

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender injustice that continues from time to time make this issue one of the themes that are often raised in literary works. This can be seen in *Jane Eyre* (1847) written by Charlotte Bronte, describes the life journey of Jane Eyre, an orphan woman who seeks to get an education, a job, and the freedom to make her own life choices. Jane refuses to be treated inferiorly and fights to maintain her self esteem and equality with men. The description of the injustice position of women is also seen in novel *A Doll's House* (1879) by Henrik Ibsen, Nora Helmer realizes that she has been treated like a “doll” and not as an equal individu, Nora decides to leave the house to find her identity. The portrayal of women in both works demonstrates that the female experience of inequality is an issue that consistently recurs in literature. A similar issue is also portrayed in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Various forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in the literary works not only show the difference in treatment between men and women, but also show how women are often placed in a lower position. Therefore one of the concept that can be used to understand the condition is through the *otherness* concept where this concept explains how women are positioned as others in the middle of society.

Women and men are fundamentally equal as humans beings. However in society, the relationship between the two is often influenced by a patriarchal

system that places men in a more dominant position, while women tend to be subordinate. Davis (2015), explains how patriarchy forms men as a group that is considered dominant, while women are seen as different and thus experience marginalization. In this case, men often hold a more privileged position, while women are viewed as different and less equally represented. This unequal relationship between men and women provides a basis for understanding how women can be positioned as *The Other* in society.

Being positioned as The Other places women in a position where they face limitations in forming their identity, making life choices, and gaining equal recognition in society. In other words, women are often defined and judged relation to men rather than recognized as independent subjects. The concept of *Otherness* is crucial because it demonstrates how social structures shape the differences in position between men and women, which ultimately can influence their roles and positions in various aspect of life. Thus, the concept of women as *The Other* not only explains how women are positioned in society but also provides an understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to the emergence of gender injustice.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (2011) explains the position of women as *The Other*. This concept explains that women are positioned as a different party from men, while men are placed as the subject or the party that becomes the center and measure in determining values, norms, and views in society. Thus, women are not seen as stand alone subjects, but are often defined based on men. According to Gustina, Anwar, and Devi (2022), if “the other” is a

threat to “the self” then it means that women are threat to men, therefore if a man wants to remain free he must subordinate a woman to himself. Beauvoir also explained how women are positioned as the other, while men are often regarded as the standard in society. Beauvoir argued that women’s position as *The Other* is not naturally determined by their biological sex, but is shaped by social and cultural conditions (Beauvoir, 2011, p.62). This position is the result of a historical process that places men as the dominant group, while women are subordinate. Because it has persisted over a long period, this condition has become part of societal life, making the differential treatment of women often considered normal (Kiran & Afaki, 2021). This view suggests that control over women is part of an effort to maintain a social structure that has placed men as the dominant group. If women were granted equal freedom to determine their own choices and identities, men’s dominant could be questioned. Therefore, various norms and social sanctions are often used to ensure women remain within the roles prescribed by patriarchal society. In this way, the inequality experienced by women is maintained not only through power but also through social beliefs that make these positions seem normal and acceptable.

Gender injustice is a form of injustice that occurs because of the difference in treatment between men and women in social life. This injustice does not appear because of biological differences, but because of the rules and cultural values that have long been formed by society. According to Lepir & Marwinda (2025), gender injustice causes unequal treatment between women and men as a result of the social system. In many social systems, men are often placed as the more

dominant, rational, and powerful, while women are considered weaker and dependent. Feminists argue that a patriarchal social system often positions women as a subordinates, and give rise to negative thoughts about women's roles and abilities. For example, Azzahro, Rohman, and Ismatullah (2025), explained that gender injustice includes marginalization, subordination, and negative stereotypes towards women because of social norms that give full power to men and limit women's movement space in various aspects. This form of gender injustice demonstrates the consequences of placing women in a subordination position within a patriarchal society. Therefore, feminism is present to criticize the system and emphasize that women have the right to be subjects who have freedom and their own identity.

