

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the methodology of the study including the object of the study, research question, research methodology, technique of data analysis, source of the data, and data presentation.

3.1. Object of the Study

This study attempts to analyze how male author portrays women in fiction. The subject used in this study is a novel entitled *The Hours*, written by Michael Cunningham and published in 1998. This study focuses on three main female characters in the novel, namely Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Clarissa Vaughan. The novel is chosen because it is written by a male author and tells a story about women. It is, therefore, in line with the discussion of this present study that focused on uncovering the way a male author portrays women in his work of fiction. Following is the brief synopsis of the novel as the object of this present study. In addition, Michael Cunningham's brief biography is also presented in this section.

3.1.1. *The Hours* Synopsis

The Hours (New York: Picador USA, 1999) takes place in three different historical periods and focuses on three different women whose story is divided into sections. Mrs. Dalloway section takes place in New York City in the end of twentieth century; Mrs. Woolf section takes place in a suburb of London in 1923; Mrs. Brown section takes place in Los Angeles in 1949. The novel begins with a Prologue which recounts, mainly from Virginia Woolf's point of view, the event of her suicide in 1941 when she drowns herself in Ouse River in Sussex, England. This is the day when Virginia hurriedly leaves her house, heading to a river while suffering from her headache. During her walk to the river, she contemplates how she has failed as a writer and that she cannot go back to the care of her husband and sister. This section also features Woolf's real suicide note to her husband Leonard Woolf (p. 6).

3.1.2. Michael Cunningham

Michael Cunningham was born in 1952 Cincinnati, Ohio, United States of America. He began his writing career by publishing his first novel, *Golden States*, in 1984. *The Hours* is his fourth novel published in 1998, the same novel that won Pulitzer Prize in 1999 and was made into a movie adaptation of the same name directed by Stephen Daldry in 2002, starring Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep, and Julianne Moore.

Cunningham read *Mrs. Dalloway* for the first time when he was in high school and became dazzled and amazed by the author and the work (Cunningham, 2011). Later, Virginia Woolf and *Mrs. Dalloway* became his main inspiration for his writing and so *The Hours* is as a contemporary retelling of *Mrs. Dalloway*' (ibid.). Related to the study, in his writing in *The Guardian*, Cunningham acknowledges the fact that he is a man who is trying to re-write a work written by 'a great writer' as well as 'a feminist icon' who has the sense that 'she belongs to women' (ibid.). Cunningham is openly gay and currently living in New York with his partner of 24 years, Ken Corbett (Brookes, 2011). His latest work is entitled *By Nightfall* (2010), dealing with homosexuality and tells about 'a middle-aged straight man named Peter Harris who is ambushed by a confounding lust for his wife's much-younger brother' (Zak, 2010).

3.2. Research Questions

This study tries to seek the answer to this following question:

1. How does Michael Cunningham, as a male author, portray women in the novel *The Hours*?

3.3. Research Methodology

This present study is a qualitative study that uses descriptive textual analysis since the data is in the form of text. Hancock (2002, p.2) suggests that the research using qualitative method ‘focuses on description and interpretation that may lead to development of new concepts or theory’ that help people understand the subject of the study. Furthermore, by using qualitative method coupled with textual analysis, the data collected are analyzed to meet the aim of the study and to develop the concept of how male author portrays women in fiction. This is in line with Maxwell (1996) who argues that qualitative study focuses on certain events or people emphasizing not on numbers, but more on words.

In addition to qualitative study, Alwasilah (2002) argues that there are four basic concepts that must be fulfilled: they are theory, hypothesis, methodology, and technique. As for the first concept, which is theory, this study employs the framework theory of Liberal Feminism as the guidance for answering the research question.

Different from quantitative study, qualitative study uses hypothesis to make the researcher sensitive to the topic being investigated (Alwasilah, 2002). This is based on the proportions or theories applied in the study. This present study sets out a hypothesis that in the novel, the portrayal of women can be either fair and accurate or misleading and stereotypical. This hypothesis is based on previous research mentioned in the Chapter II, that not all male authors portray women as what they have been in most canonical works written by male authors. Therefore, to reveal the truth, Liberal Feminism is chosen as the guidance to prove the hypothesis right or wrong.

The last basic concept, which is methodology and technique, applied by this present study is qualitative that uses textual analysis as the research technique to analyze the portrayal of women in Cunningham’s *The Hours*. McKee (2001) defines textual analysis as a technique of data gathering (McKee, 2001, p. 1). This technique is useful for researchers who attempt to interpret a text and obtain ‘a

sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them' (ibid.).

3.4. Research Procedure

In conducting the present study, the steps taken are as follows:

- Firstly, carefully close-reading the novel multiple times in order to get the best understanding of the text before delving into the analysis. Textual evidences were gathered after four times reading. The first two reading was conducted to get the whole picture of the story in the novel.
- Secondly, highlighting the main characters' acts, thoughts, and speeches as the textual evidences. This was done during the third and the fourth reading.
- Thirdly, categorizing some findings found in the novel in a form of tables to be presented as the textual evidences in analyzing the data and choosing some textual evidences that would be analyzed deeper based on the framework theory of Liberal Feminism.
- Fourthly, analyzing and interpreting the data findings using the framework theory of Liberal Feminism that was already presented in the previous chapter.
- Finally, drawing a conclusion of the study and giving suggestions related to the further study of the same topics.

