

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women in Regency-era England were generally expected to uphold moral propriety, demonstrate obedience, and fulfill domestic responsibilities. Their social value was closely associated with marriage, family reputation, and conformity to feminine ideals established by society (Sultonmamitova, 2026). In addition, girls were often educated under close supervision and encouraged to cultivate proper behavior, social accomplishments, and etiquette rather than intellectual independence (Papworth, 2014). Thus, women were encouraged to prioritize marriage, family life, and social respectability over personal autonomy. Marriage occupied a particularly important position within Regency society. It was not viewed solely as a personal or emotional decision but also as a social institution that shaped women's identities, economic security, and social status. Women's social value was often measured through their ability to marry and fulfill domestic expectations, while alternatives to marriage remained socially limited. Consequently, marriage functioned as an important mechanism through which traditional gender roles were maintained and reinforced (Sultonmamitova, 2026).

These social expectations are reflected in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). The novel follows Eloise Bridgerton, a twenty-eight-year-old unmarried woman who has remained single despite society's expectation

that women of her age should already be married. Unlike many women of the Regency period, Eloise values intellectual companionship and personal independence more than securing a socially advantageous marriage. After the death of Marina Crane, Eloise begins exchanging letters with Sir Phillip Crane, Marina's widower and the father of two children. Their correspondence gradually develops into mutual interest, prompting Eloise to travel alone to Romney Hall in the hope of determining whether they are compatible for marriage. However, instead of finding an ideal romantic relationship, she encounters the realities of Phillip's troubled household and his expectation that she might assume the role of a mother to his children. As their relationship develops, Eloise is compelled to confront the tension between her personal desires and the social expectations attached to marriage and womanhood. Although she ultimately marries Phillip, the marriage is established not through unquestioning acceptance of traditional gender roles, but through a process of negotiation in which mutual respect, intellectual compatibility, and equality become the foundation of their relationship. Throughout the novel, Eloise's journey illustrates the conflict between individual autonomy and social conformity, making her a significant character through which gender roles and women's empowerment can be examined.

Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory provides a useful framework for examining the representation of gender roles in literary works because it explains how gendered behaviors and expectations are socially constructed rather than naturally determined. According to Eagly, gender roles emerge from

the social division of labor and the distribution of power within society, leading women and men to be associated with different social expectations and responsibilities (1999:408–423). These expectations are continuously reinforced through social institutions, such as family, marriage, and culture, shaping how individuals are expected to think, behave, and interact. As a result, Social Role Theory offers a valuable perspective for analyzing how literary characters reflect, negotiate, or challenge socially constructed gender roles within their respective social contexts.

The portrayal of Eloise Bridgerton in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003) offers a valuable context for examining issues of gender roles, marriage, and women's position within Regency society. As these issues remain relevant to discussions of gender and identity, the novel provides an appropriate literary work for exploring how social expectations toward women are represented. Therefore, this study employs Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory to examine gender roles, internal conflict, and women's empowerment as reflected through the character of Eloise Bridgerton.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How are gender roles reflected through the character of Eloise Bridgerton's in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*?
2. How does Eloise's perception of marriage reflect her internal struggle between individual agency and social expectations placed on woman in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*?

3. In what ways does Eloise's resistance toward traditional gender expectations represent women's empowerment in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the gender roles reflected through Eloise Bridgerton's character in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*.
2. To show Eloise's perception of marriage reflect her internal struggle between individual agency and social expectations in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*.
3. To explore how Eloise's rejection of traditional gender norms can be interpreted as a form of women's empowerment in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Philip, With Love*.

1.4 Previous Studies

There are some academic works that have studied Julia Quinn's Bridgerton novels and their adaptations, but none of them deal with the specific focus of this research, which is an analysis of gender roles, internal conflict related to marriage, and women's empowerment in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003) through Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory.

The first study, conducted by Cabot Trobat (2024) entitled *Defying Norms and Embracing Tradition: Sophie Beckett and Eloise Bridgerton in An Offer from a Gentleman* (2001) and *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003) looks at how Sophie and Eloise confront societal conventions. While it does feature an

analysis of Eloise, the research is comparative and examines how the two characters negotiate conformity and rebellion. It does not go into Eloise's gender-role conflict, nor does it employ Social Role Theory, therefore differing from the present study in its approach.

