

# **The Triangular Love of Main Characters in E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades Darker* (2011)**

Karina Rahma Hadiani

Thesis Advisor: Christina Resnitriwanti

English Department, Faculty of Humanities

Diponegoro University, Semarang 50275

This thesis focuses on love aspects shown in *Fifty Shades Darker* (2011) novel by E.L. James. *Fifty Shades Darker* novel describes the love relationship between the characters named Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele. The aim of this thesis is to prove the existence of love aspects in the novel by analyzing the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The writer uses library research to collect the data with the novel as the main data and several relevant books, journals, articles, also online documents and websites are used as the supporting data. The intrinsic aspects cover characters, setting, and conflicts. Meanwhile, in the extrinsic aspects, the writer elaborates Robert Sternberg’s triangular theory of love. Based on Robert Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, there are three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. The result of this thesis proves that, according to Robert Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, both characters in the novel, Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele, have experienced intimacy, passion, and commitment in their love relationship.

Keyword: *love, relationship, intimacy, passion, commitment*

## **1. Introduction**

Love is an affection that every single human being owned. A. S. Hornby in Oxford Dictionary defines love as “a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody or something, especially a member of your family or a friend” (2010:916). In addition, Hornby also explains that love is “a strong feeling for somebody that you are sexually attracted to” (2010:916). Meanwhile, Erich Fromm, a social psychologist, states in his book:

Love is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision (1956:51).

Fromm explains that love is not a feeling, however it is a practice that requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism.

People in general tend to connect love with the romantic one. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines romantic as “consisting or resembling a romance”. Meanwhile, Oxford Dictionary defines relationship as ‘a loving and/or sexual friendship between two people’ (2010:1285). In addition, Psychology Today website states that most people say that romantic relationship is the most meaningful thing in their life.

Robert Sternberg, a psychologist, finds a study on triangular theory of love. According to the study, love has three basic components. Those components are intimacy, which refers to feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships; passion, refers to the drives connected to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationship; and commitment, the decision that one loves someone else, and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love (1986:119).

Someone’s intimacy, passion, and commitment is getting bigger and could turn so strong as he or she is deeply in love to another mankind. As an example taken from a literary works, we can see Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele as main characters of *Fifty Shades Darker* novel. The writer finds out that E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades Darker* novel depicts the triangular love of both main characters to each other. As we can see from the novel, both Christian and Anastasia’s passion, intimacy, and commitment to each other are clearly seen as both of them are deeply in love. Explanations above become the reasons of the writer to analyze intimacy, passion, and commitment of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele in this thesis. Hence, the writer decides to give the title of this thesis “The Triangular Love of Main Characters in E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades Darker* (2011).”

*Fifty Shades Darker* is a novel written by E. L. James in 2011. It is a sequel from Fifty Shades Trilogy, following the previous novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*. *Fifty Shades Darker* tells about the continuation romantic relationship of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele. After being left by Anastasia as his submissive in a BDSM relationship (bondage and discipline—dominance and submission—sadism and masochism), Christian realizes that he is deeply in love with Anastasia, as a man to woman, not because Anastasia is her submissive. On the other side, Anastasia, who left

Christian before because she could not let herself being Christian's submissive, also realize that she really loves Christian. Both of them meet in an occasion and later begin to have a relationship again. It is not same as the previous relationship before, but it is rather a romantic one.

## **2. Aims of The Study**

In line with the title, "The Triangular Love of Main Characters in E. L. James' *Fifty Shades Darker* (2011)" the aims of this thesis are:

- 1) Describing the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of *Fifty Shades Darker* novel.
- 2) To prove the existence of intimacy, passion, and commitment from Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele's love relationship in *Fifty Shades Darker* novel.

## **3. Method of Research**

To look for some information related to the topic of the thesis, the writer uses library research. According to Semi, library research is a method of research focusing on the library as the place filled with the information and data related to the paper (1993:17). Furthermore, the psychological approach is used to analyze the extrinsic aspects, which are the intimacy, passion, and commitment of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele in E. L. James' *Fifty Shades Darker* novel.

