synopsis of the story first, it is easier to understand the whole story and its main problem well. Moreover, the directed problem to discuss will be reached.



## CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION



Widy. UPT Perpustakaan  
UNIVERSITAS JEMBER

*The Scarlet Letter*, written in 1850, is Hawthorne's novel about the sin of adultery committing by Hester Prynne, the main character, with her secret lover Arthur Dimmesdale, a young Puritan Minister. This novel is Hawthorne's first and only great literary success as a writer. It is regarded as the masterpiece in literary world. *The Scarlet Letter* offers extraordinary insight into the norms and behaviors of 17<sup>th</sup> century American Puritan society.

This thesis focuses on the discussion of the main character's private and public morality. There are two kinds of moralities that shape her personality. The first is *private morality* that is described as her moral quality concerning to the standard of right and wrong or good and bad. It tends to be her behavior or conduct and appears as her personal moral value. Her firmness to be condemned to death and to wear the letter "A" and her acceptance of two realities, Pearl and shame, constitute the realization of her private morality.

Meanwhile, the second is *public morality* as her moral quality which deals with the general observation; whether it is right or wrong and belongs to all people as scandal. The manifestation of her public morality is shown in her sin of adultery and her rebellion against Puritanism.

It can be answered that there are some factors creating the main character's morality. First, Hester's loneliness being away from her husband for two years. Feeling lonely and yearning love, Hester tries to find someone else to give her love and happiness. Second, Hester's biological desire. As a young passionate woman who has a great sexual appeal, Hester is difficult to control her sexual drives as the result of her strong biological desire that need to be satisfied.

A young handsome Puritan Minister Arthur Dimmesdale, is the man who is able to give Hester love and affection and to satisfy her desire. In fact, Arthur Dimmesdale is a religious and holy man. He has not married and it is not a prohibition for him if he wants to be married with Hester Prynne. Their deep love and uncontrolled passion, then lead them to immoral conduct.

The moral conflicts created by the author are much influenced by the setting of the novel and the existence of each characters like Roger Chillingworth, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. The role of setting, either of time or place, is significant in supporting the strictness of 17<sup>th</sup> American Puritanism that causes Hester Prynne, whose heart and mind are rebellious and defiant, rebels against its laws and principles.

Furthermore, the existence of each characters is influential. For example Roger Chillingworth; because of his carelessness and irresponsibility toward his wife, Hester then commits adultery with her secret lover. Hester herself, has a strong sexual desire. Therefore, it is reasonable why Arthur Dimmesdale, who deemed as holy man by his congregations, doing sinful action because of uncontrolled passion.

Hester's private and public morality bring the effects in shaping her personality. Those are significant and influential too. By her sorrow and strength to survive, eventually she gains people sympathy as a woman who dares to accept the consequences that follow the sin of passion.

She shows great courage in rebelling her society although, she formerly assumes that the society where she lives in is unfriendly. She thinks that they have no tolerance and sympathy because its laws and principles are very strict. It is difficult for the persons like Hester Prynne, whose heart and mind are so peculiar, not to rebel against Puritan society. Besides, Hester also gets a moral anxiety that caused by the plan of Puritan Magistrates to deprive her of her child. This reason makes her to



challenge them in order to keep Pearl in her side. Therefore, it is true that Hester Prynne is rebellious and defiant woman.

Finally, by understanding Hester's private and public morality and its effects, we know those are influential and significant in shaping her personality.



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