

**THE MAIN CHARACTERS CONSTRUCTION OF
RELIGIOSITY AS SOCIAL CONTROL IN OTTESSA
MOSHFEGH'S *LAPVONA***

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM
MALANG
2026**

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THESIS

Presented to
Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.)

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2026**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "**The Main Characters Construction Of Religiosity As Social Control In Ottessa Moshfegh's *Lapvona***" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

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APPROVAL SHEET

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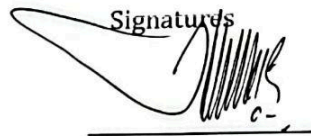
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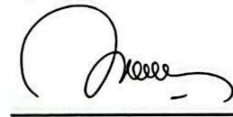
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MOTTO

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

"Wahai orang-orang yang beriman, sesungguhnya banyak dari para ulama dan rahib-rahib yang memakan harta manusia dengan cara yang batil dan menghalang-halangi manusia dari jalan Allah." QS. At-Taubah (9): 34.

"Because flowers bloomed in the wrong season, would you call it failure or miracle?"

DEDICATION

There is no more honest page in this entire thesis than this one, here I dedicated
this thesis

For Myself,

*For holding on.
For every night you almost gave up,
and chose to try again in the morning*

For my Beloved Parents

*For everything.
For the prayers whispered before dawn,
the sacrifices never spoken aloud,
and a love that asked for nothing in return.*

Thank you for believing in me
before I believed in myself.

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I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved parents. Their endless prayers, affection, and sacrifices have been the greatest source of strength throughout my journey. This achievement is not mine alone, but also theirs.

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To my dear friends and classmates, thank you for the companionship, support, and unforgettable memories we have shared. Your presence has made this academic journey more meaningful and joyful.

Especially for Rina Elfi Saida, a friend as well as a boarding house neighbor who has always been present without needing to be asked. Thank you

for agreeing to every plan of mine, for accompanying me through both joyful and difficult times, and for creating meaningful little moments from shared trips to simple dinners together. To Zahro, my dear friend who never fails to invite me along and ensure I am always included. Thank you for your thoughtfulness in keeping me informed and for your constant support throughout this journey. Your presence has made this journey lighter and more colorful. I am truly grateful to have someone as kind as you, and I hope this friendship will endure into the future, with the best prayers always accompanying your step.

Finally, I am aware that this thesis is far from perfect. Nevertheless, I hope it may contribute, even in a small way, to the development of knowledge and serve as a stepping stone for future research.

Malang, May 13th, 2026

The Researcher



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ABSTRACT

Anggita Mawar Habibi Jannah (2026) “The Main Characters Construction Of Religiosity As Social Control In Ottesa Mosfegh’s *Lapvona*“. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Dr. Istiadah, M.A.

Keywords: Religiosity, Social Control, Social Construction. Theodicy

This study examines the construction of the main characters' religiosity as a tool of social control in the novel *Lapvona* (2022) by Ottesa Moshfegh, in which Lord William and priest Barnabas systematically manipulate Christian religious institutions to maintain an oppressive social order over the starving villagers. This study aims to analyze two main problems: first, how the religiosity of the main characters is constructed through Berger's dialectical mechanism to legitimize oppressive power structures, and second, how theodicy functions as a mechanism to justify extreme suffering and prevent anomie in *Lapvona* society. This study uses a sociology of literature approach based on Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction of reality, specifically the theodicy mechanism in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967). The results show that religiosity in *Lapvona* is constructed through three dialectical stages: through externalization, Barnabas uses religious narratives to hide William's political crimes; through objectivation, religious institutions such as the Eucharistic ritual and confession are transformed into means of surveillance and control; and through internalization, society absorbs these constructions into their consciousness, voluntarily maintaining the social order that oppresses them. Furthermore, theodicy operates as social control by asserting that suffering is God's will, making structural causes invisible, and by preventing anomie through sacred narratives that convert collective grief into renewed religious devotion, thus blocking collective rebellion. This study concludes that the main characters' construction of religiosity in *Lapvona* functions not as a moral guideline but as the most effective ideological tool for maintaining oppressive power structures.

مستخلص البحث

أنغيثا ماور حبيبي جنة (٢٠٢٦) "بناء التدين كأداة للسيطرة الاجتماعية في رواية لابفونا لأوتيسا موسفيغ". البحث اجلامعي، قسم الأدب.الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية في مالانج. املشرف : الدكتوراة استعداد، ماجستير الآداب الكلمات الأساسية : التدين، والضبط الاجتماعي، والبناء الاجتماعي للواقع. التبرير الإلهي

تدرس هذه الدراسة بناء تدين الشخصيات الرئيسية بوصفه أداة للسيطرة الاجتماعية في رواية "لابفونا" (2022) لأوتيسا موسفيغ، إذ يتلاعب اللورد ويليام والكاهن برناباس بالمؤسسات الدينية المسيحية بصورة منهجية للحفاظ على نظام اجتماعي قمعي يفرض على القرويين الجائعين. وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل مشكلتين رئيسيتين: أولاً، كيف يُبنى تدين الشخصيات الرئيسية من خلال آلية برغر الجدلية لإضفاء الشرعية على هياكل السلطة القمعية، وثانياً، كيف تعمل التيوديسيا بوصفها آلية لتبرير المعاناة الشديدة ومنع حالة اللامعيارية في مجتمع لابفونا. وتعتمد هذه الدراسة على منهج سوسيولوجيا الأدب في إطار نظرية بيتر ل. برغر للبناء الاجتماعي للواقع، ولا سيما آلية التيوديسيا التي طوّرها في كتابه "المظلة المقدسة" (1967). وتُظهر النتائج أن تدين الشخصيات في لابفونا يُبنى عبر ثلاث مراحل جدلية: من خلال الإخراج، يستخدم برناباس السرديات الدينية لإخفاء جرائم ويليام السياسية؛ ومن خلال التشبيء، تتحول المؤسسات الدينية كطقس الإفخارستيا والاعتراف إلى وسائل للمراقبة والسيطرة؛ ومن خلال الاستبطان، يستوعب المجتمع هذه البنى في وعيه، فيحافظ طوعاً على النظام الاجتماعي الذي يقمعه. وفضلاً عن ذلك، تعمل التيوديسيا بوصفها أداة للسيطرة الاجتماعية من خلال تأكيد أن المعاناة إرادة الله مما يُخفي أسبابها الهيكلية، ومن خلال منع اللامعيارية عبر السرديات المقدسة التي تحوّل الحزن الجماعي إلى تقوى دينية متجددة، وبذلك تُعيق الثورة الجماعية. وتخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن بناء الشخصيات الرئيسية للتدين في رواية لابفونا لا يعمل بوصفه مرشداً أخلاقياً، بل بوصفه الأداة الأيديولوجية الأكثر فاعلية للحفاظ على هياكل السلطة القمعية.

ABSTRAK

Anggita Mawar Habibi Jannah (2026) “Konstruksi Tokoh Utama tentang Religiusitas sebagai Kontrol Sosial dalam *Lapvona* karya Ottesa Mosfegh”. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing : Dr. Istiadah, M.A.

Kata Kunci : Religiusitas, Kontrol Sosial, Konstruksi Sosial. Teodisi

Penelitian ini mengkaji konstruksi religiusitas tokoh utama sebagai alat kontrol sosial dalam novel *Lapvona* (2022) karya Ottesa Moshfegh, dimana Lord William dan pendeta Barnabas secara sistematis memanipulasi lembaga-lembaga keagamaan Kristen untuk mempertahankan tatanan sosial yang menindas terhadap penduduk desa yang kelaparan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dua masalah utama: pertama, bagaimana religiusitas tokoh utama dikonstruksi melalui mekanisme dialektika Berger untuk melegitimasi struktur kekuasaan yang menindas, dan kedua, bagaimana teodisi berfungsi sebagai mekanisme untuk membenarkan penderitaan ekstrem dan mencegah anomie dalam masyarakat Lapvona. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi sastra berdasarkan teori konstruksi sosial realitas Peter L. Berger, khususnya mekanisme teodisi dalam *The Sacred Canopy* (1967). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa religiusitas di *Lapvona* dikonstruksi melalui tiga tahap dialektika: melalui eksternalisasi, Barnabas menggunakan narasi keagamaan untuk menyembunyikan kejahatan politik William; Melalui objektivasi, institusi keagamaan seperti ritual Ekaristi dan pengakuan dosa diubah menjadi alat pengawasan dan kontrol; dan melalui internalisasi, masyarakat menyerap konstruksi ini ke dalam kesadaran mereka, secara sukarela mempertahankan tatanan sosial yang menindas mereka. Lebih lanjut, teodisi beroperasi sebagai kontrol sosial dengan menegaskan bahwa penderitaan adalah kehendak Tuhan, membuat penyebab struktural tidak terlihat, dan dengan mencegah anomie melalui narasi suci yang mengubah kesedihan kolektif menjadi pengabdian keagamaan yang diperbarui, sehingga menghalangi pemberontakan kolektif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa konstruksi religiusitas tokoh utama dalam *Lapvona* berfungsi bukan sebagai pedoman moral tetapi sebagai alat ideologis yang paling efektif untuk mempertahankan struktur kekuasaan yang menindas.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background and the formulation of the problem of study. Furthermore, it examines the significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the research, and includes definitions of key terms used in this study to promote conceptual clarity and avoid misinterpretation.

A. The Background of the Study

Religiosity is one of the important aspects of people's lives, as it serves as a moral guideline, social identity, and source of spiritual norms. Currently, in the development of contemporary society, there are many cases in the name of a belief (religion) either in the form of faith manipulation, the use of religious symbols for political purposes, or as a tool to justify social domination (Seiwatan et al, 2025). As Echele (2023) observes, leaders manipulate religion to gain political power. Yugoslavia and Syria demonstrate this ability religion has to spur conflict when co-opted for political means. This opinion emphasizes that religion can be turned into a tool of political legitimacy. While religiosity functions as a moral guideline and a source of human values, misguided religiosity practices actually cause various social problems such as discrimination based on beliefs and abuse of religion for political purposes.