Gender injustice can be found in the 17th century Puritan society in New England, which is the setting in *The Scarlet Letter*. Puritan society has very strict religious rules and regulates all aspects of life, including personal behavior and morality. Men hold power in the fields of religion, law, and family, while women are placed in the domestic realm. Women are expected to obey, maintain family honour, and submit to male authority. The statement is reinforced by the argument of Izzat (2024), explaining that the view of the puritan society towards women is that the position of women is considered less important, because of the dominance of men who hold power. Women's morality is strictly monitored because it is considered to represent the good name of the community. If a woman commits a moral outlaw, her punishment is often given openly to embarrass and set an example for the community. When a woman violated moral expectations, she

could be publicly punished and used as an example for the community, while men could receive greater social protection because of their position and status. This unequal treatment demonstrates how patriarchal norms created different standards for men and women.

The injustice is clearly seen through the difference in treatment of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Both of them committed adultery, but only Hester received an open punishment from the community. Hester was forced to wear the red letter "A" on her chest as a symbol of the sin he had to bear for the rest of his life. Hester was humiliated in public and ostracized from social life, so her identity was attached to the mistake. Meanwhile, Dimmesdale is still respected as a priest or spiritual leader even though he is also guilty. Dimmesdale did not receive the same social punishment and still maintained his honorable position. This difference shows that there are moral standards that harm women. Women's mistakes are considered more serious and more embarrassing than men's mistakes. In this condition, it shows that Hester Prynne is a form *otherness* of women in the puritan society and becomes an object of judgement and punishment.

Research of the work of *Scarlet Letter* has been carried out a lot, especially those that raise the issue of feminism, discrimination against women, symbolism, and the characterization of Hester Prynne as a woman. However, there is still room to examine the relationship between Simone de Beauvoir concept of women as *The Other* and the forms of gender injustice experienced by the main character in *The Scarlet Letter*. This study aims to fill this space by analyzing how Hester

Prynne's position as "the other" is shaped by a patriarchal society and how this position gives rise to the various forms of gender injustice she experiences.

1.2 Problem of the Study

Based on explanation above, the research question sought to be answered in this study is :

How was Hester Prynne placed as "*The Other*" in the patriarchal Puritan society?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems of the study, the purposes of this study is :

To analyze how Hester's position as "*The Other*" in patriarchal puritan society.

1.4 Hypothesis

The Othering of Hester Prynne in Puritan society places her as "*The Other*" and causes gender injustice.

1.5 Previous Studies

To show the authenticity of the research, the author presents several previous studies that have discussed the same novel. These researches are used as comparative materials to show the difference in focus, approach, and theory used in this study. There are five previous studies that study the novel. Although using the same study object, this study has a difference because it uses a different approach and theory from previous studies.

First, Moku with his research entitled *The Radical Feminism Revealed in the Novel The Scarlet Letter and the Impacts of Radical Views in Relation to Today's Life* (2024). This research uses sociological approach theory from

Swingewood and Laurenson (1972). This study explores radical feminism through Hester Prynne character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, as well as the impact of that radical view on the lives of women who fight for their rights against patriarchy.

Second, Kardiansyah conducted a study entitled *Body and Gender Relations: Postcolonial Discourse in the Novel The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne* (2017). This research uses Postcolonial theory developed by thinkers such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, along with Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction method. This study examines how *The Scarlet Letter* depicts the resistance of socially and culturally colonized women in a patriarchal Puritan society. Kardiansyah emphasized the concept of resistance to colonial constructions that limited women's bodies and gender relations, showing that, although seemingly submissive, female characters such as Hester Prynne were involved in a secret resistance to male domination and oppressive social norms.

Third, Zheng with the research title *An Analysis of Symbolism in The Scarlet Letter* (2017). This study uses the theory of Symbolism, referring to the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, to interpret the symbolic meaning in the novel, especially the change in the meaning of the red letter "A," forest, scaffolding, and the protagonist's name. This research shows how these symbols function as a representation of moral and social conflicts, as well as psychological dynamics experienced by characters, thus enriching the understanding of Hawthorne's moral message and social criticism.

Fourth, Sumekto with the research title *The Moral Values of Massachusetts Society in the Puritan Era: A Study on Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter* (2014). Adopting a moral and ethical criticism approach based on the theory of social morality to explore the moral values of the Puritan community and inherent hypocrisy. Through the analysis of Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, Sumekto highlights the consequences of violating moral norms and how sin and punishment are interpreted by society, which ultimately criticizes rigid moral standards that lead to suffering and injustice.

