

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Love is one of the strongest and most comprehensive human emotions. Goode (1959) defines love as “a strong emotional attachment, a cathexis, between adolescents or adults of opposite sexes, with at least the components of sex desire and tenderness” (p. 41). Love affects how people interact with each other. Although love manages to be personal experience, it is also a shared experience that often drives actions, and choices. In daily life, love exemplifies itself in many forms, family, romantic relationship, and even friendship. Love holds a mixture of emotions, mainly happiness, passion, and sometimes sacrifice and fragility.

Love is a source of happiness and on the other hand a source of challenges, because it can bring comfort as well as emotional conflicts. When someone falls in love, the emergence of the desire to stay close, to do many things together, is a natural occurrence. In fact, the feeling of wanting to meet constantly and to establish a commitment to remain together for an extended period of time is highly probable. Nevertheless, every relationship may undergo changes over time. From simple relationships such as friendships to stronger bonds such as marriage, no relationship is entirely immune to change. Karney and Bradbury (1995) explain that even stable marriages may decline when couples experience stress beyond their ability to adapt (24). Both internal and external pressures can influence a person’s feelings, gradually

weakening the bond within a relationship or even causing it to disappear completely, to the point where love can no longer be found.

In literary works such as fairy tales, folklore, and fantasy stories, the depth of a character's feelings, along with external factors and social pressure, plays a significant role in shaping their choices and decisions, because love is often portrayed as a magical force capable of changing a character's entire life. Their final destiny ultimately depends on the decisions they make, whether these choices lead the character to a happy or tragic ending, as in the love story between Theo and Kay written by Keith Donohue titled *The Motion of Puppets*. Published by Picador and Belford Square Publishers in 2016, this book also has the Audio formats published by Blackstone Publishing.

The story is about Kay and Theo, a newlywed couple, both who have different professions. Theo is a translator while Kay is an acrobat. The novel begins with a statement that Kai fell in love with a puppet. An old, dusty antique puppet in the Quatre Mains store, which was never open. A stringed antique puppet commonly used in children's performances. A puppet that later turned Kay into a puppet immediately after touching it that night, a puppet referred to as "The Origin." Theo and Kay's marriage is going well until the sudden disappearance of Kay drives Theo nearly insane with grief. Theo's efforts to find Kay leads him to the realization that she has been transformed into a puppet, only able to return to human form if Theo can recognize her.

Theo's deep love for his wife, Kay is undeniable, as he manages to find and recognizes Kay even in her puppet's form. Unfortunately, Kay is gradually losing her

memories as a human. This making her hesitant when Theo come to save her. She did not want to leave her life as a puppet, which she considered enjoyable, because her profession as an acrobat was also expressed by performing as a puppet there. Her hesitation culminated in Theo's disguise being revealed, causing "The Origin" to transform him into a puppet, and other puppets who go basilisk after knowing he is going to take Kay away and restore her humanity, tore him apart until he died. Meanwhile, Kay continues to live as a puppet in The Origin's side forever.

Although *The Motion of Puppets* presents a fantasy narrative, the novel offers a profound exploration of romantic relationships, particularly how love is shaped by memory, identity, and emotional reciprocity. Previous studies have primarily focused on the novel's fantasy elements, symbolism, and themes of transformation, while limited attention has been given to examining the gradual deterioration of Theo and Kay's marital relationship through the dynamics of love. Therefore, this study argues that Kay's transformation into a puppet gradually disrupts the balance of intimacy, passion, and commitment in her relationship with Theo, ultimately leading to the erosion of their consummate love. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of how memory loss, identity transformation, and the loss of emotional reciprocity contribute to the erosion of consummate love by tracing the changes in intimacy, passion, and commitment throughout Theo and Kay's relationship.

1.2 Research Problem

In *The Motion of Puppets*, the relationship between Theo and Kay undergoes significant changes throughout the course of the narrative. As their feelings and interactions evolve from the beginning to the end of the story, this study focuses on three main issues:

1. How does Kay's transformation into a puppet specifically disrupts their relationship?
2. How does Theo struggle to maintain their relationship after Kay's transformation and memory loss?
3. How does their relationship change from their initial state as newlyweds to Kay's final existence as a puppet hearing Theo's "love song"?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Borrowing Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love to analyze Kay and Theo's relationship, this study has the following objectives:

1. To analyze how Kay's transformation into a puppet specifically disrupts the Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment in her relationship with Theo in *The Motion of Puppets*
2. To analyze how Theo struggle to maintain Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment towards Kay after her transformation and memory loss in *The Motion of Puppet*
3. To analyze the erosion of Kay and Theo's consummate love by tracing the changes in their intimacy, passion, and commitment and Theo's death.

1.4 Previous Study

There are no scholarly publications discussing *The Motion of Puppets*; however, several non-academic reviews of the novel are available. A review published in 2016 by *Bookreporter* and written by Ray Palen emphasizes the novel's use of mythological elements, magical realism, and mystery. In the review Palen praises how successful Keith Donohue's is in combining the fantasy and reality themes and highlights the unexpected turning point of the story. It also notes that the novel expands many themes like horror, fantasy and crime fiction which are destined to be called a Dark-Fantasy novel.

The second review written by Vanessa Diaz in 2016 on *Elitist Book Reviews*, mostly discusses the novel as a blend of horror, tragedy, and love story. Vanessa mainly discusses Kay's transformation, particularly how it causes Theo's growing sense of desperation and affects the relationship between the newlywed couple. Vanessa states that Despite its fantastical theme, the novel's characterization narrative style are engaging and well developed, the emotions portrayed in the story also feel believable and presented convincingly to the readers. Vanessa still praises Donohue for creating an engaging and compelling storyline, Although the novel did not end the way she had expected.