The argument is supported by Berger (1967), who states that religion can act as a legitimacy of power when used to justify a particular social order. Berger (1967) not only emphasizes the function of religious legitimacy, but also explains the

dialectical mechanisms of externalization, objectification, and internalization. This mechanism shows how religious practices are born from humans, then institutionalized as objective reality, and finally re-internalized so as to form the consciousness of an obedient society. In Berger's framework religion also operates as a *sacred canopy* that provides meaning and legitimacy to social life, thereby normalizing social order and making it accepted by society.

Religiosity is a complex and multidimensional concept. According to Holdcroft (2006), religiosity can be understood as a person's level of attachment to religion, which includes beliefs, practices, experiences, knowledge, and social consequences. Thus, religiosity is not only present as a spiritual expression, but also as a social phenomenon that shapes behaviors, traditions, and the way people interpret life (Durkheim, 2008). Religiosity is not only in the form of individual beliefs, but is also realized through social practices such as fulfilling worship obligations, religious traditions, and the formation of daily behavior of its adherents (Khasana & Maemunah, 2023).

When religiosity is practiced in social reality, the results do not always reflect the teachings of religion ideally. Often the teachings of pure religion are influenced by social interests, even used for certain purposes. When religiosity is carried out for purposes other than spirituality, religion has the potential to be abused from its moral function to become a social tool that can control a society. This phenomenon of abuse of religiosity does not only appear in social reality, but is also depicted in literary works.

In this context, literary works are not only a form of expression, but also a container that contains the author's social experience and the reality of the surrounding society. Swingewood (1972) added that literary works can be seen as social documents that reflect the structure of society, ideology, and prevailing values. Thus, religiosity is not only present in the spiritual realm, but also tied to the social dynamics represented in literary texts. This is why the theme of religiosity often appears in literary works. In line with that, Efendi (2020, as cited in Andaresta & Kurnianto, 2025) also emphasized that religious elements are an integral part of literary works because religious values are often the basis for the formation of plots and conflicts. This argument is supported by Wellek and Warren (1949) who stated that literature is a representation of social life, so that religious values, both ideal and deviant, can be reflected in literary texts as a reflection as well as a criticism of social reality.

The tension between religiosity as moral guidance and religiosity as an instrument of domination is often reflected in literary works. The phenomenon of abuse of religiosity that occurs in society is also depicted in the novel *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh (2022). Set in a medieval feudal society, the novel depicts the lives of poor and oppressed commoners, confronted by cruel and manipulative rulers. Christianity in this novel does not always appear as a pure teaching, but is often abused by Lord William and his conspiratorial partner Barnabas to legitimize power and appease the starving people. Lord William shows how religion is abused as a tool of social control.

The novel is set in a fictional medieval village called Lapvona that is full of violence, famine, and religious manipulation. The main character, Marek, is a physically disabled shepherd boy who lives with his adoptive father who even Brand himself doesn't know that his father isn't his own biological father. After an incident, Marek is forced to live in the castle of Lord William, the corrupt ruler of the village.

Entering the summer break, life in the land of Lapvona is getting more difficult. Rains rarely fall, river water shrinks, and crop failures make the village suffer from hunger and difficulty obtaining food. Day by day, water and food are becoming scarcer. This condition is not solely due to nature, but the actions of the Lapvona landlords who deliberately monopolize the food supply and divert the flow of water from the mountain entirely to the castle. Together with his colleague Barnabas, a priest who had a high position in the eyes of the people, they used various means to prevent the people from resisting. Barnabas boldly persuaded the people through sweet words that seemed to be direct words from God, so that the people remained obedient even though they lived in suffering (Moshfegh, 2022).

Thus the beliefs (religion) in this novel are used as a way to control people's understanding, to make them remain obedient even though they live in suffering. This phenomenon can be read through Berger's framework, in which the dialectical process of externalization, objectification, and internalization explains how the Lapvona people accept suffering as something natural. Thus, religion functions not only as a legitimacy of power, but also as a social construct that normalizes injustice (Berger, 1967).

This condition shows that religiosity in this *Lapvona* novel does not come with moral or spiritual values, but rather becomes a tool of power to control and silence society. The phenomenon of abuse of religion as a tool of power in *Lapvona* shows the close relationship between literary texts and the social reality they represent. Therefore, this novel is relevant to be studied through the approach of literary sociology, which examines literary works based on their relation to social structures, values, and societal practices.

Several studies have explored Religiosity in literary works, highlighting religiosity in novels often serves as an entertainment, character formation, as well as a tool for legitimizing power. For example, Qarimah's research (2019) on Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* highlights how fundamentalist Christianity is twisted to oppress women. The approach used in this research is Slavoj Žižek's theoretical framework, a Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic known for his work on psychoanalysis and ideology to analyze how fundamentalist Christianity in *The Handmaid's Tale* functions as a tool of social control and legitimacy of power. This research supports the argument that religion in literature does not always appear as pure teachings, but can be used as a tool of social control.

The research entitled Norms and Culture in the Novel *On a Ship* by Nh. Dini and The Novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Comparative Study) Muwafikoh (2020) uses a literary sociology approach to dismantle the comparison of norms and culture in the two novels. The findings of the study state that norms are used to regulate behavior and social punishment for the characters

in the two novels. This statement reinforces the argument that norms that should be guidelines for humans can be manipulated into countermeasures and social controls.

The research on the novel *Robohnya Surau Kami* analyzed by Mahadewi et al (2025) analyzes the issue of inequality between religious rituals and social obligations which talks about that religious elements in life are not only maintaining the relationship between God and emptiness but also with other human beings social care. This can be a stepping stone in this study. Other research such as that of Nurulfallah (2022) also highlights the religiosity in the character of Karman in the novel *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari which emerged as a result of political trauma using the same approach, namely literary sociology. His findings state that religiosity in literary works can play a role as a moral force that restores the lives of characters and society. However, this is very inversely proportional to what happened in the Lapvona community.

Meanwhile, there is also research related to the forms of religiosity contained in the novel *Elena* by Ellya Ningsih owned by Khasana & Maemunah (2023). Using a literary sociology approach, this research displays religiosity as part of social life through the characters in the novel. In this study, the aspect of religiosity tends to have a positive effect on the characters in the novel *Elena*.

From several studies with the same focus, there is also research with other focuses that have been done for this novel. Research by Yuniar Sofia (2024) analyzes the social impact of outcasts and how to deal with them. This research provides an understanding of the understanding of social outcasts that occur in the

novel through the perspective of literary sociology. Fitriani Nur Hidayah (2021) in her thesis *Analysis of Religious Values in the Novel of Unusual Love* by Natta Reza found that the novel contains religious values in the form of faith, worship, and social morals displayed through the main character. This research was analyzed using a literary sociology approach.

Meanwhile, there is research that also applies Berger's theory regarding the construction of reality in a literary work entitled *The Construction of Social Reality in the Novel Kerumunan Terakhir* by Okky Madasari, which was analyzed by Arief (2025). In his research, he analyzed the social construction contained in the novel *Kerumunan Terakhir*. The results of this analysis show that social reality in literary texts can be understood as the result of construction built through the interaction of characters and society. Furthermore, the study, *Konstruksi Sosial Peter L. Berger dalam Novel Dilan 1990 : Kajian Sosiologi Sastra* (Thohari et al., 2025) also uses Berger's framework to examine social construction in literary texts. The results show that social reality in the novel *Dilan 1990* is constructed through Berger's dialectical mechanism, where adolescent values and norms are externalized, institutionalized as objectivation, and internalized by both characters and readers.

A similar study, entitled *The Construction of Social Reality in Felix K. Nesi's Novel Orang-Orang Oetimu: A Study by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann* (Suci & Suprpto, 2022), analyzes how social reality is constructed through Berger's dialectical mechanisms of externalization, objectivation, and internalization in a literary text. The findings show that reality in the novel is not a

natural reality, but rather is socially constructed through interactions between characters and social structures.

Previous research by Apriani et al (2025) entitled *Konstruksi Sosial dan Konflik Status Sosial pada Tokoh Qais dalam Novel Layla Majnun karya Nizami (Perspektif Sosiologi Sastra)* uses a sociological approach to literature to examine how social construction shapes Qais's role and position in society. The findings indicate that Qais experiences strong social pressure due to class differences and cultural norms, and that his social status as a poet considered mad by society symbolizes resistance to rigid social constructions that do not allow for individual personal freedom.

Meanwhile, Wanda Ayu Elpandari (2024) in her analysis of *The Religiousness Of Pious Women In The Novel Bidadari Bumi: 9 Kisah Wanita Salehah By Halimah Alaydrus* shows that righteous female figures are portrayed through morals, worship, and social roles, so that religiosity is not only individual but also social. This corroborates that religious elements in a region are formed because of the beliefs chosen to be believed by its people.

Meanwhile, there is also research by Ririn Hidayati (2020) in her research entitled *Pandangan Religiusitas Islam Tokoh Dalam Novel Anak Rantau Karya Ahmad Fuadi*, she concluded that religiosity appears in characters through worship practices, social values, and relationships with society that affirm the role of religion in daily life. Thus, the existence of this previous research can be a methodological basis for researchers to continue their research related to Religiosity in the novel *Lapvona*.

Previous studies on related topics have been conducted from various angles, yet significant gaps remain particularly in how religiosity functions to legitimize power structures through Berger's theodicy mechanism. While some have addressed religiosity as a tool of social control and others have examined social outcast issues in similar novels, the theodicy dimension as a control apparatus has yet to be explored. This study therefore seeks to fill these gaps by applying Berger's theodicy mechanism to analyze how suffering is justified and anomie is prevented in *Lapvona*.

This phenomenon of distorted religiosity is interesting to study with a literary sociology approach. This research is important because it shows that religiosity in literary works is not always ideal, but can be a reflection of the abuse of religion in society. Thus, this research departs from an understanding related to religious deviance contained in the novel with the aim of analyzing how Berger's dialectical mechanism shapes the oppressive social order in *Lapvona*, as well as the extent to which religiosity serves as a sacred canopy that protects power structures from rebellion.