Fifth, Pramono with his research title *Women's Silent Resistance Against Hegemony in The Scarlet Letter, Bekisar Merah, and Belantik: A Comparative Analysis* (2013). This research is Antonio Gramsci's hegemonic theory to analyze the silent resistance of women against patriarchal domination in Puritan society. This study compares the character of Hester Prynne with female characters in Indonesian literature, highlighting the theme of identity transformation and women's empowerment in characters that were once considered weak. Pramono argues that resistance is not always manifested explicitly, but can take the form of silent action that effectively challenges the power structure.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Studies

No.	Author Name and Research Title	Purpose of the Study	Methods and Approach or Theory	The Results
1.	Feronika Angelina Moku, Agustina C. Mamentu, Jennie Posumah. <i>The Radical Feminism Revealed in the Novel The Scarlet Letter and The Impacts of Radical Views in Relation to Today's Life (2024).</i>	Analyze how radical feminism is shown in The Scarlet Letter and analyze the impact of that radical view on today's life.	Qualitative approach with literary text analysis, using the concept of radical feminism.	The results show that Hester Prynne presented resistance to patriarchal norms, and the idea of radical feminism in the novel is still relevant to the issue of gender injustice and social stigma today.
2.	M. Yuseano Kardiansyah. <i>Tubuh dan Relasi Gender : Wacana Pascakolonial Dalam Novel "The Scarlet Letter" Karya Nathaniel Hawthorne (2017).</i>	Revealing the side of resistance to colonial construction which is reflected in the social order and community norms in the novel.	Postcolonial approach with deconstruction method	The research result show that The Scarlet Letter depicts the resistance of women as the colonized party behind the attitude that seems to obedient to the power of society and male domination.
3.	Dan Zheng. <i>An Analysis of Symbolism in The Scarlet Letter (2017).</i>	Analyzing the symbolism in The Scarlet Letter novel, especially the change in the meaning of the	Focus on the analysis of symbolism in literary texts, the approach is the reading of the main symbols in the novel.	The result of this study show that The Scarlet Letter is a strong symbolic work. The letter "A", forest, and scaffold, and the main character are interrelated with the

		letter “A” symbol, forest, scaffold, and the names of the main characters.		themes of sin, punishment, alienation, and guilt.
4.	Didik Rian Sumekto. <i>The Moral Values of Massachusetts Society in the Puritan Era: A study on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter</i> (2014).	This research aims to reveal and discuss the life of Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne as described in the novel, as well as investigate how they adopted moral values from the 19 th century Massachusetts society.	This research uses a qualitative historical method that focuses on empirical facts and the existence of social structures in a certain period, as well as systematically interpreting actions and events that are contrary to the puritan dogma.	This study identifies three main results. (1) a satirical outline of Massachusetts morality, (2) the level of puritan morality, hypocrisy, guilt and redemption resulting from moral transgression, (3) an empirical understanding of the consequences and positive implications of the struggle for honesty, honor, dignity, strength, and resilience.
5.	RB. Edi Pramono. <i>Female’s Silent Resistance against Hegemony in The Scarlet Letter, Bekisar Merah, and Belantik : A Comparative Analysis</i> (2013).	Comparing the forms of silent resistance of female characters in three novels and examine the Hegemony they face.	Comparative study method with Hegemony theory and Comparative Literature.	The result showed that Hester Prynne and Lasiyah both experienced patriarchal oppression and did silent resistance that led them to a new identity. The driving factors were self esteem, dignity, and love.

This study differs from previous studies by focusing specifically on the construction of Hester Prynne as the Other and interpreting the forms of gender injustice through Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective. Different from previous studies that tend to discuss symbols in novels, issues of morality, sin, or women's oppression in general, this study places the character of Hester as a female subject analyzed through women as the Other and the process of social gender formation according to Beauvoir. Thus, this study not only reveals gender injustice in the puritan society, but also provides a new perspective on the relationship of gender-based power in classical literary works, thus resulting in different research contributions that are still rarely discussed in previous studies.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study uses an existentialist feminist approach to examine the position of women in society, particularly how social conditions can limit women's freedom and position them as subordinate to men. Existentialist feminism is one of the feminist theories that explains that women and men should have the same freedom to determine their life path. This argument is also reinforced by Ilia (2021), who argues that freedom should be an absolute thing for all individuals to have regardless of gender. However in reality, women often face various rules, expectations, and limitations that make them unable to make their lifestyle choices freely as men. As a result, women are often seen as having a lower role and depending on men.

