

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of six sub-chapters of research background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research significance, and the definitions of key terms. The research background contains phenomena that occur in the field which are then criticized using relevant theories. The statement of problem contains a summary of the problems studied. The research objectives contain the achievement of targets following the research questions. Research significance includes the theoretical and practical benefits of the research. The definitions of key terms contains brief explanations of the main terms used in the study.

#### **1.1 Research Background.**

*The Scarlet Letter* is a 1995 American romantic drama film. It is a film adaptation of the 1850 novel of the same name by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The film was directed by Roland Joffé and stars Demi Moore, Gary Oldman, and Robert Duvall. Tells the story of a wife who was abandoned by her husband in war. The war situation forced her to flee to a safe place. However, the place that should have been filled by her husband undeniably made Hester put her heart to a young and generous public figure on the place that she has been staying.

After its release, this film received criticism, film critics considered that the context of the sexual romance was excessive. One of them is the Washington Post writers Amy E. Schwartz and the NY Times Caryn James who released an article on the same day as the film's release saying that Roland Jofee should name his film *Scarlet Letter* "Puritans in Lust" and it won the worst remake or sequel at Razzie Award in 1996 (Schart, 2010).

*Easy A* is a 2010 American film release. The film is directed by Will Gluck and stars Emma Stone, Penn Badgley, Amanda Bynes, and numerous more. The film was released on September 17, 2010 and earned great reviews from reviewers despite not being nominated for any awards. The film ini was nominated for at least nine awards

and earned 21 nominations. Because this film is an adaptation of the novel "*Scarlet Letter*" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. There are a number of earlier films adapted from the story that were released in 1934 and 1955 as references; both of these films have a somber tone and are rich with historical elements from the time period. Obviously, not everyone enjoys history. *Easy A* is a romantic comedy, so this is to be expected, but the era of the twenty-first century is reflected in the film's light packaging and upbeat musical score.

Each film has its own meaning for each individual who watches it. Both films are very interesting to discuss because they both have many similarities such as choosing a woman as the main character, the plot is the same like already "Telling a happy ending" with the use of a narrator, let me explain *Scarlet Letter* in the early minutes of "Pearl" as Hester's child, telling Hester's story, while Olivia is the narrator herself in the film, even though she has the same goal but with a different form, and the problem is the same regarding "Adultery" and "morality". Last, in the choice of symbol, namely the letter "A".

As a connoisseur of Hollywood films, the researcher has a general idea of films that have a distinctive symbol as a characteristic of a main character. No matter how many remakes or versions, Superman films always use the letter "S" as his trademark, of course the letter "S" has a positive meaning to portray the figure of "Clark" as the main character who is a superhero who always defends the truth and fights for injustice.

If it is felt that the example is lacking, the researcher can explain more than the Superman film, there is the film *The Mask of Zorro* which uses the letter Z as a characteristic of the film until the sequel, *The Legend of Zorro*, the use of the letter "Z" is still being carried out, the film *The Incredibles* which uses the letter "I" as a feature in the film, then there is the *Avenger* film which uses the letter "A" as a unique characteristic to represent a group that likes to eradicate crime and injustice on earth with various kinds of heroic abilities.

All the films that have been described by the researchers certainly have one thing in common, namely having a positive meaning or good meaning that provides moral

values that can be taken by the audience. So what's the problem with the films chosen by the researchers? *Scarlet Letter* and *Easy A*, both use the same symbol A, but both have negative meanings, giving an unexemplary value in contrast to the use of the letter "A" symbol in the Avenger film and the use of the letter "A" in the Avenger film as a symbol in the film that most films use it to give a good meaning in the whole story.

People who don't know *The Scarlet Letter* as a book by Nathaniel Hawthorne can assume that the film could be a "letter containing the sins or confessions of a devotee." While *Easy A* clearly has a different meaning, judging by the title, so people who don't know the scarlet letter or badge of shame in 2010 was able to recognize the letter A in the title *Easy A* as a grade grading of a lesson so as to be able to attract more viewers assuming the film as "tips to get an easy A".

