

CHAPTER II

**THE OTHERING OF HESTER PRYNNE IN NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE'S *THE SCARLET LETTER*: AN EXISTENTIALIST
FEMINIST ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, research problems are answered and discussed with a focus on the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne's. This analysis focusses on How Hester Prynne is Othered within the patriarchal Puritan society and how her position as "*The Other*" is reflected in the gender injustice she experiences. The analysis is based on the existentialist feminist perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, especially the concept of women as "*The Other*".

The Othering of Hester Prynne: An Existentialist Feminist Analysis

The process of Hester as the other began when he was found to have committed adultery. Her actions are not only considered as a violation of the law and religious teachings, but also seen as a threat to the moral order of the Puritan society. The process starts from the domination of the patriarchal system that gives authority to men to determine laws, moral values, and female social identity. The construction the produces various from of gender injustice that experienced by Hester, which is marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, public humiliation, and double moral standard.

The construction of Hester Prynne as the other in *The Scarlet Letter* is not happened suddenly, but through a social process influenced by the patriarchal system in Puritan society. In that society, men hold authority in the fields of religion, law and social life so that they have the power to determine values,

norms, and moral standards which must be obeyed by all members of society. When Hester did adultery, she is not only considered to violate religious rules and laws, but also seen as a woman who has tarnished the moral order of the Puritan society. Through the trial process and punishment, the use of red letters A, as well as negative assessment that is constantly given by society, Hester's identity is slowly changing. Hester is no longer seen as individuals who have their own identity and dignity, but are reduced to a symbol of sin and in Puritan society, women do not have a space that to express opinions themselves. Women's voices tend to be ignored, while decisions about law, religion, and morals are completely in the hand of men.

In addition, women are required to meet standards that are much higher than men. While women will receive punishment and social stigma if they violate the applicable norms, men often do not get the same treatment for equal violations. This condition shows how the patriarchal society gradually constructs Hester Prynne as the other, which is a woman who is seen as different and inferior to the dominant group.

When the process took place continuously, Hester not only lost her position as an equal member of society, but also experienced various forms of gender injustice. She was excluded from social life (marginalization), placed in a lower position than men (subordination), given various negative labels (stereotyping), humiliated in public (public humiliation), and received different treatment from Arthur Dimmesdale even though they both committed the same violation (double moral standard). These various forms of injustice can be understood as

consequences and manifestations of Hester's position as The Other. They demonstrate how her position as The Other affects not only how she is perceived but also how she is treated by Puritan society.

Through the various forms of gender injustice experienced by the character Hester Prynne in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, this discussion demonstrates that her experiences relate to Beauvoir's concepts of the subject and *The Other*, as well as female autonomy, while also revealing patriarchal oppression.

Simone de Beauvoir did not directly use the terms marginalization, subordination, stereotype, public humiliation, or double moral standard in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir discusses more about how women are placed as the Other, how men are positioned as Subjects, and how the patriarchal system limits women's freedom through various rules, values, and social roles. From this though, Beauvoir explained that women often do not have the opportunity to define themselves because their identity and position have been predetermined by society.

Therefore, this study does not intend to state that the five forms of gender injustice are concepts formulated directly by Beauvoir. On the contrary, these forms are the result of interpretation of Beauvoir's arguments regarding women as the Other. In other words, Beauvoir's thought was used as a foundation to explain why Hester experienced marginalization, subordination, stereotype, public humiliation, and different moral standard. All forms of injustice are understood as

the result of the way patriarchal society builds the position of women as parties outside the center power and always under men.

From the discussion, the relationship between research result and theory becomes clearer. This analysis also shows that the gender injustice experienced by Hester not only describes the condition of the Puritan society in the novel, but also reflects Simone de Beauvoir's criticism of the patriarchal system that places women as the Other.

2.1 Social Marginalization

Social exclusion is one of the processes that occur in the construction of gender injustice, which is when a society that has power limits the involment of certain individuals in social life and puts them in an unequal position. In a patriarchal society, this exclusion process often occurs against women because of the view that women do not have the same position as men determineing values, identities, and places in society. Through this process, women are gradually constructed as different parties and outside the group that is considered normal or dominant. In the context of *The Scarlet Letter*, the process of social marginalization of Hester Prynne is seen through how the Puritan community gives social distance after being punished for moral violations.

