

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I is the introduction of the study. It provides general explanations of what the writer will discuss in this research. This chapter discusses the rationale and background of conducting the study, which provides the reasons for choosing this topic. Then, the research question specifies the key issue or area of focus in this study. The objectives of the study also give a limitation on how the study should be conducted, which are elaborated in details in the sub-chapter of scope of the study. The significance of the study, which provides contributions of the study for theoretical and practical aspects. Lastly, scope and limitations that define the boundaries of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Despite the progress of modernization, gender stereotypes remain deeply embedded in societies across the world, whether in the East or the West. These stereotypes continue to shape social expectations and cultural norms, influencing how men and women are perceived and treated. Literature, as both a reflection and a reinforcement of societal values, plays a crucial role in shaping gender perceptions by portraying power dynamics between men and women (Zeb, 2021, p. 1). While literature has the potential to challenge traditional norms, it has historically contributed to the persistence of gender stereotypes by depicting women as passive, dependent, and subordinate to male characters. These portrayals often confine female characters to supporting roles, reinforcing a male-dominated narrative that limits women's agency and autonomy. As a result, literature not only reflects but also helps maintain gender inequality, keeping women in limited and marginalized roles.

According to Archer and Lloyd (2002, p. 19), "Stereotypes are the shared beliefs that people hold about a group of people, such as an ethnic group, or people in a particular occupation. Gender stereotypes refer to the beliefs people hold about members of the categories, man or woman". It highlights that gender stereotypes specifically refer to societal expectations about how men and women should behave, think, or appear. These stereotypes shape ideas about masculinity and

femininity, defining societal roles and limiting individual freedom. For example, men are typically expected to be confident, in control, and focused on their careers, while women are often seen as caring, emotional, and focused on family.

In addition, Tremmel & Wahl (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023) stated that the narrow views create inequality by reinforcing the idea that men are naturally better for leadership roles and women for caregiving. This belief limits their opportunities in education, work, and relationships. Gender stereotypes shape not only how individuals see themselves but also how others treat them, leading to bias and discrimination in areas like the workplace and social settings. By placing people into fixed roles, society restricts their personal growth and ignores the diverse abilities individuals have beyond traditional gender expectations.

Feminist theory in literary studies is a critical approach that aims to analyze literary works with a focus on the representation of women and power relations between men and women. Feminism is a movement aimed at ending sexism and gender-based oppression by dismantling systems of inequality and creating a society without gender-based restrictions (Hooks, 2000, p. 1). This approach not only explores how women are depicted in literary texts but also examines more deeply the social structures that perpetuate gender inequality. In a literary context, feminism functions as a tool to explore representations that are often biased, where women are often placed as marginal subjects who are dominated by men, both symbolically and actually.

One branch of feminist theory that is very relevant in literary studies is radical feminism. This theory highlights the systematic oppression of women that arises as a result of patriarchy, a social structure where men hold the dominant power. Budig and Jones (2008, p. 1) highlight that radical feminism asserts that the root of women's oppression lies in sexuality. It emphasizes that women's bodies are controlled through mechanisms such as violence, objectification, and societal institutions like medicine and religion. Radical feminists view sexism as the most ancient and widespread form of oppression, arguing that dismantling patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality is essential to achieving gender equality. This vision includes empowering women to gain greater control over their bodies, particularly by redefining aspects of sexuality, childbirth, and motherhood. According to Millett

(1970, p. 25), the oppression of women is not only individual, but is internalized in culture, art and society as a whole. In the view of radical feminism, patriarchal culture creates a hierarchy that places women as an oppressed class, with forced gender roles and the erasure of women's identities. This not only occurs in personal relationships, but is also reflected in various social structures, including in literary works.

The novel entitled *Redeeming Love* by Francine Rivers, first published in 1991, is considered one of her most acclaimed works. Set during the 1850s California Gold Rush, the story draws inspiration from the biblical tale of Hosea, illustrating God's redemptive love for a sinful world. The novel follows Angel, the main female character, is a young woman who is sold into prostitution as a child during the California Gold Rush era of the 1850s. Having endured a traumatic past filled with betrayal, abuse, and abandonment, Angel grows up believing that love is a lie and that her worth is defined by her body. Hardened by these experiences, she builds emotional walls to protect herself from further pain. Her life begins to change when she meets Michael Hosea, a kind and devout man who believes he is called by God to marry her. Angel's journey throughout the novel is one of deep internal struggle as she grapples with guilt, self-worth, and the possibility of redemption, reflecting the societal pressures and gender stereotypes imposed on women during that historical period.

The 19th century, particularly during the 1850s California Gold Rush era, was a time of immense transformation in the United States, marked by rapid territorial expansion, economic opportunity, and the pursuit of individual freedom. However, beneath this national progress lay deep-rooted inequalities, especially in terms of gender (Gray, 2012, p. 88). As men flooded into California seeking wealth and fortune, women were often reduced to secondary roles within a harsh, patriarchal society that defined their worth through beauty, obedience, and sexual availability. Many women, especially those without family or protection, were vulnerable to exploitation, with limited rights and virtually no control over their lives. The dominant social order confined women to domestic spheres and upheld strict gender roles, denying them access to education, autonomy, and meaningful participation in public life. In literature and reality, women were frequently

portrayed as either virtuous wives or fallen women, both stereotypes shaped by male-dominated norms. This historical context is crucial to understanding the character of Angel in *Redeeming Love* (1991), whose experiences reflect the gendered constraints and societal judgments imposed on women during this era of American history.