In Berger's framework, the dialectical mechanism explains how social reality is constructed through externalization, objectivation, and internalization, while the concept of the sacred canopy explains how religion legitimizes and stabilizes that constructed reality. Therefore, this concept is needed to be a research support tool to analyze how religiosity in *Lapvona* constructs and maintains an oppressive social order. This research is expected to contribute to the

study of literary sociology, especially about the representation of religiosity in contemporary literary works.

B. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the problems that have written, the formulation of the problems that can be taken is as follows:

1. How is the religiosity of the main characters in *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh constructed through Berger's dialectical mechanism to legitimize the oppressive power structure?
2. How does theodicy function as a mechanism to justify extreme suffering and prevent anomie within the society of *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh?

C. Significance of The Study

This research is expected to be useful both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Significance

Contributing to the study of literary sociology, especially on the representation of religiosity in contemporary literary works, with a specific focus on Berger's dialectical mechanism (externalization, objectivation, internalization) and the concept of the sacred canopy. In addition it provides a comparative framework for future studies on focus of *Religiosity* through the perspective of literary sociology, serving as a reference for other researchers who discuss the similar issue.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this study can serve as a reference for students and other researchers who are interested in studying the theme of religiosity in

literature and provides a critical understanding of how religion, through Berger's dialectical mechanism and Theodicy, can function as a tool for legitimizing power and normalizing social oppression

D. Scope and Limitations

This research is limited to the analysis of aspects of religiosity of the main characters in the novel *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh using the literary sociology approach. The focus of the research is on representations of religiosity in the novel *Lapvona*, analyzed through Berger's dialectical mechanism (externalization, objectivation, internalization) and the concept of theodicy, rather than on linguistic or aesthetic aspects.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding about the definition of some terms used in this study, the researcher provides the definition below :

1. Religiosity: all forms of religious expression, both in the form of beliefs, practices, and social functions of religion in society (Holdcroft, 2006).
2. Social Control: the concept of social control is understood as the mechanisms, strategies, and processes used by society to regulate the behavior of individuals and groups to comply with applicable norms, rules, and laws (Chriss, 2022).
3. Religion as Social Control: Religion emerged as the earliest, oldest, and most fundamental form of social control. Religion functions not only as a belief system but also as a mechanism for regulating individual behavior (Berger, 1967).

4. Dialectical Mechanism: a sociological concept consisting of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, which explains how social reality is produced by humans, becomes institutionalized as objective reality, and is reabsorbed into individual consciousness (Berger, 1967).
5. Sacred Canopy: the overarching structure of meaning that religion provides, sheltering human existence under a cosmic order (Berger, 1967).
6. Theodicy : Religious explanations that serve to legitimize human suffering by fitting it into a meaningful cosmic framework (Berger, 1967).
7. Anomie : is a situation where there is no single value framework that can be used to interpret part or all of the life experiences, including interpreting the reality of the place where one lives in the everyday world (Berger, 1967).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the theoretical basis of this research. This research starts with Sociology of Literature Approach, Peter Berger's theory of social construction of reality which comes from the sociology of religion, especially in understanding religion as a system of social legitimacy.

A. Sociology of Literature

This research uses a sociology of literature approach. Sociology of literature is a literary approach in the form of objective and scientific studies of human beings in society, the study of institutions, and social processes. Sociology of literature is also an understanding of a literary work that considers aspects of society according to Nahraini (2025). Wellek and Warren (1949) further classify the sociology of literature into three focuses, the sociology of the author, the sociology of the work, and the sociology of the reader. This study specifically applies the sociology of the work which examines how social problems, values, and ideological dynamics are depicted and constructed within the literary text itself.

This position is further supported by Damono (1978), who argues that sociology of literature seeks to explore and describe how society in literature can reflect, criticize, or shape human attitudes towards social institutions. In other words, the literary text itself through its characters, events, conflicts, and social structures already functions as a social document that carries the values,

ideologies, and power dynamics of the society it represents. The existence of literature is needed by humans to support cultural continuity and social harmony. Currently, many media highlight the relationship between literature and society that must be maintained, one of which is through literary works.

According to Comte (1869), the term "sociology" is derived from the Greek words "socious" and "logos," which implies that sociology is the systematic and empirical study of human social life. The term "sociology of literature" emerged in the mid-20th century, in the long-standing thinking about the relationship between literature and society in philosophy and literary criticism. In the late 20th century, literary sociology began to develop as an academic discipline with the publication of works such as *Literature and Society* (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). In the book, Laurenson and Swingewood define the sociology of literature as the study of the relationship between literature and society. This concept marked a shift from a literary approach that focused on the study of aesthetics alone to a broader understanding of human relationships with social institutions.

In the discourse of literary studies, literary sociology is often defined as one of the approaches in literary studies that understands and assesses literary works by considering the social aspects of Damono (1979). As the name implies, sociology actually understands literary works through the combination of literary science and sociology (Interdisciplinary). Both sociology and literature have the same object of study, namely humans in society, understanding the relationships between humans and the processes that arise from these relationships in society.

The difference is that if sociology conducts an objective, and scientific study of human beings and society, studies social institutions and processes, finds out how society is possible, how it takes place, and how it continues to exist, then literature infiltrates, penetrates the surface of social life and shows the ways in which human beings live society with their feelings, conducting subjective and personal analysis (Damono in Wiyatmi, 2013).

The research process using a sociology of literature approach can be classified into several stages according to several experts. In *Sociology of Literature* (1972), Alan Swingewood explained the research process using a sociology of literature approach by reading literary texts with a focus on how society is depicted. In addition, he explores how humans interact with social institutions in the story. Furthermore, literary texts should also highlight engagement with social issues. Meanwhile, Laurensen and Swingewood (1972) explain that the initial approach to sociology of literature tends to be descriptive and ethical. This approach begins with identifying representations of society and social institutions, followed by examining the moral or ideological values contained in literary texts. Laurensen and Swingewood also deduce some basic categories for society in literary texts, such as: class, religion, politics, family, and others.

Research related to literary criticism has used a lot of literary sociology approaches. The method of literary sociology applied to literary works has become a common practice for connecting texts with social realities both at the surface level and at a deeper level. For example, in surface-level research, the

sociology of literature aims to uncover the social issues that exist in literary works, such as poverty, conflict, or belief, describing literature as a reflection of society. In further analysis, the focus shifts from mere description to the exploration of the relationships between characters, events, and social frameworks, framing literary works as documents that convey the values, ideologies, and habits of society.

On a more in-depth level, research uses specific sociological theories, such as those of Berger, Durkheim, Marx, or Weber to analyze texts, presenting literature as a social entity full of dynamics of power, legitimacy, and control. Even when combined with other theories, such as semiotics, postcolonialism, or social psychology, sociological perspectives on literature allow literature to be seen not only as a reflection of society but also as a means of social criticism capable of opposing prevailing ideologies.

In this study, the sociology of literature approach is used to analyze the novel *Lapvona* as a form of social document that reflects the dynamics of power, religiosity, and social control. By treating literary texts as a reflection of social reality, this study is able to analyze the relationship between religious authority and political power as depicted in the novel *Lapvona*.

B. Peter Berger's Religiosity As Social Control

Religiosity is a complex and multidimensional concept. Religiosity is not only a personal spiritual expression, but also a social phenomenon that shapes collective behavior and a social order. In the document *What is Religion?* (Gilmore, 2004), religion is understood as a set of belief systems, practices, and

symbols that connect humans to something that is considered transcendent or sacred. Glock and Stark (1965) explain that religiosity has five dimensions, namely ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential. Religiosity has different layers and forms according to social and cultural contexts. Of the five dimensions, the dimensions found in the *Lapvona* novel are ritualistic and consequential dimensions because the *Lapvona* novel depicts several religious rituals such as the Eucharist ritual and the confession ritual which results in direct social consequences for rural communities.

But religiosity does not always function merely as a spiritual guide. Berger (1967) explains that religiosity operates as social control through a dialectical mechanism consisting of three stages: externalization, objectification, and internalization. This dialectical mechanism explains that religiosity is essentially a socially constructed system of meaning and can be an effective instrument of social control.

When religion successfully frames the social order as part of God's will, people no longer question the conditions they experience, because disobedience to the social order is seen as a form of defiance of God's will. In other words, religion not only regulates the relationship between humans and God, but also regulates humans' relationship with power. Religiosity is exploited not for spiritual purposes, but for the interests of those in power. When this happens, religious narratives, rituals, and institutions which should guide people toward moral truth are deliberately shaped and controlled by the ruling class to justify inequality and suppress resistance. As a result, religiosity loses its moral function

and becomes an instrument of domination. What makes this form of domination particularly powerful, as Berger (1967) argues, is that it does not operate through physical force or external coercion it operates within the consciousness of society itself. People begin to regulate their own behavior, silence their own doubts, and accept their own suffering, all in the name of God. In this way, the most effective prison is not one built with walls, it is one built with belief.

C. Peter Berger's Sociology of Religion

Berger's theory of the social construction of reality, developed with Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) and further elaborated in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), argues that reality is not something objectively given, but rather is socially constructed through human activity. In the context of this study, this framework is applied to examine how religious reality in *Lapvona* is constructed by those in power, institutionalized as objective truth, and internalized by villagers, ultimately forming what Berger calls a sacred canopy that legitimizes an oppressive social order.

Peter L. Berger is one of the most important figures in the sociology of religion who emphasizes that religion has a very basic social function. Peter L. Berger, in his influential work *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967), argued that religion is not simply a spiritual phenomenon, but rather a socially constructed system that serves to legitimize and maintain a particular social order. Berger argued that humans are world-building creatures who continually create systems of meaning to give order to their existence. Religion, in this context, is the most powerful system of meaning,

because it provides what Berger calls a sacred canopy, a cosmic structure of meaning that protects human social life and makes the existing social order seem natural, inevitable, and desired by God. The following are two important concepts in Berger's framework :

1. Dialectical Mechanism

Peter L. Berger states that a dialectic occurs between individuals creating society and society creating individuals. Social reality is a social construct created by individuals. Individuals are human beings who are free to interact with one another.