The process of excommunication against Hester began to be seen after her go out of prison to serve the sentence on the scaffold in front of the entire Puritan community. After the incident, people no longer treat it as an equal part of social life. Hester than chose to live in a small house located on the outskirts of the settlement and lived her life with Pearl by sewing to meet her daily needs.

Although the result of her work are widely used by community, Hester remained placed in social distance and was not fully accepted as part of the Puritan community. This condition shows how society builds a boundary between “them” as a group that is considered moral and Hester as an individual who is placed outside the prevailing social norms. One of the narratives that shows this condition is when Hawthorne explained that Hester chose a place to live far from the settlement center and lived a life separate from the community.

After receiving social punishment from the puritan community, Hester Prynne chose to stay in a remote cottage on the outskirts of the city with her son. The residence shows Hester’s position that is alienated from social life because society sees her as a different person due to the sins she is considered to have committed. Despite being ostracized, Hester was able to survive through her skills in sewing and fulfilling the needs of herself and her child. (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 94-95)

The narrative in Chapter V “Hester at Her Needle” shows that the process of social separation towards Hester occurred through the restriction of space and social relations given by the Puritan people. Hester no longer has the opportunity to interact freely like other women in the community. Her decision to live in a remote place not only shows a personal choice, but also is the result of the attitude of the community that continues to keep distance and reject its existence as part of the community. This condition shows that the Puritan society not only gives punishment through legal and religious rules, but also builds social boundaries that make Hester outside the community’s life.

The process continues as long as Hester lives in the middle Puritan people. Although she is known as a hardworking woman and often helps others through her stitches, the public’s view of her has not changed for a long time. Hester

remains positioned as a different woman and does not have an equal social position with other members of society. This shows that Hester's identity is no longer judged base on her ability or contribution, but based on moral stigma that has been attached to her by society. Therefore, through these processes such as the restriction of social space, rejection, and giving distance carried out by the Puritan people towards Hester resulted in a condition of marginalization, namely when Hester was placed in a marginalized position and was no longer treated as an equal part of social life. This condition shows how the Puritan community placed Hester in a different position from other members of the community.

The marginalization experienced by Hester Prynne can be understood through Simone de Beauvoir's thoughts about the position of women as the Other in a patriarchal society. According to Beauvoir, women are not seen as individuals who have an identity and existence that stand alone, but are always defined based on their relationship with men. This is seen in his statement that, "Humanity is male, and male defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.26). This argument shows that men are placed as the center and standard of humanity, while women are positioned as parties who depend on men to gain social recognition. In conditions like this, women do not have the authority to determine their own identity because their existence is always measured based on the perspective and interest of men.

From Beauvoir's point of view, the condition is a form of gender injustice because women lose their status as autonomous subjects. When men become the center of social life, women are automatically pushed to a lower position and be

outside the space that has the power to determine social values and norms. In other words, women are marginalized as part of a group that has authority in society. Marginalization is not just physical exclusion, but also the removal of recognition of women as individuals who are equal to men.

The argument is reinforced by Beauvoir's statement that "Man is a socially autonomous and complete individual; he is regarded above all as a producer, and his existence is justified by the work he provides for the group; we have already seen the reasons why the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.503). Through this statement, Beauvoir explained that society gives greater appreciation to men because they are considered to contribute to the public space as producers and the main actors of social life. On the other hand, women are limited to reproductive and domestic roles that are considered to have no equal social value. As a result, women do not gain the same recognition and dignity as men even though they have an important contribution in community life.

In Beauvoir's perspective, the condition is a form of marginalization that originates from the patriarchal structure. Women are placed in a position that does not give access to power, recognition, or equal participation in social life. When society only recognizes male activity as something of value, women are systematically pushed to the fringes and considered less important. Therefore, marginalization can be understood as one of the manifestations of the construction of women as the Other, which is a position where women are not recognized as

autonomous and equal subjects, but as parties whose existence is always below the standards determined by men.