The second study, conducted by L Rogers (2023) entitled *Reading Will Not Find You a Husband: Eloise Bridgerton, Accomplishment and the 'Thinking Woman' in the Early Nineteenth-Century Period Drama*, addresses Eloise's intellectual identity and women's education in the early nineteenth century. It gives some insight into her as an intellectually oriented character, yet it does not analyze her characterization in *To Sir Phillip, With Love* or discuss her psychological conflict between individual agency and society demands. Similar to Farooqui and Ashraf (2019) article entitled *Reconnaissance of 'Difference' in Cognitive Maps: Authenticating Happily Ever After in Julia Quinn's To Sir Philip, With Love*, it focuses on narrative strategies and romantic resolution, rather than on gender stereotypes, empowerment, or personal conflict in the novel.

Several more general studies focus on Bridgerton from the point of view of adaptability. Works like Frankel (2024) entitled *Adapting Bridgerton: Essays on the Netflix Show in Context*, Chen (2025) entitled *Neo-Historical Drama: A New Television Subgenre as Exemplified by Dickinson, Bridgerton, and My Lady Jane*, and Hovorková (2023) entitled *Bridgerton: Comparison of Selected Aspects of the Adaptation with Their (Historical) Models* look at the Netflix series in terms of genre, historical accuracy and media transformation. These

studies, however, do not address *To Sir Phillip, With Love* or the experiences of Eloise, but rather use adaption theory and historical comparison, which are outside the purview of this research.

Different from these previous studies, this study offers a concentrated, narrow-minded analysis of Eloise's characterization in the novel itself, including how Eloise Bridgerton's characterization exemplifies the gender roles of the Regency era, how her unconventional views on marriage generate internal conflict between personal agency and societal expectations, and how her rejection of traditional norms exemplifies a form of women's empowerment in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). This study provides a new perspective not taken by previous scholars by applying Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the influence of societal expectations on identity, conflict and acts of resistance in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003).

1.5 Research Method

The method used in this study is qualitative textual analysis within the context of library research. According to George, library research involves identifying and examining sources that provide factual information or scholarly perspectives relevant to the research topic (2008:6). Since this study examines gender roles through a literary work, it also adopts feminist literary criticism as its critical approach. According to Tyson, feminist literary criticism examines how literature represents women and gender relations within patriarchal society (2015:79–82). This approach provides a framework for analyzing how female

characters conform to, negotiate, or challenge socially constructed gender roles and the power structures that shape their experiences. The analysis is conducted through close reading, in which the novel is read carefully and repeatedly to identify significant narrative descriptions, dialogues, and internal monologues related to gender roles, marriage, and women's empowerment. The primary data consist of Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003), while the secondary data include scholarly books, journal articles, and other academic sources relevant to gender roles, women's empowerment, and Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory.

The method of this analysis is composed of four systematic steps. Initially text data was collected from the novel, focusing on narrative descriptions, dialog and internal monologues relevant to significant concerns such as gender roles, marriage and women empowerment. Repeated readings were necessary to ensure that no important passages were missed during the analysis. Secondly, the selected data are classified into three study focuses: (1) gender roles as reflected in the character of Eloise Bridgerton, (2) her perception of marriage and the internal conflicts it generates, and (3) her rejection of traditional norms as an expression of women's empowerment. This classification significantly helps organize the discussion, ensuring that the analysis remains focused and aligned with the objectives of the study. The study uses this classification method since it assists in the transparent structuring of the study. The analysis specifically applies the concepts of expressive roles, agentic traits, and role incongruity to identify gender-role expectations represented in the novel.

Furthermore, role negotiation, social clock, and negotiated empowerment are used as analytical concepts to examine how Eloise Bridgerton responds to and negotiates those expectations throughout the narrative.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Julia Quinn's *To Phillip, With Love* (2003) provides valuable context for investigating gender roles and social expectations placed on women in Regency society. This study explores how internal conflicts are analyzed when cultural expectations for marriage shape women's identity and conflict with personal desires for independence. This study uses Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory as a primary analytical framework and examines how gender ideology is expressed in novels by applying literary elements such as character, characterization, settings, and conflict.

1.7 Writing Outline

The thesis is divided into four chapters, which are divided into multiple subchapters. The four chapters are given below.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, it contains of the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the studies, previous studies, scope of the study and writing outline.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter will discuss the theories and

methods that will be used to analyze the study.

It deals with intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

CHAPTER III

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, it presents the results and discussion of the analysis of the object of the studies in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). It analyze the gender roles reflected on Eloise, the social expectations of marriage and how they affect the internal tension between social duty and personal autonomy. It also discusses how acts of resistance to traditional norms are portrayed as a form of women's empowerment in the Regency era portrayed in the text. This chapter seeks to study how the novel addresses issues of limiting gender norms, and how it explores the tension between imposed social roles and individual self-determination through this approach.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This chapter completes the preceding ones.