Previous studies, such as “*An Analysis of Struggles Against Sexual Slavery in Film Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers: A Feminism Approach*” by Tri Widya Dannila Sari and Maya Kurnia Dewi (2022), “*Women Empowerment in Comparison to Asian Female Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Crazy Rich Asians Novel*” by Deandra Alike Hefandia, Dwi Linda Kusuma, and Atikah Ruslianti (2023), and “*Challenge the Stereotypes: Islam Voices As a Form of Decolonial Feminism in Uzma Jalaluddin's Novel Ayesha At Last*” by Rifqi Akbar (2024), have explored feminist themes in literature and film, addressing issues such as sexual slavery, empowerment, and cultural stereotypes. While these studies focus on various feminist struggles and representations, they largely emphasize contemporary contexts or general feminist ideals.

In contrast, this study specifically examines gender stereotypes and societal expectations of women in 1850s California, situating its analysis within the Victorian-era cultural framework. Using radical feminism by Kate Millett (1970) and the feminist literary framework of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000), this research explores how Angel's character development in *Redeeming Love* (1991) reflects the rigid gender roles of her time. Within the Victorian literary tradition, women were often portrayed as either the "Angel" a passive, pure, and self-sacrificing figure, or the "Madwoman" a rebellious woman who rejects societal constraints and is thus deemed dangerous. This study investigates whether Angel ultimately conforms to the submissive, redemptive role of the "Angel" or embraces the defiant nature of the "Madwoman", challenging or reinforcing the patriarchal norms of her era. By analyzing these transformations, this research offers a critical perspective on the intersection of gender stereotypes, historical narratives, and female character portrayal, bridging feminist discourse with the socio-cultural realities of 19th-century America.

Through this study, the writer aims to explore the gender stereotypes reflected in the character of Angel in *Redeeming Love* (1991) by Francine Rivers, particularly within the historical and cultural context of 1850s California. Additionally, this study examines how these stereotypes shape Angel's character development throughout the narrative, particularly in shaping her into either an 'Angel' or a 'Madwoman', influencing her transformation and interactions within a patriarchal society. By situating the analysis within the broader themes of gender, power, and societal expectations, this study explores how patriarchal structures dictate women's roles, limit their autonomy, and reinforce systemic inequalities in both literature and society. This study examines how Angel's character conforms to or resists these gendered constraints, reflecting the broader struggle of women navigating restrictive societal norms. As a result, this study is titled "*The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Angel's Character Development in Redeeming Love (1991): A Radical Feminist Analysis*" offering a nuanced feminist critique of how women's identities and roles are constructed and challenged within the novel.

1.2 Research Questions

There are two research questions in this study, as follows:

1. What gender stereotypes are reflected in the character of Angel in *Redeeming Love* (1991) by Francine Rivers, particularly in the context of 1850s California?
2. How do these gender stereotypes influence Angel's character development in *Redeeming Love* (1991), particularly in shaping her as an 'Angel' or a 'Madwoman'?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify and analyze the gender stereotypes reflected in the character of Angel in *Redeeming Love* (1991) by Francine Rivers, particularly within the context of 1850s California. It seeks to examine how these stereotypes are portrayed in the novel and how they reflect the societal norms and gender expectations of that era. Furthermore, this study explores how these gender stereotypes influence Angel's character development, particularly in shaping her into either an Angel or a Madwoman, as conceptualized by Sandra M. Gilbert and

Susan Gubar. By addressing these objectives, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of gender stereotypes on female character development in literature and contribute to feminist literary analysis.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of literary studies, particularly in the area of feminist literary criticism.

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefits

This work contributes significantly to feminist literary analysis by investigating how gender stereotypes impact the character of Angel in *Redeeming Love* (1991) in the historical context of 1850s California. The research supports and expands on established theories by putting them to a specific historical literary context, using Kate Millett's radical feminism lens and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's feminist framework. By examining Angel's change, this study reveals how patriarchal institutions and cultural norms are absorbed in literary narratives. These findings support feminist theories' continued importance in understanding female representation, questioning static perceptions of gender roles. Finally, the study reinforces established theoretical paradigms, ensuring their viability and applicability in future feminist literary studies.

1.4.2 Practical Benefits

This research promotes awareness of gender stereotypes in literature and their influence on societal perceptions of women. By critically analyzing Angel's portrayal in *Redeeming Love* (1991), this study encourages students, educators, and readers to recognize how literature reinforces or challenges traditional gender norms. The findings can be applied in feminist studies, gender courses, and literary analysis, providing a case study for examining gendered experiences in historical and contemporary narratives. Additionally, this research fosters critical thinking and discussions on gender equality, advocating for more diverse and empowering representations of women in literature and media. Furthermore, the findings serve as a reference for future research and academic studies, particularly for students of English Study Program at Trunojoyo Madura University, providing a comprehensive feminist framework for analyzing literary works.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The primary focus of this study was the stereotypes of the main female character in the novel *Redeeming Love* (1991) by Francine Rivers. The analysis centered on the stereotypes attached to women in the Gold Rush era of 1850s California and discussed how these stereotypes influenced the development of the main character, particularly in her life. This study used the theory of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000) to identify how these stereotypes influenced female character development in a literary work. This framework guided the analysis of Angel's character and her experiences within the patriarchal context of 1850s California. The analysis was limited to the character of Angel, while other characters were referenced to support the argument. This study also applied radical feminism, particularly the theories of Kate Millett (1970), to examine how stereotypes were attached to Angel's character. Furthermore, this research was limited to a qualitative analysis of the novel *Redeeming Love* (1991), exploring the dialogues, narrative structure, character interactions, and symbolism within the novel as they related to the gender stereotypes imposed on Angel.