2.2 Restriction of Hester's Rights and Social Roles

The positions of women in Puritan society is greatly influenced by social rules and prevailing moral values. After Hester received a sentence for adultery that she considered to have committed, her identity was no longer seen based on her abilities as an individual, but based on the stigma as a woman who had violated social and religious norms. The stigma then affects the way people treat Hester, including assessing her ability to play the role of a mother. This can be seen when the Puritan leaders questioned Hester's feasibility in raising Pearl.

“Hester Prynne,” said he, fixing his naturally stern regard on the wearer of the scarlet letter, “there hath been much question concerning thee, of late. The point hath been weightily discussed, whether we, that are of authority and influence, do well discharge our consciences by trusting an immortal soul, such as there is in yonder child, to the guidance of one who hath stumbled and fallen, amid the pitfalls of this world... What cans thou do for the child, in this kind?”

Hester then replied “I can teach my little Pearl what I have learned from this!. However, Governor Bellingham rejected the answer and said, “Woman, it is thy badge of shame! It is because of the stain which that letter indicates, that we would transfer thy child to other hands.” (Hawthorne, 1850. p. 133)

The conversation shows that the Puritan people established the view that Hester's moral mistakes made her not have enough ability to determine his own child's life. Puritan leaders do not see Hester as an individual who is able to make decisions, but as someone who must be directed and supervised by a party that is considered to have greater authority. In that situation, Hester's voice as an mother does not have the same position as the decision Puritan leaders. Although Hester

tries to show that his experience and affection can be the basis for rearing Pearl, his opinion is still rejected because his identity has already been determined through the stigma given by society.

Through the incident, it can be seen that the Puritan community not only punished Hester's actions, but also limited the space for Hester to take control of her own life. The power to determine Pearl's future is in the hands of a party with social authority, namely male leaders, while Hester as a woman is placed in a position to accept the decision. Thus, the process of forming the view that Hester is a woman who does not have full authority over herself results in acts of subordination, namely when Hester is placed in a lower position and her right to determine family life and her role as a mother is limited by the patriarchal system of Puritan society.

Simone de Beauvoir views the subordination of women as one of the consequences of the construction of women as the Other in society patriarchy. The view is reinforced by Beauvoir's argument that states that "The subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.27). Through this argument, Beauvoir explained that the existence of the subject can only be confirmed by creating the other party as the Other. Men place themselves as the essential party (the essential), while women are positioned as the non essential party (inessential) in treated as an object. This hierarchical relationship creates power inequality, because only the subject has the authority to determine values, make decisions, and control the lives of other parties. On the other hand, women as the Other are placed as

objects that must accept the decision without having an equal position to appose or determine their own will.

This condition is reflected after Hester gave birth to Pearl, religious leaders and the Puritan Government questioned her eligibility as a mother and considered taking custody of her child. The decision regarding Pearl's future does not involve Hester's will as a biological mother, but is entirely in the hands of the magistrates and priests who are all men. This situation shows that Hester is not treated as a subject who was authority over his own life, but as an object whose life can be regulated by the party in power.

From Simone de Beavoir's point of view, the experience reflecting subordination as a form of gender injustice. The authority that Puritan leaders have to determine the rights of a mother shows how the patriarchal system places men as subjects with social, legal, and moral legitimacy, while women are in a position to submit to the decision. Thus, the subordination experienced by Hester is not only a form of power inequality in the puritan society, but also manifestation of the construction of women as the Other described by Beauvoir.

2.3 Stereotypical Construction of Hester's Identity

In *The Scarlet Letter*, the process of gender injustice against Hester Prynne seen through how the Puritan people formed a certain view of her after knowing the adultery that her considered to have committed. In a society influenced by patriarchal values, women are often judged based on their compliance with moral norms that have been determined by society. When a woman is considered to violate the norm, the mistake made is not only seen as a personal action, but also

used to determine her values and identity as a whole. This is what Hester Prynne experienced, when the puritan society no longer saw her as an individual with personal experience and character, but as someone whose identity was determined based on the moral violations attached to her.

