

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study of gender roles depicted by Eloise Bridgerton in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003), and this study analyzes several intrinsic elements of the novel: character, characterization, setting, and conflict. The theoretical framework guiding this study is Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory for interpreting this text and helps track how expectations for gender are formed and maintained in a subtle form throughout the narrative.

2.1 Character and Characterization

Characters are an important element of literary works, as presented to readers through characters in events, conflicts, and subjects. According to Holman and Harmon, character is “most often used to refer to a person in a story” (1973:90). This definition emphasizes that character’s function as the individuals through whom the narrative develops and meaning is conveyed. Characters become the main medium to express human experiences in literary works through their actions, thoughts, and interactions.

Characters sometimes occupy different story functions within a literary work. Some characters are the main focus of the story, while others contribute to the development of the story through interactions or relationships with other characters. The existence of these different character roles is important because they help shape the plot development of the story, the emergence of confrontation, and the development of the theme.

Characters can also be categorized according to their complexity. Forster divides characters into flat and round characters. He explains that flat characters are "constructed round a single idea or quality" (1927:67). In other words, they are usually defined by one dominant trait, and tend to be relatively unchanged throughout the narrative. On the contrary, round characters grow in complexity because they are characterized by various traits and dimensions. As a result, round characters often look more realistic and capable of development as the narrative progresses.

Closely related to character is characterization. Holman and Harmon define characterization as "the creation of images of these imaginary persons so credible that they exist for the reader as real within the limits of the fiction" (1973:91). In other words, characterization refers to the process through which authors construct and develop fictional characters. Through characterization, the reader can understand the character's personality, attitude, motivation, and behavior represented in the narrative.

In this study, the concepts of character and characterization are used to identify the narrative role of the major character and to examine how the character is represented throughout the novel. Furthermore, the distinction between flat and round characters provides a framework for understanding the complexity of character representation. These concepts serve as supporting tools to validate how characters contribute to representation of gender roles, internal conflicts, and women's empowerment.

2.2 Settings

Setting is an important element of a literary work because it provides a context in which events occur and characters interact. According to Kenney, setting is “the point in time and space at which the events of the plot occur” (1966:38). Likewise, Gill explains that this promise includes the time, place, and social conditions at which the action takes place (1995:148). These definitions suggest that setting is an essential narrative element that shapes the characters’ experiences, relationships, and actions, as well as the background of the story.

Furthermore, Kenney explains that the background is composed of several factors, including the geographical location of the story, the character's job and daily life, the historical period when the event took place, and the religious, moral, intellectual, social, and emotional environment surrounding the character (1966:40). Based on these factors, setting can be understood through three main aspects: setting of place, setting of time, and social setting. Setting of place refers to the physical place where the event takes place, such as a geographical area, a building, or other spatial environment. Setting of time refers to the context of the historical period or chronological order in which the story begins. Social setting refers to social values, habits, beliefs, norms, and conditions that affect a character's life or behavior.

In literary analysis, the setting plays an important role because it helps the reader understand their personality and the situations in which they compose their actions. The physical environment, historical background, and social

conditions surrounding the characters often influence the choices they make or the conflicts they experience. Thus, this setting provides a framework for examining individual behavior and their relationship to a broader environment than the narrative unfolds.

In this study, setting is used to specify the physical, temporal, and social context surrounding the characters in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). In particular, the social background of Regency-era England is drawing particular attention because it provides a cultural framework in which gender roles, internal conflicts, and women's empowerment are represented throughout the narrative.

2.3 Conflict

Conflict is one of the fundamental elements of literary works, as it creates tension and promotes the development of stories. Furthermore, Holman explains that conflict is "the struggle which grows out of the interplay of two opposing forces in a plot" (1973:118). He further explains that conflict provides the elements of interest and suspense that sustain a narrative, whether in drama, novels, or short stories. Through conflict, characters influence the development of events and face challenges, obstacles, and competitiveness that contribute to the development of the plot.

Conflict may generally be divided into external and internal conflicts. According to Perrine, internal conflict occurs by nature, referring to the mental or moral struggles they experience (1978:44). This kind of conflict occurs when

characters are faced with competing desires, beliefs, values, and obligations. On the contrary, external confrontation is a problem that arises from the interaction of characters with external forces (1978:44). These external factors may include other personalities, social expectations, institutions, or environmental conditions.

In literary analysis, conflict is important to express the tension that forms the character development and its meaning. Conflict allows the reader to understand the challenges a character faces and the factors that influence its response. Conflict also provides insight into the relationship between individual desires and external pressures affecting human behavior. The concept of conflict in this study is used to investigate the tension experienced by Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). This study focused on the struggles experienced by Eloise Bridgerton. This conflict emerges from the tension between her personal beliefs and the social expectations placed on women in Regency society.

2.4 Gender Roles

Gender is understood through the social roles and expectations assigned to women and men within society rather than through biological differences alone. From this perspective, the behavioral differences associated with women and men are largely shaped by social structures and the division of labor, which influence how individuals are expected to think, behave, and interact. As these expectations are repeatedly reinforced through social institutions, they become widely accepted as appropriate expressions of femininity and masculinity

(Eagly, 1987:13–20). Through this continuous process, repeated participation in socially assigned activities and responsibilities forms shared expectations regarding the qualities and behaviors considered appropriate for each gender. These socially constructed expectations gradually develop into gender roles, which subsequently function as standards for evaluating individual behavior (Eagly, 1987:14).

