

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter elaborates the methodology in conducting the study and also explains the appropriateness of the methodology used in the exploration of the two research questions formulated earlier in the first chapter. The two research questions posed by the study is regarding the portrayal of oppression in *F451* and the effect of the latter to the protagonist's identity.

3.1 Object and Context of the Study

This study focuses on the portrayal of oppression in Ray Bradbury's *F451* (1953), a story which narrates the life of a fireman named Guy Montag in a dystopian America. The dystopian novel was chosen because the writer is interested to examine the relevance and connection between dystopian work and its historical background. Although there are many others dystopian works such as Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Collin's *The Hunger Games* (2008) trilogy, Dashner's *The Maze Runner* (2009) trilogy, and Roth's *Divergent* (2011) trilogy, the writer chose this particular novel because in *F451* world, it is the people who actually start inflicting these oppressions to themselves. In addition, the oppressions reinforced by the government are invisible and concealed by the façade of a perfect and prosperous life of the people. Therefore, the issue of invisible oppression in the novel is more interesting to observe because in a way it is relatable to the present society we live in. In addition, Bradbury's *F451* shows the possibility for society to change and gives hope to the reader through Montag's ability to transform his identity from an ignorant to a nonconformist.

In Bradbury's *F451*, the citizens of this particular society is oppressed in a way that the government makes them somewhat less human and much easier to control. One of the oppressing acts that can be found in the story is the book burning. In *F451* world, book is considered as the most illegal commodity in the society and should be burnt, along with the house in which they are hidden. Interestingly, in this society, instead of putting out the fire, the firemen is responsible for the job.

As mentioned before, the protagonist of the story, Montag, makes his living by being a fireman. At first, he seems like a happy man who is content with his life and his job. However, only after a particular series of events happened in his life that he finally realizes that he is not happy with his life. As the results, he started questioning his life and even secretly reading the books that he supposed to burn, hoping that he will find the real meaning of his life by flipping through the pages of the book. Montag, once a quintessential fireman is now one step closer to become an outcast. This theme of identity evident in the story is in line with the discussion of the effect of oppression to the protagonist's identity.

The data for this study is taken from the novel *F451* by Ray Bradbury which was first published in 1953. However, it is important to note that the writer used the version of the book which was published by Simon & Schuster Paperback in 2012, considering that there are variations in some versions of the book. One of them is evident in the expurgated version of the novel published by Ballantine Books in 1967. In that particular version, words such as "hell", "damn" and "abortion" were eliminated from the novel. Not only words, but some scenes from the original version were also altered. For example, in one scene, a drunken man is changed to a sick man. While in another, cleaning fluff out of a human naval becomes cleaning ears (Greene, 2008).

3.2 Research Design

This study was designed under cultural materialism approach and employs the textual analysis technique to analyse the text. As for the theoretical framework of the study, the writer applied Young's categorization of oppression known as Five Faces of Oppression (1990) and Hall's theory on identity.

Cultural materialism is a context-oriented analysis, an approach which "do not regard literary texts as self-contained, independent works of art but try to put them within a larger context" (Klarer, 1998, p. 94). More specifically, it is "an approach to literature and culture that sees literary texts as the material products of specific historical and political conditions" (Wolfreys, Robbins, & Womack, 2006, p. 116). It implies that in this present study, the historical context of the novel plays a significant role in the analysis. In fact, the writer takes the historical (and political) context of the novel into consideration when analysing the text. This approach is relevant to the study because the writer is interested in seeing how this novel relates to history and what interpretation might be produced from the approach which includes the historical contexts as a tool to understand the meaning of the novel.

In addition to that, Harris (as cited in Elwell, 2013), states that one of the basic tenets of cultural materialism is the assumption that society is a system of interrelated parts. Which means that when a part of society changes, then the other parts should also change. This statement is in line with the aims of this present study which seeks to reveal the relation between oppression and identity in the novel. Therefore, the writer thinks that cultural materialism is appropriate for this study since it covers the aims of the study.

Meanwhile, textual analysis is applied in the present study because the data is in the form of text and focuses on certain events and people instead of numbers. Textual analysis itself is considered as a staple of English studies research which is focused on texts and aims to understand the culture that is written and attached

on its artefact. The highlights of this technique is the understanding that meaning-making is not only a relational process between the cultural artefact and the consumer, but also between the consumer and anyone to whom the consumer has communicate their own meanings of the particular artefact. (Griffin, 2005; Belsey, 2005)

In addition to that, the writer applied Young's categorization of oppression known as Five Faces of Oppression (1990) and Hall's theory on identity as the framework of the study. As mentioned before, this present study questioned the oppression evident in the society of *F451* and the effect of the oppression to the protagonist's identity. The writer then formulated an assumption based on the previous research mentioned in the previous chapter that oppression may affecting those who is 'touched' by it. Thus, these theories are chosen as the guidance to prove the assumption sets by the writer to the novel.

3.3 Research Procedure

There are several steps taken in analysing the text, these steps are: (1) Doing close reading of the novel for multiple times in order to get a better understanding of the novel; (2) Collecting the textual evidences by identifying the context of oppression in the subject of the study; (3) Classifying the textual evidences found in the text according to Young's Five Faces of Oppression (1990); (4) Interpreting the findings and investigating its relation with the identity construction of the protagonist by using Hall's theory in identity; (5) Drawing a conclusion based on cultural materialism approach toward the novel.