Peter explains in his book entitled *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967), That religion and society are dialectical phenomena: human beings create the social world. In this way, society is a product of human beings while at the same time reshaping human beings.

This dialectic consists of three main moments. The first moment is Externalization is the process by which human beings express themselves through actions, symbols, and institutions. In a religious context, externalization occurs when a community develops beliefs and rituals that give material and social form to its relationship with the sacred.

The second moment is Objectivation, occurs when such social expression freezes into an institution that appears objective and legitimate. Berger explains that the world that humans have produced is now presented to him as something that is not a human product.

The Third moment is Internalization is the process by which individuals re-receive that objective reality into their consciousness, thus shaping the way of thinking and acting. Through repeated exposure, people begin to accept their social circumstances as normal.

With this mechanism, religion can be understood as a social construct born of man, institutionalized as an objective reality, and finally internalized so that it becomes a collective consciousness that normalizes the social order, even an oppressive one. Thus, through externalization, society is a product of humankind. Through objectification, humans become a unique reality. Through internalization, humans become a product of society.

The need for religion as a tool to legitimize power is a phenomenon that has existed for thousands of years. Religion has been used by rulers as a tool to maintain power and control society. This can be seen in various historical events that have occurred throughout the world.

The dialectical mechanism described above is directly linked to Berger's concept of the "sacred canopy." When religious institutions successfully complete this dialectical cycle, they create an ideological structure that overshadows the entire social order. Power relations, inequality, and suffering are no longer seen as the product of human decisions, but rather as a reflection of divine will. Thus, religion here acts as a shield not to protect the people, but to protect the power structure above them.

Thus, hierarchies and power structures within a society are naturalized and desacralized; they appear not as products of political decisions and social conflicts, but as manifestations of a cosmic order established by God. This is what Berger means when he argues that religion is the most effective and enduring legitimation of social institutions. By basing social order on the sacred, religion provides that order with its strongest defense against criticism and resistance. In this way, religion provides a sacred umbrella that makes society accept their circumstances. This is explained in Ukah & Wilks (2017) that religion functions as a social construct that legitimizes political order through sacred narratives.

2. Theodicy

Another equally important concept in Berger's theory is theodicy. According to Berger (1967), theodicy is a religious explanation of suffering that places it within a meaningful cosmic framework. He states that "theodicies are explanations of evil and suffering in terms of religiously legitimated meanings. They make suffering meaningful, and thus bearable, by locating it within a wider, ultimately sacred, order of reality." Thus, suffering is not seen as the result of social manipulation, but as part of a divine plan. This function leads society to accept oppressive social conditions as normal.

Theodicy, therefore, is not simply a philosophical response to the abstract problem of evil, it is a social mechanism that serves to maintain

the stability of the social order under conditions of extreme hardship. By providing a sacred explanation for suffering, theodicy prevents the normative breakdown that might occur in the absence of a sacred explanation.

Furthermore, theodicy serves to prevent anomie. Berger states that anomie is a condition in which individuals lose their framework of meaning and norms. Without religious explanation, extreme realities have the potential to trigger chaos and even rebellion. However, incorporating this suffering into a sacred religious narrative can maintain social stability. However, this study places more emphasis on Berger's own explanation in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), particularly the concept of theodicy as the legitimation of suffering.

The social consequences of theodicy are significant. When suffering is explained as God's will, its structural causes become invisible. The oppressed are guided not toward resistance, but toward fortitude, piety, and submission. In this way, theodicy operates as a mechanism of social control that is all the more effective because it is entirely internal to the consciousness of those it controls.

For this study, theodicy is analyzed as a mechanism through which religious authorities in *Lapvona* justify extreme social suffering and suppress conditions that could potentially give rise to collective resistance or anomie within *Lapvona* society.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter explains the methods used by researcher in conducting research. The method in this study consists of four components which consist of research design, data sources, data collection, and data analysis.

A. Research Design

The method used in this study is literary criticism with a sociology of literature approach. Literary criticism is one of the branches of literary science that specifically studies literary works through direct study.

Literary criticism has a variety of functions. One of them is to study literary works by analyzing and weighing the advantages of the work, whether it is appropriate or not. On the other hand, literary criticism also acts as an explanation of a certain thing, for example providing an interpretation of literary works. Therefore literary criticism is used for reading, identifying, and interpreting textual data from the novel *Lapvona*.

The sociology of literature approach is used to analyze the *Lapvona* novel as a form of social document that reflects the dynamics of power, religiosity and social control. The researcher uses a sociological approach by Peter Berger to interpret the religious phenomena depicted in the novel. This study applies Berger's dialectical mechanism (externalization, objectivation, internalization) to analyze how social reality in novels is constructed as forming a sacred canopy that

legitimizes oppressive power structures, as well as Berger's concept of theodicy which functions as a mechanism to justify extreme suffering and prevent anomie within the society.

B. Data and Data Source

The object used by researcher in this study is *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh with 320 pages. The source of data in this study is in the form of a hardfile (printed book). The novel consists of five chapters: spring, summer, autumn, winter and spring again. The novel was published by Penguin Press in 2022 in New York. The data taken from the novel is in the form of narrative texts, dialogues between characters, descriptions of events, and depictions of social practices that reflect religious values and their functions in society.

C. Data Collection

The researcher collects data from reading the entire novel *Lapvona* by Ottessa Moshfegh carefully. Researcher must take several steps to obtain accurate data. First, researcher read novel using *close-reading* techniques to understand the content of the novel. Then, the researcher repeats the stages but focuses on the core of the things that are the focus of the research. The next step is for the researcher to take notes and take some important sentences as analysis data by marking, underlining, and making notes on each data.

D. Data Analysis

Researcher review the data in various stages after acquiring it. The researcher first selects texts from the novel that display the practice of religiosity in the form of narratives, dialogues, and character descriptions, the selected data

are parts that show religious practices that function as legitimacy of power and social control.

Next, the researcher categorizes the selected data into two analytical categories based on Berger's framework in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) and further elaborated in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967) First, the construction of religiosity through dialectical mechanisms as a process that forms a sacred canopy that legitimizes power and social order, and second, theodicy as a social control mechanism to justify suffering and prevent anomie. These categories guide the analysis of how religious practices in *Lapvona* function as instruments of social control. The analysis is then conducted to answer the research questions and draw conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the analysis that has been carried out by the researcher in answering research questions. The analysis is divided into two main categories: first, religiosity as a sacred canopy that legitimizes power and an oppressive social order, examined through the dialectical mechanisms of externalization, objectivation, and internalization; second, theodicy as a mechanism that justifies extreme suffering and prevents anomie in *Lapvona* society.

A. The Construction of Religiosity through Berger's Dialectical Mechanism

Lapvona novel depicts religiosity or religion not merely as a spiritual guide, but as a tool actively used to maintain authority and foster public obedience. William, the ruler, and Barnabas, the priest, collaborate, exploiting religious institutions to conceal the injustices they themselves have created, from monopolizing water sources and food supplies to enslaving the common people. The people, who should be able to question their conditions and circumstances, are instead led to believe that the suffering they experience is God's will, not the work of humans.

This research focuses on the actions of two characters: William, the arbitrary ruler, and Barnabas, the religious figure. The Christian religious rituals in the novel are not unlike those of today: church service, Easter celebrations,

listening to sermons, praying, and fasting. However, in the novel, William and Barnabas use these rituals to instill an inappropriate dogma. Sermons, which should provide enlightenment, are instead used to justify the suffering of the people, allowing them to accept the disparity between the nobility and the proletariat.

In Berger's framework, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the concept of the dialectic of society. This dialectic mechanism includes the dialectics of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, which explain how a religious ritual is formed and born from humans, which is then recognized and generally accepted as an objective reality, and then internalized by its followers, thus forming an obedient societal consciousness. Furthermore, the results of these three processes explain how religiosity is fully constructed as social control. Through this construction, religiosity becomes a system that protects the power structure from rebellion and conceals injustice within the consciousness of society itself.

1. Externalization

Externalization, within the framework of Berger (1967), is the process by which humans express themselves outwardly through actions, symbols, and institutions. In a religious context, externalization happens when a community gives a material and social form to its relationship with the sacred, creating rituals, doctrines, and religious narratives that appear to come from divine authority rather than from human construction.

Without externalization, objectivation and internalization would not occur. Through this process, artificial meanings created by humans are projected onto the social world and begin to appear as objective realities. In the realm of power, externalization becomes particularly dangerous when religious narratives are constructed not to guide society toward truth, but deliberately to conceal it.

In Lapvona, the most damaging externalization occurs in the religious narrative Barnabas creates to explain the village's suffering. Rather than acknowledging the cause of the famine as the deliberate monopoly of food and water supplies by William and Barnabas, Barnabas externalizes the religious explanation by asserting that the suffering is supernatural in origin. This is evident and evidenced by the following quote:

“Oh, I say it's because the Devil got out of hell and is on the loose, hungry for innocent souls. His fire has dried up the land. God has shut the gates of heaven to keep the Devil out” (p. 91)

In this quote, Barnabas explains that the social reality of famine experienced by his people, caused by William's political decisions, is God's will. He gives it a religious form, a narrative that links the event to demonic activity and divine will. In Berger's framework this shows the process of externalization because Barnabas presents the explanation he has constructed to the community using sacred narratives.

What makes this externalization particularly powerful is the specificity of its construction. Barnabas does not offer a vague spiritual comfort, he provides a detailed narrative complete with a villain (the Devil), a

cause (the Devil's fire drying the land), and a divine response (God shutting the gates of heaven). This specificity gives the narrative the texture of factual reporting rather than religious interpretation, making it far more persuasive to a community that has no access to the truth about William's water reservoir. The people cannot verify or contradict what Barnabas tells them they can only receive it. While receiving it, they receive not just an explanation but a complete reframing of their political reality as a spiritual one.