Remak states that comparative literary studies transcends country and other fields, such as art, philosophy, science, and religion. His method compares literary works from different countries and fields. Comparative literature is a method, not a philosophy, for analyzing literature (Anggradinata, 2020, p. 78). To determine the significance of the symbols in the two films, the researcher used a comparative study method developed by Anggradinata, who compares literary works using cross-cultural studies. Anggradinata examines books, not films, as its object of study. Anggradinata is sometimes referred to as research publications that evaluate literary works, not films. However, in order to make the anggradinata method more applicable to the subject of this research, the researchers discovered the term film that might support the procedure of doing this research.

Cross-cultural studies offer two benefits. Comparative literature can be deepened. Comparative literature will mark internationalization, too. This comparative literature study compares two or more cultures and literary works. How may this strategy be used in comparative (and cross-cultural) literature? In a work, numerous things can be obtained, such as language style, discourse, authorship, literary works, reader receptions, etc (Anggradinata 2020:79).

Researchers find "Reception" in "Film studies", this is stated by Staiger who argues that film meaning originates through the interplay between the text, the reader, and surrounding historical and sociological circumstances. Much of her work is inspired by Hans Robert Jauss' reception theory and aesthetics. Staiger's historical materialist method emphasizes text, context, and engaged viewer. Besides textual analysis and exploring wider settings around the film text, this technique reconstructs the viewer's horizon of expectation. This encompasses a complex range of discourses, not just film- or cinema-related ones, but also historical, political, and scientific discourses. Press reviews, interviews, articles, and letters to the editor are employed to contextualize filmic meanings. (Biltereyst, 2018, p. 30)

Barbara Klinger's 'histoire totale' approach to cinematic reception advocates for recognizing the 'highly interactive' interrelations between cinematic practices, intertextual zones, and social and historical settings (Biltereyst, 2018, p. 31)

After finding the approach, the researcher took the same steps as described by Anggradinata. First, the reviewer can compare works. Second, the reviewer can compare the works. Third, the reviewer can use a given technique, concept, or theory, such as cross-cultural (Anggradinata, 2020, p. 81)

Therefore, this research is an "effect on the audience" which looks at the similarity phenomenon from the films *Scarlet Letter* (1995) and *Easy A* (2010). The similarities between the two will lead to critical thinking where I as a "spectator and researcher" want to find and know the purpose of the "A" symbol in both films.

The purpose of the literature review is to provide an explanation of prior research and analyses conducted by scholars. Moreover, to determine the validity of a study. This study's literature review is as follows.

The title of Widyastuti's (2012) thesis is "*Transformasi Novel Ke Film Kajian Ekranisasi Terhadap The Scarlet Letter Karya Nathaniel Hawthorne*". Widyastuti utilized a comparative literary technique to analyze the parallels and contrasts between the novel and the film. She remarked that the novel's conclusion differs from the film's. Reverend Master Dimmesdale passed away at the conclusion of the novel. The film's

three major characters lived happily at its conclusion. She also discovered that certain characters in the film were absent from the novel. The new characters in the film contribute to the story's continuity. The novel's narrator is a nameless guy from the Customs House, whereas the film's narrator is an adult Pearl who recounts her mother's life. The difference between the two themes is the focus. In the novel, the emphasis was on sin, whereas in the movie, it was on love. Puritan New England at the middle of the 17th century is the backdrop for both the novel and the film.

Different from Giyatmi and Ratih Wijayava's (2017) article "*The Scarlet Letter in an Ecranization Process*" in the National Seminar Journal. By comparing the modified novel to the screen adaptation, the researchers were able to identify discrepancies and modifications. To convert a novel into a film, a filmmaker, in this case the director, must be able to adapt the novel's plot such that it is engaging when viewed on a movie screen.

"*Mixed Message: slut shaming in Mean Girls and Easy A*" by Laurie McMillian (2017) is an example of comparative literary research. In both films "Slut Shaming" is a social concern. He contends that both Mean Girls and Easy A link girls' sexuality with immorality, despite the fact that both films initially appear to have opposed "slut-shaming." McMillian's final strategy was to position the picture as a recipient of societal influence.

Kardiansyah, et al. (2017) in the journal "*Body and Gender Relations: Post-colonial Discourse in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Scarlet Letter'*" highlights the aspect of resistance to colonial constructions that still apply to the social order and societal standards as depicted in the novel. By employing a post-colonial viewpoint and a technique that enables deconstructive analysis, it can be demonstrated that the novel reveals the colonized resistance (women) behind their attitudes and behaviors that appear to obey the colonial power (society and male domination).