## **4. Triangular Theory of Love**

The triangular theory of love holds that love can be understood in terms of three components that together can be viewed as forming the vertices of a triangle. These three components are intimacy (the top vertex of the triangle), passion (the left-hand vertex of the triangle), and decision/commitment (the right-hand vertex of the triangle). Each of these three terms can be used in many different ways, so it is important at the outset to clarify their meanings in the context of the present theory.

### **1. Intimacy**

The intimacy component refers to feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships. It thus includes within its purview those feelings that give rise, essentially, to the experience of warmth in a loving relationship. Sternberg indicates that it includes, among other things, feelings of (a) desire to promote

the welfare of the loved one, (b) experienced happiness with the loved one, (c) high regard for the loved one, (d) being able to count on the loved one in times of need, (e) mutual understanding with the loved one, (f) sharing of one's self and one's possessions with the loved one, (g) receipt of emotional support from the loved one, (h) giving of emotional support to the loved one, (i) intimate communication with the loved one, and (j) valuing the loved one in one's life.

## 2. Passion

The passion component refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships. The passion component thus includes within its purview those sources of motivational and other forms of arousal that lead to the experience of passion in a loving relationship. In a loving relationship, sexual needs may well predominate in this experience. However, other needs, such as those for self-esteem, succorance, nurturance, affiliation, dominance, submission, and self-actualization, may also contribute to the experiencing of passion.

## 3. Decision/Commitment

The decision/commitment component refers to, in the short-term, the decision that one loves a someone else, and in the long-term, the commitment to maintain that love. The decision/commitment component thus includes within its purview the cognitive elements that are involved in decision making about the existence of and potential long-term commitment to a loving relationship.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Intimacy

#### 5.1.1. Christian and Anastasia Experienced Happiness Together

After they restart their love relationship, Christian takes Anastasia to a masquerade party held by his family. They have a dinner together with Christian's family and many party guests. Christian's family greet Anastasia warm enough and they are pleased to meet her. During the night, Christian and Anastasia really experience happiness together. He takes her to his childhood bedroom, and it is revealed that Anastasia is the only woman whom Christian ever takes to. Their intimate discussion lead them to make love in there.

Christian and Anastasia's enjoyment to the party is shown after seeing the fireworks in the party. As Anastasia says in her mind when she sees Christian, "He looks happy. It's a real pleasure to see him this way ..." (2011:168). Meanwhile, just after Anastasia thinking of Christian, Christian also states that he was really enjoyed the evening (2011:168). He also says thank you to Anastasia because of the moment they have. Anastasia also agrees with Christian and feels the same with him that she enjoys the party.

Christian and Anastasia experienced happiness is also described when they are sailing together. After Christian states his declaration of love to Anastasia, he takes her sailing with his boat. When they are sailing, it is seen that they have closeness and connectedness to each other. They are talking about everything, such as Christian's mother, the boat, and others. They also show their love by having sex in the boat. They feel so happy about it. Anastasia states to Christian that it was a perfect afternoon for her and she says thank you to him. Christian also says the same thing with Anastasia and wants to take Anastasia to sailing school someday later (2011:224). From their statement, it is clearly seen that both of them experience happiness together.

From two moments above, which are attending the party and sailing, it shows Christian and Anastasia's intimacy. Their closeness, connectedness, and bondedness are seen when they are at those moments. They are so happy to experience the moments. As Christian says to Anastasia that the last few days he spent with her had been the best in his life (2011:228). It proves that they have experienced happiness together as partners.