3.5. Data Source

The source of the data in this study is gathered from the novel entitled *The Hours* written by Michael Cunningham and published in 1998. Since the novel is divided into three narrative stances (Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Woolf, and Mrs. Brown) these following synopses of each narrative serve as the source of the data since they feature each of main female characters.

3.5.1. Mrs. Dalloway

The first narrative thread that comes after the prologue is the story of Clarissa Vaughan who is on her way to buying flowers for the party she is throwing at the night in honor to Richard's accomplishment in literature. It is noticeable that Clarissa Vaughan is the modern version of Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway. Hence, the section is named after Mrs. Dalloway. During her trip to buy flowers, she thinks of and questions the choices she has made. She also thinks about the affair she had with Richard and the possibility she might miss and compares her domesticated life with Sally with the life she might have had with Richard. Her encounters with some old friends (including Richard's mother, Laura Brown who comes to visit Clarissa after Richard's death) and the witnessing of Richard's suicide brings her to realization that life is as simple as living it, doing whatever she does, and then going to sleep (p. 225).

3.5.2. Mrs. Woolf

The Mrs. Woolf character is closely based on the biography of Virginia Woolf, a notable writer and feminist icon in twentieth century. Fictionalizing Virginia Woolf, the novel tells a story about the modernist author in the beginning of writing her new novel *Mrs. Dalloway* while struggling with her insanity issues. Throughout the day, she feels suffocated by the quietness of suburb and yearns for the life of London city, for she thinks only in London 'she will remain sane' (p. 209). At the end of the story, she makes a decision about the fate of her character, Clarissa Dalloway.

3.5.3. Mrs. Brown

Laura Brown is a suburban wife living in post-war Los Angeles in 1949. She wakes up on her husband birthday and decides to read *Mrs. Dalloway*. As she plans to make a little party for her husband by making a cake with her son, she feels suffocated by her, seemingly, perfect life. She then runs away to a hotel where she thinks that 'it is possible to die' (p. 151). She contemplates committing suicide but then realizes that she cannot do it because she loves life, 'loves it hopelessly' (p. 152). So she goes back to the house, makes a party, and sleeps. In the end of Mrs.

Dalloway section, the reader is made known that Laura is actually Richard's mother who left him and the family.

3.6. Data Presentation

To achieve the goal of this present study, the data are divided into three sections which are related to the way Michael Cunningham portrays women in *The Hours*. Those sections consist of data presentation of female main characters' attitude in domestic sphere; female characters' traits; female characters' decision / action to achieve self-liberation. The collected data is presented in the form of the tables as follow.

Table 3.1.
Example of Female Characters' Attitude in Domestic Sphere

No	Character(s)	Attitudes	Textual Evidence	Comment/Analysis
1	Laura	Unconfidence	She brushes her teeth, brushes her hair, and starts downstairs. She pauses several treads from the bottom, listening, waiting; she is again possessed ... by a dream-like feeling, as if she is standing in the wings, about to go onstage and perform in a play for which she is not appropriately dressed, and for which she has not adequately rehearsed. What, she wonders, is wrong with her. This is her husband in the kitchen; this	When Laura descends the stairs, about to go to the kitchen where her husband and son are having breakfast, she feels that she does not know what to do to face them. This passage implies that, for Laura, domestic role is not something natural; it is like a play that needs rehearsing.

			is her little boy. (Mrs. Brown section, p. 43).	
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Table 3.2.

Example of Female Characters' Traits

No	Character(s)	Traits	Textual Evidence	Comment/Analysis
1	Clarissa	Nurturing (Feminine)	Tonight she will give her party. She will fill the rooms of her apartment with food and flowers, with people of wit and influence. She will shepherd Richard through it, see that he doesn't overtire, and then she will escort him uptown to receive his prize. (Mrs. Dalloway section p.13).	This passage indicates that Clarissa possesses nurturing trait which is included as feminine as she commits to taking care of Richard during the party.

Table 3.3.

Example of Female Characters' decision / action to achieve self-liberation

No	Character(s)	Decision / Action	Textual Evidence	Comment/Analysis
1	Clarissa	Choosing not to marry.	She, Clarissa, was clearly not destined to make a disastrous marriage or fall under the wheels of a train. She was destined to charm, to prosper. She was eighteen,	When she was eighteen, Clarissa was called by the name of Mrs. Dalloway by Richard. However, Clarissa decides not to marry and that because she can do whatever she likes. Instead of being in

			renamed. She could do what she like (Mrs. Dalloway section, p. 11)	marriage, she chooses to stay in domestic partnership with Sally Seton.
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The complete data presentation is available in the appendices section.