This resulted in drought and famine not due to socio-political problems, but rather seen as events beyond human control. Through those narratives, the true cause of the people's suffering is hidden, replaced by sacred explanations. This pattern of concealment through externalization is further reinforced and sustained through Barnabas's repeated sermons, which not only hide the truth but actively redirect the people's emotional response away from its legitimate political target. This shows that externalization occurs in this quote when religious figures use sacred narratives to construct a particular social reality.

*"Their anger was righteous. Father Barnabas, their priest, had told them so. Chastise an evil-doer and God will know you're good"(p. 8)
"Work harder this year and the Devil will scare," Father Barnabas still said."(p. 169)*

These two quotes, when read together, reveal a consistent and deliberate pattern in Barnabas's externalization strategy. The active redirection of the people's legitimate anger and exhaustion into forms of religious devotion that ultimately serve William's political and economic interests. This sacred narrative was entirely humanly constructed, yet

presented as divine truth. When this narrative was questioned or failed to deceive his people, Barnabas would resort to theological ambiguity as a closing statement.

The mechanism of this externalization is particularly sophisticated. By telling the people that their anger is righteous, Barnabas does not suppress their emotion he captures it and repurposes it. The anger that could fuel resistance becomes instead a source of moral energy directed toward vague religious duty. The phrase "*chastise an evil-doer*" is deliberately ambiguous, it sounds like a call to justice, but it points toward no specific target, no specific action, and no specific accountability. It simply keeps the people's energy moving in a direction that poses no threat to William's power.

Furthermore, the promise that "*God will know you're good*" introduces a system of divine reward that ties the people's self-worth to their compliance with Barnabas's moral framework. In Berger's (1967) terms, this is externalization functioning at its most ideologically complete, not only is the political reality hidden behind a religious narrative, but the people are given a positive incentive to embrace that narrative. Their anger is not just redirected; it is transformed into an act of faith. Compliance becomes a virtue. Submission becomes godliness. In this transformation, William's power is protected not by force but by the people's own desire to be seen as good in the eyes of God.

The quote on page 169 demonstrates that this redirective externalization is not a one-time rhetorical maneuver but a sustained and

adaptive strategy. The village has endured an extended period of suffering, the famine has deepened and the people are exhausted. Yet Barnabas continues to externalize the same framework, now directing the people's depleted energy toward increased labor: 'work harder this year and the Devil will scare. This statement performs two functions simultaneously. First, it reframes exhausting physical labor as spiritual warfare working harder is not serving William's economic interests, it is fighting the Devil. Second, it sustains the externalized narrative established earlier, reinforcing that the Devil not William is the source of all suffering. The people's labor, which directly benefits William's estate, is thus experienced not as exploitation but as meaningful sacred action.

"He hadn't been alive during the Great Pestilence, but had heard from his peers in school that survivors needed divine justification for such tragedy. He made a lame attempt to comfort the people, to soothe their guilt and the scars of their hardship. All he could tell them was that God worked in mysterious ways." (p. 133)

By stating his final sentence, "divine mystery," Barnabas foreclosed the possibility of rational inquiry into the plight of his people. It's as if their suffering cannot be explained through social or political analysis, it must be accepted as something beyond human comprehension. The statement *"God worked in mysterious ways"* functions as what Berger (1967) would identify as the ultimate form of externalization, a theological assertion so absolute and so broad that it permanently forecloses any possibility of rational inquiry. Unlike the previous externalizations, which offered specific narratives (the Devil's fire, the moral framework of chastising evil-doers, working harder

against the Devil), this statement offers nothing except closure. It tells the people that their suffering has no explanation accessible to human understanding and therefore no human accountability, no human cause, and no human solution. It must simply be accepted as divine will operating beyond the reach of human comprehension or challenge.

Crucially, the effectiveness of this final externalization depends entirely on the accumulated weight of all the externalizations that preceded it. The people do not push back against "*God works in mysterious ways*", they do not demand a more satisfying answer, because months and months of repeated sacred narratives have already conditioned them to recognize the boundary of divine mystery as the limit of legitimate inquiry. Questioning beyond that boundary has been made to feel not just intellectually futile but spiritually dangerous, as if pressing further would itself constitute an act of defiance against God. This is externalization at its most complete: a single sentence that carries the full ideological weight of an entire system of constructed religious meaning, shutting down critical awareness with the authority of the sacred itself.

By enveloping the real causes of the people's suffering in religious explanations, Barnabas prevented the people from seeing that William was the source of their problems. As long as the people believed their suffering was God's will, William's power would never be challenged. Through this sustained and adaptive process of externalization, from specific demonic narratives to moral redirection, from labor demands disguised as spiritual

warfare to the final foreclosure of all inquiry through divine mystery, Barnabas successfully constructs a religious reality in which William's political crimes are rendered permanently invisible. The famine is not a political problem, It is a spiritual test. The drought is not a consequence of monopoly, it is the Devil's fire. Suffering is not the result of human greed, it is God's mysterious will.

Each externalization builds upon the previous one, layering sacred meaning over political reality until the original cause is completely obscured and the people have no conceptual tools left with which to question their condition. This is the foundational stage of religiosity being constructed as social control and without it, neither objectivation nor internalization could take place.

2. Objectivation

Objectivation occurs when human-produced religious expressions, through externalization, solidify into institutions that appear to exist independently of the human activity that created them. This creates the perception that human-created religion is not man-made, but rather something that already exists and was established by God.

In *Lapvona* novel, the most damaging objectification occurs in the part where Barnabas, as a priest, actively uses his position to legitimize William's power in the eyes of the people. This is evidenced by the following quote:

“Villiam actually seemed to enjoy Marek’s company, his strangeness and funniness. Marek grew less compulsive about his fear of God. As Villiam was powerful and unafraid, Marek believed that pleasing

William was akin to pleasing God. And Father Barnabas always agreed with whatever William said.” (p. 76)

In Christian tradition, a priest occupies a sacred position as a mediator between the congregation and God, his authority derives from the divine, not from any human political arrangement. This is precisely the perception that Barnabas exploits. By consistently agreeing with everything William says and commands, Barnabas transforms the institution of the priesthood into a mechanism for legitimizing William's political authority. Every time Barnabas endorses William's decisions, the people receive those decisions not as the commands of a human ruler but as expressions of divine will, because the priest, as God's representative, has validated them.

What makes this objectivation particularly effective is that it requires no explicit deception. Barnabas does not need to tell the people that William speaks for God, he simply needs to never contradict him. The institutional authority of the priesthood does the ideological work automatically. Because the people have internalized the understanding that the priest represents divine authority, his agreement with William is sufficient to elevate William's commands to the status of sacred ordinance. In Berger's (1967) terms, the human-constructed alliance between Barnabas and William has been successfully objectivated, it appears not as a political arrangement between two men but as a natural alignment between religious and divine order.

The social consequence of this objectivation is immediate and far-reaching. The people of Lapvona do not experience William's authority as the imposition of one man's will upon another, they experience it as

participation in a divinely sanctioned social order. To resist William is therefore not merely to challenge a political ruler, it is to place oneself in opposition to God's representative on earth. The institution of the priesthood, which should exist to hold power accountable before God, has been completely inverted, it now functions to place power beyond accountability by wrapping it in sacred authority. This is also supported by the following quote:

"The little gift of religion Barnabas allowed the villagers on Sundays the church gave out drops of wine and little oats for the Eucharist, was enough to fool them into accepting their poverty and enslavement" (p. 68)

The Eucharist is one of the most sacred rituals in Christian practice, a ritual believed by the faithful to represent direct communion with God, instituted by divine command. This sacred status is precisely what makes it such a powerful instrument of objectivation in Lapvona. By administering the Eucharist, even in its most minimal form, a drop of wine and a few oats. Barnabas activates all the theological weight the people attach to this ritual and directs it toward a specific social purpose: the normalization of poverty and enslavement.

The narrator's observation that this "was enough to fool them" is revealing in its directness. The Eucharist does not materially improve the people's condition, a drop of wine and a few oats provide no real nourishment to a starving community. Its function is entirely ideological. By receiving the Eucharist, the people participate in a sacred act that frames their material deprivation as spiritually meaningful. Their poverty becomes part of the

sacred narrative of sacrifice and devotion rather than evidence of exploitation and injustice. In Berger (1967) framework, this is objectivation at its most complete: a human-constructed ritual, serving a human political purpose, is experienced by its participants as a direct encounter with the divine.

What makes this form of objectivation particularly insidious is its weekly repetition. The Eucharist is not administered once. It is administered every Sunday, consistently reinforcing the same ideological message, that the people's material conditions are acceptable, spiritually meaningful, and not to be questioned. Each week, the ritual renews the people's acceptance of their poverty as part of their spiritual life. Over time, this weekly repetition transforms what begins as a manipulated ritual into what appears to be a timeless sacred truth, the objectivation deepens with every administration, making it progressively more difficult for the people to perceive the gap between the ritual's sacred appearance and its political function.

"Father Barnabas conveyed such rumors to the lord. That was his primary function as the village priest: to listen to the confessions of the people down below and report any sagging dispositions or laziness to the man above." (p. 10)

"Father Barnabas had a room at the manor and stayed there most nights. The two men often gossiped about what the priest had heard in his Saturday confessional." (p. 55)

These two quotes, read together, reveal the most complete and most dangerous objectivation in the novel, the transformation of the confessional from a sacred private space into a comprehensive system of political surveillance. The confessional occupies a uniquely powerful position in Christian practice: it is understood as the most intimate and inviolable space between a believer and God, protected by absolute secrecy and carrying the

promise that what is spoken there goes no further than the divine. This sacred understanding is precisely what makes it William's most effective intelligence-gathering tool.

The people confess to Barnabas in the belief that they are speaking to God's representative in a space of absolute privacy and divine protection. In reality, every confession is immediately transmitted to William, who uses the information to monitor the dispositions, loyalties, and potential resistance of his subjects. Page 55 makes the degradation of this institution explicit: the sacred contents of confession become "*gossip*" exchanged between two men in a manor house. The most intimate spiritual disclosures of the community, their doubts, their fears, their grievances are converted into political intelligence without their knowledge or consent.