The process began when the Puritan people gave an assessment of Hester based on the sins her was considered to have committed. Punishment what Hester received not only aims to give consequences for his actions, but also make her an example for society regarding women who are considered to violate moral rules. Thus, society is slowly building a certain image of Hester as a woman who deviates from the values they consider correct. That view was seen when Hester served her sentence in front of the Puritan community in Chapter II, The Market-Place. At the time, some Puritan women gave negative comments about Hester and thought that the punishment given to him was still not severe enough.

“Goodwives,” said a hard-featured dame of fifty, “I’ll tel ye a piece of my mind. It would be gratly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactresses as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 56). “...At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester prynne’s forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me”. “Ah, but,” interposed, more softly, a young wife, holding a child by the hand, “let her cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!” (Hawthorne, 1850, p.57). “What do we talk of marks and brands, wether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead?” cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges. “this woman has brough shame upon us all, and ought to die” (Hawthorne, 1850, p.58).

The statement shows that people prefer giving a negative label to Hester rather than understand the situation she is experiencing. The assessment is not based on Hester's personality as an individual, but on the assumption that a woman who commits adultery is no longer honored.

The labeling given to Hester continues to affect her life after the sentence is carried out, the condition can be seen in Chapter V, *Hester at Her Needle*.

Throughout them all, giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion. Thus the young and pure would be taught to look at her, with the scarlet letter flaming on her breast, at her, the child of honorable parents, at her, who had once been innocent, as the figure, the body, the reality of sin. And over her grave, the infamy that she must carry thither would be her only monument (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 92).

The narrative shows that the puritan society no longer sees Hester as an individual, but as a symbol that represents female sins. Hawthorne explained that Hester was used by religious leaders and public figures to teach about the dangers of moral violations to the next generation. Furthermore, society not only stigmatizes Hester as an individual but also connects her actions with the assumption that women are inherently weak and easily fall into sin.

Based on the discussion, the process of forming a negative view through moral judgement, labeling as a sinful woman, and the removal of Hester's individual identity produced a stereotype against her. This stereotype makes Hester no longer seen as an individual who has the ability to change, but as a symbol of a woman who is considered deviating from the norms of the Puritan

society. Therefore, the stereotype attached to Hester is one of the forms of gender injustice that continues to affect the way people treat her.

The perspective Simone de Beauvoir, stereotypes are one form gender injustice that appears when a woman's identity is formed based on a social constructed created by a patriarchal society. Beauvoir rejects the assumption that the nature, character, and role of women are determined by biological factors or natural nature. On the other hand, Beauvoir argues that women's identity is the result of a continuous social process so that women are directed to fulfil the ideal image that has been determined by society. As a result, women lose the freedom to define themselves as autonomous individuals because their identity has been determined by norms and values built from a male perspective.

The idea was explained by Beauvoir through his statement that "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychis, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the ennuich that is called feminine" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.330). This argument shows that women are not born with a certain character or identity, but are formed through a social process that creates a concept of what is called "female". Thus, the traits that have been considered inherent in women are not nature, but are the result of community construction. From Beauvoir's point of view, this condition is a form of gender injustice because women are forced to adapt to the identity determined by society, not base on their own choices and freedoms.

Furthermore, Beauvoir showed that the construction give birth to a picture of the ideal female figure that must be obeyed. This can be seen in her argument that “The ideal woman is totally stupid and totally subjugated; she is always willing to welcome the man and never ask anything from him” (Beauvoir, 2011, p.260). Through this statement, Beauvoir criticized how patriarchal society standards regarding women who are considered ideal, namely women who are passive, obedient, have no demands, and always prioritize the interests of men. This kind of stereotype not only limits women’s freedom, but also legitimizes male domination because women are considered good if they show obedience to male authority. Therefore, stereotypes according to Beauvoir are not just social labelling, but a mechanism that maintains women’s position as the Other.

Beauvoir also explained that the stereotype towards women continues maintained through various judgments attached to them. Beauvoir’s stated that “There are so many common features in the indictments against woman; her condition has remained the same superficial throughout changes, and this condition defines what is called the woman’s` character`: she “wallows in immanence” (Beauvoir, 2011, p.724). This argument shows that society continuously forms a picture of “female character” through various accusations, judgments, and generalizations that are passed down from time to time. As a result, women are not seen based on their personality or actions as individuals, but based on the collective character that has been built by society. From Beauvoir’s perspective, this condition shows that stereotypes are an instrument of a

patriarchy that eliminates women's individuality and maintains their position as the Other.