#### **5.1.2. Mutual Understanding between Christian and Anastasia**

Sternberg stated that intimacy also includes mutual understanding with the loved one (1986:121). Christian is not used to be open about his past to anybody, even his former submissives. However, he feels different when he is with Anastasia. He feels connected to Anastasia. When Christian is being open to share his past, Anastasia is welcome to hear that. She listens to all of Christian's stories so she can know him as well as understand him deeply. She understands Christian well and also feels sorry about his past. Her connectedness with Christian makes her feels sad when she hears the story of his childhood. It is shown when she touches Christian and he feels his past trauma, as she describes,

It's too much. I am overwhelmed by his trust in me—overwhelmed by his fear, by the damage done to this beautiful, fallen, flawed man.  
Tears pool in my eyes and spill down my face, lost in the water from the shower.  
*Oh, Christian! Who did this to you?*(2011:194)

As an addition from Prager's book, Wittgenstein in his family resemblance structure depicted that partners talking about personal things was a kind of those features that served as the most salient cues for signalling intimacy (1995:16). So, we can see that Christian talks to Anastasia about his personal things. Their connectedness and bondedness make them understand each other about Christian's situation in the past.

Actually, Christian and Anastasia's mutual understanding is often seen in the novel. Sometimes, they have little conflicts and there are some quarrels during their relationship. However, they realize that they really love each other so they understand each other well. They are open to discuss their problem and they introspect themselves. After Christian argues with Anastasia, he sometimes asks her why they fight. Anastasia answers it because they were getting know to each other (2011:287). It is seen that they have a mutual understanding that makes their relationship lasts eventually.

### **5.1.3. Christian and Anastasia's Intimate Communication**

Christian and Anastasia's intimate communication which is shown in *Fifty Shades Darker* novel, also contains personal sharing about Christian and Anastasia themselves. They talk about personal things of themselves because they feel close, connected, and bonded to each other. Christian always discusses anything with Anastasia. Their discussion is mainly about their conflicts to be other's love. When Christian reveals himself about his past, Anastasia tries to understand him. Sometimes she becomes insecure of herself though. She talks to Christian about her fear that she is not enough for Christian. She is afraid that she is forcing him to be someone else. Meanwhile, Christian reveals that his days with Anastasia are the best in his life (2011:228). When Anastasia almost runs from her relationship, Christian talks to her and discusses it with her. He never ceases to say how much he loves Anastasia. Despite Anastasia is often being insecure with herself and thinking that she makes Christian broken, Christian states that Anastasia is his lifeline (2011:326). Every time she feels insecure and decides

to talk to Christian, Anastasia always gets her reassurance about Christian's deepest love to her. It makes her believe in him and successfully maintain her love to him.

Even after Christian's proposal, their intimate communication are still discussing about Christian and Anastasia's fear. Christian is afraid that Anastasia will leave him. Meanwhile, Anastasia keeps thinking that she is inadequate to fulfill Christian's needs. When they are discussing this, both of them give each other reassurance. Christian reassures Anastasia that the woman he loves is only her. He states that none of his previous sexual partners appealed to him like Anastasia (2011:399). Anastasia also reassures Christian everytime that she is not going to leave him.

#### **5.1.4. Christian and Anastasia Valuing Each Other**

Both Christian and Anastasia realize that they love each other, they need each other, and they cannot live without each other. Their presence in other's life is so valuable. Christian and Anastasia's valuing each other in their life also indicates the intimacy of their love relationship, as Sternberg states that intimacy included feelings of valuing the loved one in one's life (2011:121).

The presence of Anastasia in Christian's life is so precious for Christian. It is often shown in the novel when Christian is valuing her and he never stops saying how much he loves her. Christian is always afraid of losing her because he cannot imagine to live without her. It is described after both of them are terrorized by Leila. Christian does not state directly, however the value of Anastasia who is really meaningful for him is clearly seen in this situation. As it is described,

“Do you know what you mean to me?” he murmurs. “If something happened to you, because of me ....” His voice trails off, his brow creasing, and the pain that flashes across his face is almost palpable. He looks so vulnerable—his fear very much apparent. (2011:175)

From the explanation above, it is shown that Christian is terrified of losing Anastasia. She has a very large value in his life. Even just thinking of Anastasia gets hurt, Christian is really sad and afraid. It is explained how much Anastasia is valuable in his life.