What Berger (1967) would identify as the defining feature of objectivation is fully present here. The confessional appears to the people as an objective and inviolable sacred institution, completely independent of any human manipulation. Its sacred status makes it unquestionable, the people cannot imagine that it has been compromised, because to question the confessional would be to question the very mechanism through which they access divine forgiveness. This is the ultimate irony of objectivation in Lapvona. The institution the people trust most completely as a space of divine protection is in fact the instrument through which they are most thoroughly exposed to human surveillance and control.

Through the objectivation of these three institutions, the priesthood, the Eucharist, and the confessional religiosity in Lapvona has been transformed from a system of spiritual guidance into a comprehensive apparatus of social control. William's authority is legitimized through the priest's endorsement. The people's poverty is normalized through the weekly Eucharist. Their most private thoughts and doubts are monitored through the confessional. Each institution appears sacred, inviolable, and divinely established, while serving an entirely political function. This is the core achievement of objectivation as Berger (1967) describes it. Human-constructed systems of control are given the appearance of divine reality, making them not only unquestionable but actively embraced by those they are designed to oppress.

3. Internalization

Internalization is the final stage in Berger's dialectical framework, where the objectified reality is absorbed into the individual's consciousness, resulting in the existing social order shaping their subjective experiences and understanding. This process, supported by repeated exposure in the form of sermons and rituals, leads individuals to accept the existing social order as natural and witnessed by God.

In *Lapvona* novel, internalization is most clearly demonstrated in one of the characters, Marek (William's adopted son). He is one of the victims of Barnabas's understanding. Of all the characters, Marek is explicitly shown to be experiencing the internalization stage.

"Marek believed that pleasing William was akin to pleasing God. And Father Barnabas always agreed with whatever William said." (p. 76)

This passage shows internalization in one of its most complete forms. Marek does not arrive at the belief that pleasing William equals pleasing God through his own independent reasoning, this belief is the direct result of everything Barnabas has constructed through externalization and objectivation. Because Barnabas consistently agrees with everything William says, and because the priestly institution has been objectivated as the voice of divine authority, Marek absorbs the logical conclusion: William's will and God's will are the same thing. This is no longer an external teaching that Marek consciously follows, it has become part of how he understands the world.

What makes this internalization significant is that it happens naturally, without force. The narrator notes that Marek *"grew less compulsive about his fear of God"* meaning the internalization does not produce anxiety or resistance but rather a sense of settled certainty. Marek is not afraid of William in the way someone fears punishment, he is devoted to William in the way someone is devoted to God. The political authority of the ruling class has been completely absorbed into his personal religious consciousness, making it indistinguishable from genuine faith.

The social consequence of this internalization is that Marek becomes a willing participant in the system that oppresses him. He does not need to be controlled from outside because he has fully accepted the constructed religious reality from inside. In Berger's (1967) framework, this is the

defining characteristic of internalization, when the socially constructed order is no longer experienced as an external imposition but as a personal truth, the most effective and most durable form of social control has been achieved.

“Marek ate what Jude ate, always saving a few bites for God: he knew that sacrifice was the best way to please Him”(p. 7)

Amidst the extreme famine that gripped the village, Marek still set aside a small portion of his food for God. There was no external pressure for this action; he had fully internalized the understanding that sacrifice was a form of obedience. Marek not only accepted the oppressive social order but willingly continued it because this belief was deeply rooted in him.

They no longer see sacrifice as a burden, but as a moral act that must be undertaken even under extreme circumstances. The famine, which should have driven individuals to survive, instead demonstrated the depth of their religious values. This demonstrates how religious teachings within Lapvona society have shaped how they understand sacrifice and the relationship between humans and God. This situation creates more effective religious control as individuals begin to monitor themselves through the beliefs deeply ingrained in their consciousness.

Furthermore, the phrase *“he knew”* is particularly significant in Berger's (1967) framework. Marek does not wonder whether sacrifice pleases God, he knows it. This certainty is the hallmark of complete internalization. What began as an external religious teaching delivered through Barnabas's sermons has become personal knowledge, a truth that Marek carries inside himself and acts upon independently. This is precisely what makes

internalization more powerful than any form of external coercion: it produces not obedience but conviction. Internalization is also evident in society. Several residents saw Ina fleeing into the forest, as in the following quote:

“Father Vapnik lied to his congregants the next Sunday, said that the horse had taken Ina up the mountain and left her safe and sound at the nunnery. Those who had seen Ina escape into the woods said nothing. They never gossiped about the priest. To do so was blasphemous.” (p. 24)

In the quote above, there is an incident where Ina runs away into the forest and is seen by several people. Even though they know the pastor is lying to his congregation, they choose to remain silent. They are not physically afraid, but because they themselves believe that gossiping about the pastor is a form of blasphemy.

This is one of the clearest examples in the novel of what Berger (1967) calls the self-regulating capacity produced by internalization. The people do not need a guard or a punishment system to keep them silent, they silence themselves, because their own belief system has defined the act of questioning the priest as a moral violation. The political function of this self-censorship is obvious: as long as the people believe that speaking against religious authority is blasphemy, Barnabas can lie, manipulate, and deceive without any risk of exposure. The community's own internalized values protect him far more effectively than any external enforcement could.

What is most significant about this passage is the gap between what the people know and what they do. They know the priest is lying, they have direct evidence of it. But their internalized religious framework overrides this

knowledge and prevents them from acting on it. This gap between awareness and action is the defining feature of deep internalization: even when the constructed reality shows cracks, the internalized belief system fills those cracks and maintains the social order intact.

“Even if the boy were strong enough to lift the stocks and help the bandit run away into the woods, he wouldn't. God was watching.” (p. 4)

The quote above is also a form of internalization that we often hear and even agree with. The phrase "God was watching" represents divine supervision that has been fully internalized, so that social control no longer requires external coercion. Marek does not restrain himself out of fear of human punishment; he restrains himself because he believes God is watching him. This internalized obedience is more effective than direct violence because it creates a surrender to one's beliefs. Even in situations that could lead to resistance, individuals will choose obedience out of a belief that disobeying God is wrong. This is the most effective form of social control in Berger's framework: when individuals become their own supervisors in the name of God, power does not need to be physically present to maintain compliance.

In Berger's (1967) framework, this is the ultimate achievement of internalization, when divine surveillance replaces human surveillance so completely that the physical absence of any external authority makes no difference to the person's behavior. Marek regulates himself. He monitors his own actions, judges his own impulses, and restrains himself, all in the name

of a God whose watching presence he has fully internalized from the religious narratives Barnabas has preached. The political system does not need to be physically present to maintain compliance because it has installed itself inside Marek's own mind. Internalization was also evident when Barnabas was absent from leading worship. A resident named Jon said:

"What happens when he's not there?" Villiam asked. 'When you're not there,' Jon said, 'we still worship. We try to remember the things you said last time, and we pray.' (p. 194)

Jon replied that when Barnabas was not present to lead the service, the people continued to worship by remembering what Barnabas had said the previous week and then praying on their own. This shows that Barnabas's teachings no longer required his physical presence to be carried out; the values and rituals he instilled had become fully integrated into the people's consciousness and were carried out independently. The people did not obey because they were being watched or forced to, but because the teachings had truly lived within them. This was the internalization of the religious order, which was essentially a tool of William's control, so deeply absorbed by the people that they voluntarily continued it without needing external encouragement. Collective internalization is seen in the citizens' communal response to suffering.

The political implication of this is profound. William's control over the village does not depend on Barnabas's constant physical presence. It depends on the internalization that Barnabas has already achieved. Even if Barnabas were to disappear permanently, the people would continue to regulate themselves according to the religious framework he constructed,

because that framework now lives inside them. This is the final and most complete stage of religiosity being constructed as social control, when the construction no longer needs its builders, because it has become part of the consciousness of those it was built to control.

"Not one of the villagers would confess to a breach of their faith. 'God is mysterious, yes, but He is not cruel,' they all said." (p. 133)

Despite facing starvation and apparent oppression, none of the residents questioned God's justice. Instead, they maintained their belief that God was not cruel, a statement that indirectly justified the conditions they experienced as a divine mystery, not the result of the ruler's cruelty. This is evidence that the sacred canopy had been fully rebuilt.

In Berger's (1967) framework, this collective response demonstrates that internalization has moved beyond individual consciousness and become embedded in the community's shared reality. The constructed religiosity is no longer just something individuals believe privately. It is something the community affirms together, reinforcing each other's internalization in a continuous cycle. Each person who says *"God is not cruel"* makes it easier for every other person to believe the same thing, because the collective affirmation creates the appearance of universal truth.

Through the process of internalization demonstrated across multiple characters and communal behaviors in Lapvona from Marek's belief that pleasing William equals pleasing God, to his voluntary self-denial during famine, to the villagers' collective self-censorship, to the internalized divine

surveillance of 'God was watching,' to the autonomous continuation of worship without Barnabas, and to the communal refusal to question God's justice, religiosity has been fully constructed as social control. The oppression in *Lapvona* does not ultimately rest on William's guards or Barnabas's sermons. It rests on the consciousness of the people themselves, on the beliefs they carry inside them, the values they act upon independently, and the reality they collectively affirm. This is what Berger (1967) means when he argues that religion, when constructed as social control, becomes the most effective and most durable form of ideological domination: it does not control people from outside, it lives inside them.

B. Theodicy as Social Control

After the sacred canopy is successfully formed through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, the religion in *Lapvona* novel does not stop there; it then functions through the mechanism of theodicy. Theodicy is a way to make the extreme suffering being experienced feel meaningful according to Chernus (nd). In his book, Berger explains that theodicy is a religious explanation that places suffering within the framework of divine meaning, so that suffering is no longer seen as the result of human decisions that can be challenged, but rather as part of God's plan that must be accepted.

In *Lapvona*, theodicy serves two purposes. First, it justifies the suffering faced by the people as divine will, and second, it prevents anomie, a condition where the people lose their norms, which could potentially trigger chaos or even rebellion. As long as the people of *Lapvona* can see their suffering as a test or

God's will, they have no reason to rebel, and this is why theodicy becomes the most effective tool of social control in the novel.