Eagly explains that gender roles are generally understood through two main dimensions. As she says, "Gender-stereotype studies have shown that the majority of the beliefs that people hold about the differences between women and men can be summarized in terms of two dimensions, the communal and the agentic" (Eagly, 1987:16). These dimensions form the basis of a socially agreed upon expectation of appropriate behavior for women and men. As a result, women generally lead to expressive roles, and men to instrumental roles. Expressive roles value parenting, emotional support, interpersonal relationships, empathy, and consideration for others. Instrumental roles value independence, self-assertion, leadership, ability, and task-oriented behavior (Eagly, 1987:16). These roles are not innate traits, but socially built expectations that shape how individuals are expected to behave in society.

From a literary perspective, Social Role Theory provides a useful framework for examining how gender expectations are represented through the characterization, dialogue, behavior, and social interactions of literary characters. Through this theory, researchers can identify the social expectations imposed on characters and analyze how those expectations influence their

behavior, decisions, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in this study, Eagly's Social Role Theory is employed to examine the representation of gender roles through the character of Eloise Bridgerton in Julia Quinn's *To Sir Phillip, With Love* (2003). The analysis is carried out using the concepts of communal expectations, agentic traits, role incongruity, role negotiation, and social clock, which together provide a framework for understanding how gender expectations are imposed, experienced, and negotiated throughout the narrative.

2.4.1 Communal Expectations

Communal expectations refer to the socially prescribed qualities and responsibilities traditionally associated with women. Within Social Role Theory, women are commonly expected to display communal qualities such as nurturing, emotional support, interpersonal sensitivity, and concern for others (Eagly, 1987:16). These expectations emerge from women's traditional domestic and caregiving roles and gradually become social standards for appropriate feminine behavior. Such expectations are further reinforced by the concept of the social clock, proposed by Neugarten, Moore, and Lowe (1965), which explains that society establishes normative timelines for major life transitions, including marriage. While Social Role Theory explains the content of gender expectations, the social clock explains when these expectations are considered appropriate to be fulfilled.

In this study, the concepts of communal expectations and the social clock are employed to examine how Regency society constructs normative

expectations regarding women's roles, particularly in relation to marriage, family responsibility, domesticity, and appropriate feminine behavior. These concepts provide a framework for understanding how social norms establish not only the qualities expected of women but also the socially acceptable timing for fulfilling those expectations, especially the expectation of marriage. Accordingly, they are used to analyze the social pressure experienced by Eloise as an unmarried woman, the influence of these expectations on her self-awareness and perception of marriage, and the ways in which such pressures contribute to the development of her internal conflict throughout the narrative.

2.4.2 Agentic Traits

Agentic traits refer to the characteristics commonly associated with independence, assertiveness, competence, self-direction, and leadership (Eagly, 1987:16). According to Eagly, these qualities have traditionally been linked to men's instrumental roles and participation in the public sphere, where men are expected to act decisively, pursue goals, and demonstrate control over situations. In contrast to communal qualities, which emphasize care and relational sensitivity, agentic traits highlight autonomy, initiative, and the ability to influence others or direct one's own actions. Within Social Role Theory, such traits are not viewed as naturally exclusive to men, but as qualities that society has historically assigned more strongly to masculine roles. As a result, when women display agentic characteristics, their behavior is often seen as less conventional because it challenges the expectations attached to femininity.

However, individuals do not always conform to the gender roles prescribed by society. Those who possess agentic characteristics may reinterpret or negotiate these expectations while remaining within the existing social structure rather than completely rejecting them. In this study, the concept of agentic traits is used to examine Eloise's intellectual independence, autonomy, and assertiveness, as well as the ways in which she negotiates traditional expectations of femininity throughout the narrative.

2.4.3 Role Incongruity

Role incongruity is derived from Eagly and Karau's (2002) Role Congruity Theory, which expands Social Role Theory by explaining the conflict that arises when an individual's characteristics or behaviors are inconsistent with the expectations associated with a particular social role. Eagly and Karau argue that individuals may experience prejudice or social pressure when fulfilling one role requires them to violate the expectations of another role (2002:576). In the context of gender, role incongruity occurs when women display characteristics that are perceived as inconsistent with traditional feminine roles, creating tension between individual behavior and socially prescribed expectations.

In this study, the concept of role incongruity is used to examine Eloise's internal conflict regarding marriage. It provides a framework for understanding how her agentic traits and desire for autonomy conflict with the communal expectations imposed on women in Regency society. Through this concept, the

study analyzes how the incompatibility between personal identity and prescribed gender roles generates psychological tension and influences Eloise's decisions throughout the narrative.

2.4.4 Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is defined by Naila Kabeer as the process through which individuals who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability. Kabeer argues that empowerment is not a fixed condition but a continuous process that enables women to gain greater control over decisions affecting their lives (1999:435-464). She conceptualizes empowerment through three interconnected dimensions: resources, agency, and achievements. Resources refer to the material, social, and human assets that expand women's opportunities, agency refers to the capacity to make meaningful choices, and achievements represent the outcomes resulting from those choices. These three dimensions illustrate that empowerment develops through the interaction between access to opportunities, the ability to exercise choice, and the realization of desired outcomes.

In this study, Kabeer's framework is used to provide a conceptual understanding of women's empowerment as the broader outcome of women's experiences within gendered social structures. Rather than serving as the primary analytical framework, it complements Eagly's Social Role Theory by explaining how changes in women's access to opportunities, decision-making, and life outcomes may reflect empowerment. Thus, while Eagly's theory is

employed to examine the construction and negotiation of gender roles in the novel, Kabeer's concept of women's empowerment supports the interpretation of whether these negotiations contribute to a process of empowerment experienced by the female character.