Sulmi Magfirah (2017) published a journal article titled "*Analyzing Social Aspects in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (A Genetic Structuralism Approach)*". This article examines the sociological aspects of demonstrating that the novel Scarlet

Letter consists of the following five categories: (1) Family, (2) Religion, (3) Tradition, (4) Economics, and (5) Education. This research also describes the structure of the story's supporting elements.

Pertiwi and Hetami (2020), titled “*Puritan in Lust: The Adultery of the Symbol A in The Scarlet Letter*”, explore the symbolism of infidelity in the film and, through comparative analysis, attempt to decipher the various interpretations of the symbol "A" that appears in the film adaptation. They argued that the film adaptation has its own method of communicating the significance of the symbol "A" to "Ardor," and that the film is disloyal and departs from the text; the film is dominated by lust. This work focuses on how the letter 'A' can have a positive connotation; Nathaniel wishes to represent a lady who does not give up easy regardless of the circumstances she experiences; from weakness to strength. Hester's character does not care about her punishment as long as she can be with Arthur Dimmesdale.

In addition, there are past studies relating to the object of inquiry that included semiotics in their research, such as: In her 2015 thesis titled *The Use of Impoliteness Strategy in Easy A*, Sofyah describes the use of impoliteness techniques in the film Easy A in accordance with Culpeper's theory of impoliteness. The research describes the impoliteness methods employed by the characters in the film Easy A, as well as their responses to these activities. The study's findings are presented as percentage tables.

In her 2015 thesis titled *Olivia Pandherghast's Speech Acts in Easy A* Dewi investigated the speech act shift in the film Easy A, focusing on the main character, Olivia. He discussed what types of speech acts Olivia Panderghast utilized and how her speech act changed prior to and after her transformation as the main character. Dewi's research findings, like Sofyah's, are presented as a table of percentages of the sorts of speech actions employed by Olivia Panderghast, although Sofyah's (2015) research focuses on the usage of impoliteness methods.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Symbol in most films use it to give a good meaning in the whole story, while in both movies stand a “not” good meaning. So, based on the statement problem above, researcher want to know why does the “A” symbol has different meaning. So, there are three problem formulations that need to be studied in this study.

1. What is the recognition of the “A” symbol in both films?
2. What is the meaning of symbol that created by different styles from two different film makers?
3. How was the social situation when both films are released that could affect public’s opinion of the “A” symbol in both films?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

Based on the formulation of the problem above that symbol in films always contain a good meaning in general so there are three objectives to beachieved in this study.

1. To find the acknowledgment of “A” symbol based on elements of films.
2. To find the “A” symbol created by two different film makers.
3. To describe the social conditions effect public’s acceptance of a film and the meaning of “A” symbol in both films.

## **1.4 Research Significances**

The previous studies above certainly varied in the object, method, background and results of the research. All research certainly becomes new knowledge for the audience, especially students or people who are interested in the field of knowledge. This research is not present to distinguish or the “less” label for previous studies because the researcher was greatly helped by previous studies in the process of completing this research. This research aims as new knowledge for the next generation to be interested and triggered to research things that were not thought of before especially in the field of literature which of course will also be useful for life.

### 1. Theoretical Significance

The research of this study is expected to contribute more and enrich the comprehension in understanding methods in film studies field.

### 2. Practical Significance

First, this research could be one of the reference materials for the reader and experts, or society in this English Department who are interested in film analysis.

Second this research could have the potential to advance the development of film analysis, particularly in terms of methods and strategies for analyze film based on cultural studies

Last, this research may pique the interest of other researchers who want to conduct similar research. Furthermore, this research can be used as a reference for those interested in conducting similar research in the field of film analysis..

## 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Symbol** : A literal thing (like an object, name, or gesture) that also stands for an idea that isn't as easy to explain.
- Reception** : The belief that future ignorance constrains and alters past knowledge
- Film Reception** : The focus of film audience studies is on contextualizing spectatorship and embodied viewers in terms of text, intertextual zones, and contextual impacts.