1. Theodicy as a Justification of Suffering

The theodicy in *Lapvona* novel operates not only through sermons, but also through the way the people interpret their suffering in everyday life. Barnabas consistently places every form of suffering, famine, drought, and death into a divine framework, preventing the people from questioning their true causes. This is most evident when the true truth about the source of the people's suffering is nearly revealed, only to be concealed by Barnabas's theodicy narrative.

"Father, what do you say when the people ask why it is so hot this summer?" "Oh, I say it's because the Devil got out of hell and is on the loose, hungry for innocent souls. His fire has dried up the land. God has shut the gates of heaven to keep the Devil out.' Of course, he told no one that Villiam was hoarding water in a reservoir up there. 'Isn't that a good story,' Villiam said. 'You really are a good priest.' (p. 91) "Villiam kept the water for himself,' she told him. 'Father Barnabas said it was the work of the Devil.' [...] "If there was water up there, and Villiam had it, and the priest knew, then why were we down here starving by the lake?" [...] "Father Barnabas said that there was a breach of security down in hell, and that the Devil flew up to Earth, and it made the world hot and dried it all out. Grigor stiffened, hearing the posterousness of the story for the first time." (p. 154)

This quote directly shows how theodicy works as a tool to justify the suffering experienced by the people of Lapvona. The character Ina reveals the truth that William secretly channeled mountain water only to his castle. That was the real cause of the drought. Barnabas instead explained the drought through a religious narrative, stating that the devil, who had come out of hell, had caused the drought. In this situation, the people believed that the drought was the work of the devil.

This quote also demonstrates how theodicy can obscure reality. Although William's facts are beginning to come to light, Grigor, who had been listening to Barnabas's religious narratives all his life, rejected this reality and confirmed Barnabas's statement. In this situation, the community believed that the drought befalling them was the work of the devil. Interestingly, Grigor himself begins to think critically about the drought they're experiencing while William has water, a question that should have led to awareness. But it fails to do so because Barnabas' narrative has already taken root. Grigor's reaction to hearing it for the first time demonstrates that the theodicy has been working so well that he never questions the narrative at all.

Furthermore, the phrase *"hearing the preposterousness of the story for the first time"* represents a crucial moment where Grigor begins to realize the incongruity of the religious narrative he has heard and believed in. However, this individual awareness is not strong enough to destroy the long-established social order. In Lapvona society, religious belief has become part of the collective consciousness, so that when a different form of awareness emerges, it does not automatically generate social resistance.

"He still prayed every morning and every night. Still beat himself with the whip on Fridays. Still believed that there was indeed a God out there watching him, measuring his suffering. If you died from famine, you were guaranteed passage into heaven. This was common knowledge." (p. 66)

The quote above demonstrates one of the powers of theodicy. It transforms death by starvation, a true consequence of William's monopoly on

water and food, into a heavenly investment. The phrase "This was common knowledge" is the most significant evidence that the theodicy taught by Barnabas was successful. Because the sermons Barnabas delivered every week in church inspired his congregation to believe in it. Death by starvation with the promise of heaven, this narrative was not only accepted as a personal belief but gradually became common knowledge shared by the community, no longer requiring proof.

The phrase "this was common knowledge" is the most significant detail in this passage. It signals that the theodicy has moved beyond individual belief into collective assumption, something so widely accepted that it no longer needs to be explicitly preached or argued. In Berger (1967) framework, this theodicy has reached the highest level of objectification, no longer needing to be explicitly preached, as it has become integrated into society's understanding of how the world automatically works. As long as they hold on to this belief, the weight of the suffering they experience becomes even greater, and they have no desire to question or change it.

The behavioral consequence of this theodicy is profound. The passage describes a character who *"still prayed," "still beat himself with the whip,"* and *"still believed"*, the repetition of *"still"* emphasizes the persistence of these behaviors despite the worsening conditions. This is not a person who has been recently convinced. This is a person whose entire framework for understanding suffering has been shaped by the theodicy over a long period of time. Even as the famine deepens and death approaches, the theological

promise of heavenly passage prevents any impulse toward resistance. In Berger's terms, theodicy has made the most extreme political oppression not only bearable but spiritually meaningful, which is precisely why it is the most effective form of social control in Lapvona.

"Tell the villagers that God wants them to redouble their faith now, and that this spring harvest will be a testament to their goodness in the face of villainy. And let the bandit hang for a day. Good if some birds come and peck at him or something. That will make people feel that justice has been paid." (p. 34)

"He loved not the Christ but himself and the thrill of keeping people in line. He liked wearing his habit, and he liked the preposterous authority that his position granted him. Since his assignment in Lapvona, he had not given any real sermons. He simply translated William's rule into language that sounded vaguely religious." (p. 96)

The quote above shows how theodicy was created and used to justify the suffering experienced by the people. The context is that the people of Lapvona are experiencing drought and difficult harvests. William, instead of taking responsibility for his people's difficulties, orders Barnabas to provide a religious narrative to the people that God wants them to strengthen their faith and that the difficulties that occur are a form of testing their goodness towards God. With this religious explanation, the suffering experienced by the people is no longer understood as a political decision by William, but will be believed to be part of God's plan which they must accept with full faith.

The second quote shows that Barnabas was truly only defending William's power. The sentence "He simply translated William's rule into language that sounded vaguely religious" shows that Barnabas never delivered true religious teachings; he merely translated William's commands or wishes into a religious language acceptable to the people. In this case,

religion was no longer a moral guide for society, but had instead transformed into a tool that legitimized existing power.

It all proves that the theodicy the people have long believed in is not divine truth, but rather a political command deliberately couched in religious language. By conveying this message, the people no longer question their suffering. Instead, they are commanded to work harder as a form of proof to God. In Berger's framework, theodicy functions here as a means of giving meaning to suffering, so that the possibility of chaos occurring can be prevented.

"Maybe blindness was penalty for some profane ill within her soul. [...] Only Jesus could rise, the priest, Father Vapnik, had told them. The people were perturbed. They told Ina to sit still on the dirt, then made a circle around her with small stones and proceeded to set the cottage on fire." (p. 23)

The above quote demonstrates how theodicy operates brutally in Lapvona. The suffering experienced by Ina, who lost her entire family to a contagious disease and then became blind, does not attract popular sympathy, but rather frames it within a divine framework. Ina's blindness is interpreted as punishment for her sins. The teaching that only Jesus could rise becomes the theological foundation that gives the people the right to decide Ina's fate. They leave her to die in a circle of stones inside her burned-down house. The people have no sense of guilt at all because what they believe is not that they are killing people but that they are letting God's will take its course. Theodicy forces victims to accept their own suffering and also allows others to justify

the suffering of others as God's will. In this way, suffering, which can actually be prevented, is accepted as a matter of necessity.

The teaching that "*only Jesus could rise*" functions as the specific theological justification for what follows. By establishing that resurrection belongs only to Christ, the religious authority removes any moral obligation the community might feel toward Ina, the absence of guilt is the most significant detail in this passage. The people are "*perturbed*", they are not indifferent to what they are doing, but they proceed anyway, because their internalized theological framework overrides their natural human response to another person's pain. In Berger's (1967) framework, this demonstrates the full social power of theodicy, when suffering is understood as divine will, the moral instinct to prevent or alleviate that suffering is not just suppressed but theologically invalidated.

Theodicy does not only justify the suffering of those who experience it, it justifies the inaction and active participation of those who witness it, making the entire community complicit in a system of oppression they experience as spiritual devotion. her death is not a human tragedy requiring human intervention but a divine process that must be allowed to run its course. The people do not see themselves as killing Ina when they set her cottage on fire. They see themselves as stepping back and allowing God's will to take its course. This is theodicy at its most socially dangerous, it does not merely make people accept their own suffering, it gives them theological permission to participate in the suffering of others without guilt.

The absence of guilt is the most significant detail in this passage. The people are "*perturbed*", they are not indifferent to what they are doing, but they proceed anyway, because their internalized theological framework overrides their natural human response to another person's pain. In Berger (1967) framework, this demonstrates the full social power of theodicy, when suffering is understood as divine will, the moral instinct to prevent or alleviate that suffering is not just suppressed but theologically invalidated. Theodicy does not only justify the suffering of those who experience it, it justifies the inaction and active participation of those who witness it, making the entire community complicit in a system of oppression they experience as spiritual devotion.

The findings from the data above demonstrate that the theodicy within *Lapvona* was not a phenomenon that arose naturally from the people's own beliefs, but rather a mechanism consciously created and managed by the men they trusted and relied on most, Barnabas and William. The suffering resulting from political decisions such as monopolies on water, food, and slavery was successfully transformed into an unquestionable divine perspective. As long as suffering was interpreted as God's will, the people would have no moral or social reason to question it.

2. Theodicy as a Preventative for Anomie

Theodicy in *Lapvona* novel not only serves to justify suffering but also actively works to prevent anomie. In Berger's terms, anomie is a state of loss of values or norms that can lead to chaos. Barnabas consistently fills the

void of meaning created by extreme suffering with his religious narrative, giving the people purpose and hope again. Similarly, his function is to prevent potential rebellion by the people, unwittingly acting as a form of social control that will go unnoticed. This is clearly seen in the following quote:

"Can a savior bring the dead back to life?' someone had asked the priest after Mass last week. 'A savior can do anything. Anything you wish, He will grant.' [...] 'Is the Devil still free?' 'Yes,' the priest said gravely. 'We must all be very careful. The gates of heaven are still shut, and the Devil may come back here if he gets restless roaming. We've got to get him back to hell. That's what the savior is for.' 'Get the Devil back to hell, yes,' they all said, nodding, grateful that the savior was on the way." (p. 156)

The people were vulnerable at the time, many starving to death, losing their families, and living in excruciating suffering. This situation had the potential to create anomie, but the opposite actually occurred. The question, *"Can a savior bring the dead back to life?"* arose from profound sadness and loss. Barnabas quickly responded, not with rational or political explanations, but by expanding his religious narrative. He offered an impossible promise and emphasized that the threat of the devil still lurked. Thus, the people, who had previously been inclined to criticize the authorities, were successfully transformed into a place of hope. The grateful and relieved public response to the sermon proved that Barnabas, through his religious narrative, had successfully prevented the potential for anomie.