Existentialist feminism theory is a theory developed by Simon de Beauvoir based on Jean Paul Sartre's theory of "being there for others". Through her work *The Second Sex* (2011), Beauvoir explained that women are not born as women, but become women through social processes that shape their identity, role and position in society. Her famous statement, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". This statement shows that women's identities and social positions are shaped not only by biological differences but also by social and cultural conditions. In this study, this theory is used to understand how social and patriarchal conditions shape women's position and limit their ability to become independent subjects.

The concept of "the self" and "the other" is one of the most well known ideas in Simon de Beauvoir's thought. Through this concept, Beauvoir explained that men are positioned as the subject, while women are positioned as "*The Other*", which is the party that becomes the measure or standard in society. On the contrary, women are placed as "the other", which is the party that is considered different and their existence is often defined based on men. This subject-other relationship explains how women are positioned as "*The Other*" in relation to men. As for the existentialist put forward by Simon de Beauvoir stated that women in their existence in this world are only "*Other*" for men. Women are positioned as "*The Other*" rather than being recognized as independent subjects. From an existentialist perspective, women have the possibility to become subjects by exercising their freedom and defining themselves.

a. Subject-Object Relationship (The Others)

Beauvoir's ethical analysis highlights the oppression and violence against humans that arises as a result of a wrong understanding of the subject and object. In human relationships, there is always an intersubjective conflict, where every individual tries to make another person an object and reject himself as an object. Women are oppressed because their existence is not paid attention to and is not recognized as an absolute subject like men, this gives rise to the view that the absolute subject is a man, while women are only "the other". This process starts from biological facts such as reproductive roles, hormonal imbalances, and women's physical weaknesses cornered at domestic and reproductive roles.

Beauvoir questions the traditional definition of women and argues that women's social position is shaped by cultural and social constructions. These constructions can position women as dependent on men and reinforce their status as "*The Other*". Women are often considered only objects that "print" children, and the ability to give birth is considered a weakness of their bodies. This gives rise to the view that women cannot live without men, if it is believed that women are created from the ribs, men become subjects and absolutes, while women become objects or "others". The differences between men and women mostly come from social constructions that marginalize women, as well as the internalization of the concept of Otherness. The important question is whether women can free themselves from object status, and whether that cause should make them like men, or they can achieve different subjectivity. The culture

created by men makes the assumption that men are subjects and women are objects.

b. Female Oppression by Patriarchy

Gender oppression is not just an ordinary form of oppression. Just as black people know how it feels to be oppressed by white people, or poor people feel how it feels to be oppressed by rich people, women also experience a unique form of oppression from men.

Beauvoir also discussed the “feminine mystery”, which presents women as mysterious and difficult for men to understand. She explained that this mystery is connected to women’s position as The Other, particularly in amorous and conjugal relationships (Beauvoir, 2011, p.278-281). The institution of marriage can actually damage the relationship of a couple and has the potential to become a form of slavery. Being a wife, mother, or domestic worker is a feminine role that limits women's freedom (Tong, 2004). Women often choose to marry because of social pressure, obligation, or because marriage is considered the only most reasonable solution for a normal existence as a wife and mother. However, the beginning of married life can be difficult for women because marriage may make them feel that their future is already determined, leaving them with limited freedom and few possibilities beyond the roles of wife and homemaker (Beauvoir, 2011, p.499). Marriage can also restrict women’s freedom and individuality, particularly when women are expected to accept marriage as a duty rather than as a free choice. Beauvoir explained that even when a woman marries for love, marriage can turn

the husband into her master and transform their relationship into a duty (Beauvoir, 2011, p.607-608).