Beauvoir's thoughts are reflected in Hester Prynne's experience in *The Scarelet Letter*. Where Hester received various negative labelings after being found to have committed adultery. The Puritan people no longer see Hester as an individual with her own background, experience, and humanity, but identify her solely as a sinful woman. Hester's identity is then reduced to a symbol of moral violation attached to him through the letter "A" (adulteress). From Beauvoir's point of view, the labelling shows how patriarchal society forms a female identity based on pre constructed stereotypes. Hester was not given space, to define her self, but was forced to accept the identity formed by society. Thus, the stereotype experienced by Hester is a manifestation of gender injustice because it eliminates the freedom of women to be subjects who determine their own identity and further strengthens their position as the Other.

2.4 Public Humiliation and Control of Hester's Body

The process of constructing gender injustice against Hester Prynne is seen through the way Puritan make punishment as a means to maintain the moral values they believe in. After Hester was found guilty of adultery, Puritan leaders not only imposed sentences based on law and religion, but also regulated how the punishment should be testified by all members society.

In this way, Hester's violation is no longer a personal problem, but as a warning to the community about the consequences that must be accepted by women who are considered to be violating norms. Through this process, Hester's

body and identity are placed as objects that can be seen, evaluated, and judged by the Puritan people.

The process began to be seen when Hester was ordered to stand on top of Scaffold while holding Pearl and wearing the red letter “A” on her chest. In Chapter II, *The Market-Place*. Hawthorne described that Hester had to walk through the crowd to the place where the punishment was carried out so that everyone could witness him.

A lane was forthwith opened through the crowd of spectators. Preced by the beadle, and attended by an irregular procession of stern-browed men and unkindly visaged women, Hester Prynne set forth towards the place appointed for her punishment. A crowd of eager and curious school-boys, understanding little of the matter in hand, except that it gave them a half-holiday, ran before her progress, turning their heads continually to stare into her face, and at the winking baby in her arms, and at the ignominious letter on her breast. It was no great distance, in those days, from the prison-door to the market-place. Measured by the prisoner's experience, however, it might be reckoned a journey of some length; for, haughty as her demeanor was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 62).

The narrative shows that the Puritan people deliberately put Hester in public space to be the center of attention of the whole society. The journey to the Scaffold, the gaze of the people surrounding her, and the red letter “A” she wears show that the punishment is designed not only to give sanctions, but also to build shame in front of the public. Thus, since the beginning of the Puritan society has formed a situation where Hester is positioned as an object that can be seen, evaluated and judged openly by people other.

The process did not stop after Hester stood on the Scaffold, in Chapter III, *The Recognition*, the Puritan leaders again put Hester in the center of attention when they forced her to reveal the identity of Pearl's father in front of the public.

“Speak, woman!” said another voice, coldly and sternly, proceeding from the crowd about the scaffold. “Speak; and give your child a father!” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 78). “I will not speak!” answered Hester, turning pale as death, but responding to this voice, which she too surely recognize. “And my child must seek a heavenly father, she shall never known an earthly one!” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 79).

The incident showed that the Puritan community not only judged Hester's actions, but also tried to force her to take responsibility for the offense in public. Hester was placed alone in front of the community to answer the demands of Puritan leaders, while men involved in the same adultery were not treated in the same way. This situation shows that public space is used as a tool to strengthen social pressure on Hester through gaze, judgment, and demands made openly.

This shows that Hester is placed as an object that shown in front of the public, forcing him to take responsibility for his mistakes openly, and making the red letter “A” as a sign that continues to be attached to her resulting in public humiliation. Through this process, Hester not only received punishment for the offense accused of her, but was also publicly humiliated so that shame and stigma continue to stick in her life as a woman in the Puritan society.