On the other hand, Anastasia also feels the same as Christian does. She really loves him. Christian is so important in her life. When Christian is missing because of helicopter accident, Anastasia is extremely worried about him. She is really afraid of losing him. As her mind says, “Oh, I love him so. I will be nothing without him, nothing

but a shadow—all the light eclipsed” (2011:454). It is shown that Christian is so precious to her. She feels the world will be empty without Christian, as it is implied when she says ‘all the light eclipsed’. It is also seen from her other statement, saying that Christian is ‘center of her universe’ (2011:454). All of Anastasia’s statements above prove that she really loves Christian and cannot live without him. He is really important for her.

When Christian arrives home safely after the accident, both Anastasia and him show their love to each other. They also show how much they mean for each other.

I hug him tightly. “I can’t imagine my life without you, Christian. I love you so much it frightens me.”  
“Me, too,” he breathes. “My life would be empty without you. I love you so much.” (2011:474)

From the statement above, it proves that Christian and Anastasia’s presence is really precious to each other. The writer thinks that they do not only love each other, but they also mean for other’s life. Both of them are scared of losing or other one is leaving. However, each worst thought is always being erased by other one. If one of them feels afraid of losing, other one will courage and say other’s value for him. When they are valuing each other as explained above, it shows the intimacy of their relationship.

## **5.2. Passion**

### **5.2.1. Christian and Anastasia’s Physical Attraction to Each Other**

Christian’s physical attraction to Anastasia is seen when he takes her to have sexual activity. He likes to do that with her because of his attraction to Anastasia. Anastasia describes Christian’s attraction to her when she sees him while they are intimately having sex on the sailing boat,

Standing before him, I am naked and unashamed, and I know it’s because he loves me. I no longer have to hide. He says nothing, just gazes at me. All I see is his desire, his adoration even, and something else, the depth of his need—the depth of his love for me. (2011:217)

The statement above is clearly described that Christian has a physical attraction to Anastasia. It is one of reasons why he really loves her. He adores Anastasia’s body as well as desires it. Having sexual activity with Anastasia makes Christian loves her more. As he says to Anastasia, “You never fail, Ana. You are beautiful, bright, challenging, fun, sexy, and I thank Divine Providence every day ...” (2011:247). It



implies how grateful Christian is to know Anastasia and to be always with her. When Anastasia argues with Christian, apparently it makes Christian's attraction to Anastasia increasing and wants to own her more. It is described when he states to her seducingly that he is going to take it out on her body when argues with her as his revenge (2011:289).

*Fifty Shades Darker* novel also provides Anastasia's admiration to Christian. She clearly has physical attraction to him. The writer thinks that Anastasia never stops to describe the reasons how he loves Christian. She describes everything about Christian and her attraction to him. As an evidence of her physical attraction to him, Anastasia states that she loves Christian and calls him as her 'Fifty'. She loves him intoxicating scent, his strength, also his mercurial ways (2011:378).

Furthermore, Anastasia tells Christian everything that makes her attracted to him, as Christian asks her. She explains to him that she loves everything about him, also his fifty shades (2011:496). As she describes,

"This." I stroke my index finger across his lips. "I love this, and what comes out of it, and what you do to me with it. And what's in here." I caress his temple. "You're so smart and witty and knowledgeable, competent in so many things. But most of it, I love what's in here." I press my palm gently against his chest, feeling his steady beating heart. (2011:496)

From Anastasia's statement above, it clearly describes her attraction to Christian. It implies that she loves Christian's kisses to her, as she points out her attraction to his lips. The writer thinks that Anastasia likes that because those kisses clearly state Christian's love to her. When Anastasia states that Christian is competent in so many things, it implies that everything that Christian has done is successfully makes her attracted, including to love her. It is clearly described as she addresses her finger to Christian's heart later.