Another review written by Aditi Saha in 2016 on *Book Stop Corner* points up the emotional and mysterious aspects of the story. However, the reviewer mostly emphasizes the psychological aspects of character development and emotions experienced by the main characters. Aditi Saha points out the gradual disappearance of

Kay's memories and the separation of her from her reality into the puppet world. Saha praises the way Theo tries to save Kay without understanding at all what happens with his wife, which proves Theo's determination and his strong feelings towards his wife. Finally, Aditi Saha ends her review with praise for surprising plot twists, emotionally toned novel and love symbolism used in the book. Lastly, she admires Donohue for touching themes of love and memory loss in the tragic story.

Finally, the most recent review on this book was posted on the website of *Medium* in 2017 and written by Zachary Houle. In particular, Houle thinks that Donohue is greatly inspired by classic tales in terms of creating a modern tale about love and transformation. Additionally, Zachary appreciates the profoundness of the themes discussed in the novel and its contemplative tone while exploring people's desire to recover something that they have already lost, including memory loss. Besides, Zachary Houle mentions that the novel is considered to some readers.

Although there is no previous research discussing the novel *The Motion of Puppet*, Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love has been widely applied in many studies. Among them, the first was written by Ioana Unk in 2017 in her journal entitled "*A Psychological Map of Love: Alain de Botton's Love Stories as Reflections of Sternberg's Theory on Love*" which broadly discusses love as psychologically destructive, followed by the dynamics of the three components of love proposed by Sternberg. Likewise, Fatma et al. applied the triangular theory of love to analyze the three components of love in two texts by the author Ruskin Bond. This journal was published in 2024 under the title "*Examining the Emotion of Love in Ruskin Bond's*

Selected Works Through Sternberg's Triangular Theory" and focuses on illustrating love that collapses in silence, time, and circumstances rather than merely as an emotion.

However, there have been no previous studies that applied the triangular theory of love to analyze the dynamics of love between Theo and Kay in *The Motion of Puppet*. Even some non-academic reviews have focused on elements such as fantasy, genre, and plot rather than concentrating on the psychological aspects of love between the two main characters. Therefore, this study is conducted to analyze the construction of love between Theo and Kay in *The Motion of Puppet*, by applying Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love to systematically analyze Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment. This study aims to fill the gap by examining how memory loss, identity changes, and Kay's transformation led their Consummate Love relationship to collapse.

1.5 Research Method

Two approaches are utilized in this investigation of the metamorphosis of the experience of love between Theo and Kay in the novel, *The Motion of Puppets*: library research and psychological approach to literature. Library research is employed as the major means of gathering theories, references, and data concerning the research topic. In her book titled *The Element of Library Research*, Mary W. George (2008) says that "library research involves the identification and location of sources which supply factual information or expert opinion relating to a research question; an essential element of any other method of research at some stage" (p. 06). Following this

definition, library research is conducted to collect and analyze sources pertinent to the analysis of love and emotions in the novel.

Moreover, the research adopts a psychological approach to literature in order to study the emotion and relationship transformation undergone by the literary figures. The psychological approach to literary study is helpful in gaining a better insight into the emotions, mental states, and actions of the literary figures. According to Paula Gardner (2024), “The most conventional form of psychological literary criticism analyzes the mental states, desires, and motivations of literary figures.” (p. 174) Thus, using this definition of the psychological approach to literature. This study employs it to explore the emotional states of Theo and Kay with respect to the three elements of Robert Sternberg’s triangular theory of love; these elements include intimacy, passion, and commitment. Through this psychological approach, it becomes easier for the study to investigate how Kay’s transformation into a puppet impacts her emotional stability in her marriage with Theo and eventually the destruction of consummate love in the novel.

1.6 Scope of the Study

In this analysis, several intrinsic elements in *The Motion of Puppets* including character/characterization, conflict, and point of view will be analyzed to illustrate the relation between Theo and Kay throughout the novel. Furthermore, the study investigates the dynamic of love as illustrated in the relationship of Theo and Kay through Robert Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, especially intimacy, passion, and

commitment. The study specifically analyses significant occurrences before and after Kay becomes a puppet to understand the process of how Kay's transformation affects their relationship. Moreover, the process of loss of emotional symmetry, memory loss, and identity transformation contribute significantly to the eroding of consummate love in Theo and Kay's relationship. Through the process of Kay becoming less human while Theo is consistent with his love for Kay, it is revealed that love cannot be preserved by just loyalty and commitment when human identity and mutual reciprocity of emotions cannot exist in equal levels among both partners.

1.7 Writing Organization

This thesis is categorized into four chapters, which are structured as follows:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the basis of the study, including the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, research method, scope of the study, and writing organization. It also describes the reasons for choosing the topic and the importance of analyzing love through Sternberg's triangular theory in *The Motion of Puppets*.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter examines the theories and concepts used to support the analysis. The intrinsic elements consist of character and characterization, setting, and conflict, while the extrinsic element focuses on Robert Sternberg's triangular theory of love,

especially the components of intimacy, passion, and commitment. These theories are used to analyze the relationship between Theo and Kay in *The Motion of Puppets*.

CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is where we discuss the findings of our analysis. First, it looks at how Kay being turned into a puppet destroys intimacy, passion, and commitment in their relationship. Furthermore, it explores Theo's challenge of keeping intimacy, passion, and commitment despite Kay's mental transformation. Moreover, this chapter explains how their relationship transforms from perfect love to broken love by the end of the novel.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter proposes the conclusion of the study based on the analysis discussed in the prior chapter. It summarizes the findings regarding the transformation and destruction of consummate love in Theo and Kay's relationship as portrayed in *The Motion of Puppets*.