In the open punishment process againsts Hester, it has been explained that Hester Prynne experienced public humiliation through the punishment of standing on a Scaffold the use of the red letter A, as well as the views and condemnation of the Puritan community. The punishment not only aims to sanction Hester's

violations, but also make it a public spectacle so that the public knows and remembers the mistakes he has done. Thus, the insult that Hester received was not only personal, but also part of the social mechanism to maintain the values and rules that apply in the Puritan society.

This view is in line with Simone de Beauvoir's thinking which states that women's behavior is often the target of public criticism. Beauvoir emphasized that the forms of behavior that are condemned towards women do not come from the biological nature or the inherent nature of women, but are the result of social situations that shape the position of women in society. Beauvoir's stated "But the types of behaviors denounced are not dictated to woman by her hormones or predestined in her brain's compartments; they are suggested in negative form by her situation" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.724). Through the statement, Beauvoir shows that society tends to judge women based on moral standards that they created themselves, then consider women as the cause of violations of those norms.

Beauvoir's thought can be used to understand Hester Prynne's experience in *The Scarlet Letter*. The humiliation that Hester experienced was not only caused by the actions she did, but also because the Puritan society placed her as a woman who had to bear all the criticism for the moral violations that occurred. The criticism was realized through punishment on a scaffold, the use of the red letter A on his chest, and the need to accept the views and judgments of the community continuously. In this condition, Hester's body is no longer seen as part of herself as an individual, but turns into a medium used by society to show and defend their moral authority in front of the public.

In addition, the insults received by Hester shows that Puritan society makes women an object of moral evaluation. Through punishment that is done openly, Hester's identity is reduced to a symbol of sin so that his entire existence is measure based on one mistake he made. Meanwhile, the community does not give the same treatment to men involved in the violation. This shows that public contempt not only acts as a sosial punishment, but also a form of control over women to remain subject to patriarchal norms. In other words, public humiliation becomes a means to strengthen the position of women as a party that is continuously monitored, evaluated, and judged by the community.

Based on Beauvoir's thoughts, the public humiliation that Hester experienced reflects how the patriarchal system works through the process of moral assessment of women. Society not only punishes an action, but also shapes women's identity through open condemnation. Therefore, public humiliations in *The Scarlet Letter* can be understood as a form of gender injustice that places women as objects of social judgment. Hester's experience shows the public contempt is one of the wayfor patriarchal society to maintain its power, which is by making women's bodies, identities, and lives a symbols to affirm prevailing moral norms.

2.5 Double Moral Standards Toward Hester and Dimmesdale

In the Puritan social system, moral valuations are not seen by the same measure. Women are considered as the party that must maintain the honor and moral values of the family and society. Therefore, when a woman violates the applicable norms, the mistake is easier to know, announce, and be used as a basis

for assessing her entire identity. On the contrary, men still have the opportunity to maintain their position, honor, and even public trust despite committing the same offense. The difference in the way of view shows that the Puritan society from the beginning has built an unbalanced moral judgment between women and men.

The process can be seen through the different treatment that Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale received after committing adultery. Hester was forced serving a sentence in front of the public, wearing the red letter “A”, and continuing to accept social judgment for years. On the contrary, Arthur Dimmesdale continues to carry out his role as a priest and continues to gain respect from the community because of his identity as an adulterer unknown to the public. The difference in treatment shows that the Puritan society places more emphasis on Hester’s fault as a woman than on men who commit the same offense.

This situation is seen in Chapter XI, *The Interior of a Heart*, when Hawthorne describes the life of Arthur Dimmesdale who remains respected despite his guilt.

More than once, Mr. Dimmesdale had gone into the pulpit, with a purpose never to come down its steps, until he should have spoken words like the above. More than once nay, more than a hundred times he had actually spoken! But how? He had told his hearers that he was altogether vile, a viler companion of the vilest, the worst of sinners, an abomination, a thing of unimaginable iniquity; and that the only wonder was, that they did not see his wretched body shrivelled up before their eyes, by the burning wrath of the almighty! Could there be plainer speech than this? Would not the people start up in their seats, by a simultaneous impulse, and tear him down out of the pulpit which he defiled? Not so, indeed! They heard it all, and did but reverence him the more (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 174).