### **5.2.2. Christian and Anastasia's Romance and Sexual Activity**

Sternberg indicated that passion may be aroused by intimacy (1986:122). Apparently, it is also reflected in Anastasia and Christian's relationship. Most of their intimacy leads them to a romance, then it leads them to sexual consummate. Their romance is shown when Christian claims that Anastasia is his (2011:79). Anastasia agrees with him. It leads them to have sexual consummate, as Anastasia describes later,

“... This is what he does to me—takes my body and possesses it wholly so that I think of nothing but him. His magic is powerful, intoxicating. ...” (2011:79)

As another evidence, after being terrorized by Leila, Christian and Anastasia have an intimate communication. They discuss many things intimately. It creates romance between them. Christian gives Anastasia a complement. He says that she never ceases to amaze him and he is in awe of her. Anastasia also states her feelings to Christian, saying that he is a very good reason to stay (2011:184). Christian teases Anastasia after a romantic long discussion, asking what Anastasia is going to do with him at the moment (2011:185). Then, they feel their passion among them and it leads them to have sexual activity. Clearly, it describes their sexual activity is also aroused by intimacy.

### **5.3. Decision/Commitment**

#### **5.3.1. The Decision of Christian and Anastasia (The Short-Term Aspect)**

Christian decides to give a new proposition to Anastasia. He is discussing with Anastasia about the kind of relationship that she wants. When Anastasia says to him that she does not want any rules like the previous relationship—BDSM relationship, Christian agrees with her and he is willing to let go the BDSM practice. Although it will be hard for Christian, because he has to let go his urge to be the dominant. He offers Anastasia to have a normal relationship like lovers, as he says it as a vanilla relationship. He does that because he realizes that he needs Anastasia in his life. He really desperates to live without Anastasia. It is shown as he says, “I need you more, Anastasia. These last few days have been hell. ...” (2011:36).

After listening to Christian’s new proposition, Anastasia confesses to Christian that actually she cannot lose Christian. She admits that she really loves him. After she left him, she realizes that the physical pain that Christian had inflicted to her was not as bad as losing him. Because of that, she accepts Christian’s proposition and starts a new relationship with Christian. The writer thinks that at this time, Christian and Anastasia realize that they love each other. It is the short term aspect of their decision/commitment when they decide to love each other.

#### **5.3.2. The Commitment of Christian and Anastasia (The Long-Term Aspect)**

When Christian and Anastasia go through their relationship, both of them experience happiness in their life, though they are often conflicted with the thought that

somebody will leave other. However, Christian realizes that he really loves Anastasia. He does not play any games with her and has a commitment to keep being with her. He is really terrified if Anastasia will leave him. So, he finally decides to propose her.

“What can I do to make you understand I will not run? What can I say?”

He gazes at me, revealing his fear and anguish again. He swallows. “There is one thing you can do.”

“What?” I snap.

“Marry me,” he whispers. (2011:332)

After thinking hard and considering Christian’s proposal, Anastasia realizes that she also wants to maintain her love to Christian. She really loves him. On Christian’s birthday, Anastasia gives him a simple present that actually answers his proposal. She gives him a key chain with the word ‘yes’ that flashes on and off on the key ring. When Christian looks at that, he is so happy and asks Anastasia again that she wants to marry him. Anastasia nods and says, “Yes, I’ll marry you” (2011:467). It shows that Anastasia also has a commitment with her relationship with Christian. She is ready to maintain her love with Christian in a marriage.

## **6. Conclusion**

Love is a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody. It needs a promise to love each other forever. Love has three components, which are intimacy, passion, and commitment. These components help people to measure love between each other in a relationship. The writer found that all of the components are experienced by the main characters of E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades Darker* novel, Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele, in their love relationship.

Intimacy in Christian and Anastasia’s relationship is depicted from the evidences that show four feelings of intimacy. They are the feelings of experienced happiness with each other, mutual understanding with each other, intimate communication with each other, and valuing each other in one’s life. The passion in their relationship itself is depicted from the evidences that show physical attraction of Christian and Anastasia to each other also their romance and sexual activities. Meanwhile, Christian and Anastasia’s decision to love each other and restart their relationship proves the short-term aspect of commitment component. Then, the long-term aspect of commitment

component in their relationship is shown when they decide to maintain their love into marriage.

Hence, it can be concluded that E. L. James' *Fifty Shades Darker* novel successfully proves the existence of intimacy, passion, and commitment as three components of triangular theory of love. *Fifty Shades Darker* novel depicts all three components of love, which are intimacy, passion, and commitment, of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele to each other.

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