Barnabas expands the religious narrative rather than confronting reality. He offers an impossible promise, *"a savior can do anything, anything you wish, He will grant"*, and simultaneously renews the threat of the Devil. These two moves work together: the promise of the savior gives the people

something to hope for, while the threat of the Devil gives them something to fear and focus on. In Berger's (1967) framework, this is theodicy performing its anomie-prevention function with precision, the void of meaning created by mass death and suffering is immediately filled with sacred narrative before it can become the kind of existential emptiness that leads to social breakdown.

The communal response *"get the Devil back to hell, yes, they all said, nodding, grateful"* demonstrates how completely the theodicy has succeeded. People who moments earlier were on the edge of collective despair are now unified around a shared religious purpose. Their grief has not been resolved, it has been redirected. Their potential rebellion has not been addressed, it has been absorbed into renewed religious devotion. This is what makes theodicy so effective as a tool of social control in Berger's framework. It does not need to solve the problem that causes suffering. It only needs to give that suffering a sacred meaning that makes resistance feel unnecessary and inappropriate.

"The priest liked the farce. It was just his style. He had no real knowledge of the Bible he spoke no Latin, read only a little, understood nothing but he walked around with the Good Book anyway to give the impression that he knew it all, and at each household he opened it to random pages and spoke in a gibberish that made the villagers cross their hearts and bow their heads." (p.53)

"The guards carried out any punitive action the lord directed if a family had failed to pay its taxes or had voiced some grievance to the collector or priest. Oftentimes punishment consisted of a little poison in the family's well, just enough to make the wife and children sick for a week. The priest would say that God punished those who didn't uphold their responsibilities as citizens. This was the way William governed. Surreptitiously." (p.53)

According to the quote above, theodicy was used as a tool to prevent resistance to William's authority. It is explained that when a citizen dared to raise his voice and complain about paying taxes to a collector or priest (Barnabas), William secretly poisoned the family's well. The resulting

suffering from the poison sickened their children or wives, which Barnabas later confirmed was God's punishment for those who failed to fulfill their responsibilities to the people.

The people who dared to speak out eventually became silent without knowing the truth, all they knew was that they would be punished by God if they resisted. The case did not stop at that family, other families who witnessed it were also afraid to speak out because even the slightest resistance was believed to be judged by their God. This is what is called "This was the way William governed. Surreptitiously." William's power did not need to be shown harshly because Barnabas' theodicy worked far more effectively than directly silencing his people's mouths.

The social consequence of this system is the most effective possible prevention of anomie and rebellion. No family dares to voice grievance a second time, not because they fear William directly, but because they believe God will punish them for speaking out. Other families who witnessed the sick children and wives internalize the same lesson without having experienced the punishment themselves. In Berger (1967) framework, this is theodicy creating what might be called a theological deterrent, resistance is not just politically dangerous, it is spiritually dangerous. And a deterrent that operates through religious belief is far more comprehensive and far more durable than one that operates through physical force, because it follows people into every private moment and every solitary decision.

"He had worked so hard to feed himself and his family, for the love of God, believing it would earn him a seat in heaven. Now he knew he had

been working, in fact, to make heaven on Earth for the lord above.” (p.135)

“And I’m angry.” ‘At whom?’ Grigor couldn’t answer. There was not a soul he was not angry at. He cycled through his options: God, the bandits, Villiam, his family, his neighbors. The list was too long to speak aloud. Grigor was ashamed of that excess, and so he lied. ‘I’m angry at myself,’ he said after a long pause, ‘for not protecting my family.’ ‘Then bring a gift to the old lady and she will relieve you of your anger.” (p.146-147)

“How is it that you are so rich, and the rest of us so poor?” [...] ‘Did you steal the water this summer? Did you cause the drought?’ Villiam smiled, then coughed... ‘If you have nothing to ask,’ Villiam replied, ‘then I guess the game is over. Pity.’” (p.198)

The three quotes above, when read sequentially, form a narrative line that shows the process of the cracking of trust or the sacred canopy in an individual. The quotes contain suspicions about Grigor's character, after surviving the famine that hit the village, coming to the conclusion that for sixty years he never imagined that the hard work for God that he was doing was not actually for heaven, but rather to build a comfortable life for William. However, in the second quote, Barnabas doesn't allow that realization to arise. Third, Grigor comes to the convention with undirected anger. This is where Barnabas intervenes through confession. A single question, *“At whom?”*, is enough to make Grigor ashamed of his anger and blame himself.

But after learning the truth from Ina, Grigor dared to confront William directly. However, William responded with a dismissive attitude that belittled Grigor. Grigor realized that the truth and rebellion would never happen and be realized because no one in the village listened to him. In Berger's framework, anomie can only occur when individual consciousness transforms into collective solidarity. And as long as the Lapvona community remains within the sacred canopy, Grigor's consciousness will not trigger any change. The

three quotes above prove that the process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization has successfully occurred among the people, thus creating a theodicy that prevents a rebellion.

Quotes page 192 shows the final and most complete demonstration of why individual awareness cannot prevent anomie from being contained in Lapvona. Grigor, having learned the truth from Ina, finds the courage to confront William directly, asking him whether he stole the water and caused the drought. But William's dismissive response, *"if you have nothing to ask, then I guess the game is over. Pity"*, reveals the ultimate limit of individual resistance within a community where collective consciousness remains governed by the constructed religiosity.

Grigor has the truth. He has awareness. He has the courage to confront power directly. But he has no one standing beside him. In Berger (1967) framework, anomie can only develop into collective resistance when individual critical consciousness is shared widely enough to constitute a new normative framework. As long as the rest of the Lapvona community remains within the constructed religious reality, Grigor's individual awakening will always remain isolated, a single crack in a wall that the community itself continues to hold up from the inside.

Through the process of theodicy as anomie prevention demonstrated across multiple situations in Lapvona, from Barnabas's conversion of collective grief into renewed religious devotion at the most vulnerable moment of the community, to the systemic use of covert punishment covered

by theological framing, to Grigor's trajectory from individual awakening to isolated confrontation, theodicy consistently achieves the same result: potential collective resistance is absorbed, redirected, or isolated before it can organize into meaningful challenge to William's authority. Anomie is prevented not because the people find genuine meaning in their suffering, but because the constructed religiosity fills every void of meaning with sacred narrative before that void can become the space in which resistance grows. This is the final and most complete function of religiosity as social control in Lapvona, it does not merely justify oppression, it makes oppression structurally impossible to resist.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusions formulated based on the research problems, analysis results, and discussions from the previous chapters. In addition, it also provides the researcher's recommendations for future studies related to the applied theory or the literary work analyzed

A. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the construction of religiosity as a mechanism of social control in Ottessa Moshfegh's novel *Lapvona* by applying the theory of reality construction and the concepts of sacred canopy and theodicy. This analysis has successfully answered the two research questions posed in Chapter I.

First, religiosity in *Lapvona* is constructed through Berger's dialectical mechanisms of Externalization, Objectivation, and Internalization to legitimize oppressive power structures and maintain an oppressive social order. Barnabas, as a religious figure, externalizes this by transforming the suffering caused by William's monopoly of water and food resources into a religious narrative about the devil and God's punishment. This narrative is then objectified through religious institutions such as the Eucharist and confessional rituals, thus appearing as an objective and inviolable divine reality.

Finally, through these two processes, internalization occurs. The people, especially Marek, the most prominent character, internalize this construction, fully absorbing it into their self-awareness. They no longer see William's oppressive power over his people, but rather as God's will that must be accepted and obeyed.

Thus, a "sacred canopy" is formed that successfully protects William's oppressive power structure from popular rebellion.

Second, theodicy is an effective mechanism for justifying extreme suffering and preventing anomie in society. Barnabas framed famine, drought, death, and violence as manifestations of God's mysterious will, tests of faith, or punishment for sin. Barnabas successfully transformed meaningless suffering into a meaningful sacred narrative. This prevented society from falling into a state of anomie, or the loss of values and morals, and led people to grow in faith rather than rebel against their circumstances.

Overall, Ottessa Moshfegh's novel *Lapvona* strongly illustrates Berger's argument that religion can function not as a positive force but as the most effective ideological tool to maintain power structures and social order. Through the collaboration between political power held by William and religious authority held by Barnabas, religiosity becomes a form of "sacred canopy" that legitimizes and normalizes suffering. This study also proves that religiosity in literary works can be a medium for sharp criticism of the manipulation of religion in real social life.

B. Suggestion

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of literary studies, particularly in the application of Peter L. Berger's sociological theory of religion, the concepts of sacred canopy and theodicy in modern literature.

First, further researchers are advised to examine *Lapvona* novel in more depth using different theoretical approaches to produce a broader interpretation of the novel. Because this study chose to focus on the sociology of religion, the concepts of sacred canopy and theodicy by Peter L. Berger, further research can use other approaches such as Marxist literary criticism, Michel Foucault's theory of power, or postmodernism to expand the dimensions of oppression, religion, and social control in modern novels.

Second, further research is recommended to focus more on analyzing specific characters, such as Grigor, Jude, and Ina, who experience inner conflict or are aware of oppression. This study focuses more on Barnabas and William, the main masterminds behind the religious construction. Therefore, there is still room for further in-depth character analysis.

Third, this research is expected to contribute to enriching literary studies and the sociology of religion by demonstrating that religiosity in literary works is not always presented as a positive aspect, such as a moral guideline. Religion can be a tool for domination, depending on how it is used and accepted by society.

Finally, the researcher hopes this research will help readers understand that social inequality and suffering need not always be accepted as normal or as God's will. *Lapvona* novel attempts to demonstrate the dangers of a belief system that is accepted blindly without critical thought. This novel attempts to demonstrate the importance of awareness and critical thinking in order to discern forms of manipulation hidden behind sacred narratives.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



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