The position of women as *the other* is one of the causes of the emergence of various forms of gender injustice. When women are not seen as equal subjects, they are more vulnerable to experiencing discriminatory treatment, both in social life and in literary representation. Thus, gender injustice can be understood as the impact of a social structure that puts women in a lower position than men. In this study, gender injustice is understood as a form of injustice experienced by female characters due to their position as the other. These forms of injustice can be in the form of subordination, marginalization, negative stereotypes, discrimination, restriction of rights, to control over women's bodies, behavior, and life choices. All forms of injustice do not appear. Various forms of injustice are rooted in a patriarchal system that continues to maintain male dominance in society.

Based on the theory above, this study uses Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as "*The Other*" as the main concept to analyze the *Othering* of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*. The existentialist feminist approach provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how patriarchal society positions results in unequal treatment and gender injustice.

1.7 Research Method

This research uses a Qualitative research method. Moleong (2012), said that qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words obtained by people and observable behaviors. In literary research, a qualitative approach allows researchers to interpret the meaning

contained in the text through in depth analysis. In its application, this qualitative research is supported by close reading techniques and interrelated content analysis. Close reading is used as a technique to obtain data from literary texts, while content analysis is used to analyze the data that has been obtained. Therefore, these three parts form a series of research methods, where the qualitative approach becomes the foundation of research.

1.7.1 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is an important stage in research that aims to obtain the required data in accordance with the research focus. In other words, data collection is a method or technique used by researchers to collect relevant information to support the analysis process. The data collected in this study consists of primary and secondary data.

a. Primary data

Primary data is the main data source used by researchers in research. In this study, the primary data is in the form of literary works, namely the novel *Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The novel becomes the main object of research because it creates a problem that is in accordance with the focus of the study being researched. Primary data is obtained through careful and in-depth text reading of the novel content.

b. Secondary data

Secondary data is supporting data that is used to strengthen analysis and research arguments. Secondary data in this study includes theory books, scientific journal articles, previous theses or theses that discuss similar problems with

different novel objects, as well as theses or theses that discuss similar problems with different novel objects. In addition, sources from online media are also used to support the completeness and depth of research.

The data collection technique used in this study is close reading and documentation. The researcher repeatedly reads *The Scarlet Letter* and documents relevant textual data in the form of quotations, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and events related to Hester's construction as the Other.

Literary research, observation is carried out through reading and observing the novel text intensively. This technique is considered effective in qualitative research because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of various narrative aspects related to the problems raised in the novel.

1.7.2 Data Analysis Methods

According to Patton (2002), data analysis is the process of transforming a large amount of qualitative data into a clear, deep, and meaningful narrative description, until it produces research findings. This analysis process involves identifying textual evidence that shows the basic patterns of gender injustice in the narrative, the interpretation of its significance to the development of the main character, and tracing how these elements convey the typical life lessons in the literary work of *Scarlet Letter*.

1. Close reading

The first step in data analysis is done by clarifying the data through the close reading technique (close reading). Richards (2019), stated that close reading is an approach that focuses attention on the structure of the text itself, especially the use

of language and literary tools, in order to understand the meaning and effect produced by the text. Read the novel repeatedly and identify the parts that involve: Hester's social position, interaction with male authority, social assessment, punishment, motherhood, identity, and relationship with Dimmesdale.

2. Classifying

The data collected from the novel are textual passages, including dialogues and narrative passages, that show the Othering of Hester Prynne and the gender injustice she experiences. These data are then grouped according to the forms of gender injustice experienced by Hester prynne, such as marginalization, subordination, stereotype, public humiliation, and double moral standards.

3. Interpretation Through Beauvoir

The data that had been grouped was then interpreted using the existentialist feminist perspective of Simone de Beauvoir. The interpretation focusses on the relationship between the subject and the *Other* to see how Hester Prynne is placed as "*The Other*" in a patriarchal Puritan society, such as the concept of Subject and the *Other*, freedom, autonomy, patriarchal authority, and women's socially constructed identity.

4. Synthesis

The last step is synthesis, which is combining the interpretation results to find the *Othering* pattern experienced by Hester Prynne. The result of this synthesis is used to explain how *Othering* towards Hester Prynne was formed in the Puritan society and how Hester's response to the position can be understood through Beauvoir's ideas