The narrative shows that the Puritan community still views Dimmesdale as a pious figure even though he repeatedly admits himself as a sinner. The confession did not change the way people treated him. On the contrary, they actually respect Dimmesdale more because they consider his confession as a form of humility and piety. This situation is very different from Hester who from the beginning lost her social honor after her identity as an adulterer was known by the public. The difference in treatment shows that moral judgment in Puritan Society is not applied equally, but is influenced by the position and gender of the perpetrator.

Based on discussion, the process of giving different moral judgments to women and men, protection of men's honor, and heavier judgments against women result in a double moral standard. Hester had to bear social punishment and stigma publicly, while Arthur Dimmesdale still maintained his position and respect in society despite committing the same offense. The situation shows that society's Puritans apply unequal moral standards to women and men in dealing with the same offense.

In Simone de Beauvoir's perspective, double moral standard is a form of gender injustice that arises because patriarchal society builds different moral rules for men and women, especially in matters of sexuality. Although Beauvoir does not use the term double moral standard directly, she shows that difference in judgment of men and women does not come from differences in biological nature, but from social construction formed by patriarchal traditions. As a result, the same action can be judged differently depending on the gender of the perpetrator. Men tend to

gain tolerance and maintain their social status, while women are more easily blamed and receive heavier social consequences.

This view is explained by Beauvoir through his statement that “The difference stems from the overall erotic situation of man and woman and defined by tradition and today’s society” (Beauvoir, 2011, p.677). This argument shows that the difference in experience between men and women in sexual issues is shaped by traditions and social norms that develop in society. Thus, these assessment of sexual Beauvoir is not based on the action itself, but on the social construction that determines how men and women should act. From Beauvoir’s point of view, this condition is a form gender injustice because society creates moral standards that do not apply equally to both sexes.

Beauvoir then strengthened his argument by stating that “For woman, the love act is still considered a service woman renders to man, thus giving him the status of master; we have seen that he can always take an inferior woman, but she degrades herself if she gives herself to a male who is not her equal; her consent, in any case, is of the same nature as a surrender, a fall” (Beauvoir, 2011, p.677). Through this argument, Beauvoir shows that sexual intercourse is understood differently for men and women. Men remain positioned as masters so that their involvement in sexual relations does not reduce their social dignity. On the other hand, women are seen as having humiliated themselves when doing the same thing. The assessment shows that patriarchal society associates women’s honor with their social morality, while men are not burdened by equal moral demands. Thus, women receive heavier social consequences than men, even though they

both do the same action. For Beauvoir, this condition shows how patriarchy maintains male dominance through the application of different moral standards against women.

Beauvoir's thoughts are clearly reflected in the experience of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. As explained in the differences in moral judgment of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, both of them committed the same offense, namely adultery. However, the Puritan community gives a very different assessment of each perpetrator. Since Hester's identity was known, she lost her social honor, was humiliated in front of society, and continued to receive stigma as a sinful woman. On the contrary, Arthur Dimmesdale is still seen as a pious and moral priest. Even when Dimmesdale confessed himself several times as a sinner in front of the congregation, the confession did not change the way people treated him. People actually interpret his confession as a form of humility and the piety of a religious leader, not as a confession of the sins of adultery that he has actually committed. This shows that the Puritan society does not apply the same moral measure to men and women. Hester's offense were the basis for losing his honor and social identity, while Dimmesdale's violations did not erase the authority or respect he received as a man and religious leader.

From Beauvoir's perspective, the difference in treatment shows that a patriarchal society does not judge actions objectively, but judges based on the social position of men and women. As explained by Beauvoir, the patriarchal tradition has established a moral standard that gives greater tolerance to men,

while women are used as a symbol of society's moral honor. Therefore, when a woman is considered to violate sexual norms, she receives a much heavier social punishment than men who commit similar violations. In the case of Hester Prynne, the Puritan society constructed herself as a woman responsible for the moral violation, while Dimmesdale was still maintained as a dignified figure. This condition shows that the double moral standard is not just a difference in treatment between men and women, but a form of gender injustice that was born from the construction of women as the Other, which is the party that is always the object of moral judgment in the patriarchal system.