

Oppression and Identity in Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the oppression and identity in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (henceforth, F451). It examines the portrayal of oppression in the F451 society and how these oppressions affect the main protagonist's identity construction. To meet the purposes, the study was designed under cultural materialism approach and applies Young's theory on oppression known as Five Faces of Oppression (1990) and Hall's theory on identity as the theoretical framework of the study. The findings reveal that there are five forms of oppression evident in the novel: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. It also indicates that the main protagonist's identity is constructed by the oppression that he observes and notices through his interaction with characters and things around him. As the result of these oppressions, Montag's identity is transformed from ignorant to non-conformist. Seeing from the cultural materialism perspective, the fictional world of F451 is a metaphor of a more media-absorbed society of America 1950s. As such, this oppression should be resisted. In this case, Montag's identity construction can be interpreted as the representation of the resistance. Thus, parallel to its context, F451 presages the threat of media dominance and at the same time offers a possible way to fight against it.

Keywords: *Oppression, Identity, Cultural Materialism, Fahrenheit 451*

INTRODUCTION

Fahrenheit 451 (henceforth F451) is a novel penned by Ray Bradbury (1953) which narrates a dystopian future of America in which books become the most illegal commodities and must be destroyed in order to sustain the stability of the nation. In this anti-intellectual world, Guy Montag as the main protagonist of the story stands up for what he believes in and challenges the prescribed hegemony of the world he lives in. Written in the aftermath of the World War II, F451 is considered by critics as “one of the most important social commentaries we have available” (Barrett, 2011, p. 4). Indeed, in his critical acclaimed novel F451, Bradbury “deals with subjects and issues that were shaped by the political climate of the United States in the decade immediately following World War II” (Hoskinson, 2001, p. 126). The novel reflects Bradbury’s concerns toward some issues which are emerging in America’s Golden Age and serves as Bradbury’s attempt to address his concerns on the danger of conformity, ignorance, and censorship during the period. In

addition, the novel foreshadows the collapse of literacy, creativity, and at the same time, humanity. However, F451 does not only offer a kind of social criticism. It also offers an insightful view to the effect of the oppression to the identity of the individuals living in that particular society. This notion eventually leads the writer to examine the issue of oppression in the novel and to question whether oppression can actually affect one’s identity. The study specifically aims to reveal the oppression experienced and observed by the society and to find out how this oppression affect the main protagonist’s identity construction.

Departing from the explanation above, this present study offers a new perspective in the study of Bradbury’s F451 by using a cultural materialism approach and focusing on the relational connection of the oppression and identity construction. In analysing the text, the writer employs Young’s oppression theory (1990) and Hall’s theory on identity as the framework of the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Oppression is one of the issues examined in the study. Young (1990) states that oppression is best used to describe any disadvantage and injustice experienced by some people, which is not necessarily caused by a tyrannical power. Rather, it is a by-product of the everyday practices in a well-intentioned liberal society. She also proposes that instead of viewing oppression merely as the result of a few people's choices or policies, one should see oppression as a structural system. Indeed, the societal rules—which include unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols—can be an element of forces that oppress people. In short, oppression can be linked to any kind of acts performed by people that makes other people less human. Since there is no clear cut boundary in oppression, Young (1990) proposes the five 'faces' or forms of oppression which have broaden the scope of what can be considered as oppression. In her theory, she categorizes oppression into five forms, which are: (1) Exploitation, (2) Marginalization, (3) Powerlessness, (4) Cultural Imperialism, and (5) Violence.

The next issue discussed in this study is identity. Hall (as cited in Fearon, 1999, p. 5) points out that identity is a kind of ambivalent point of thought and being. He adds that it is "always a temporary and unstable effect of relations which define identities by marking differences" (as cited in Grossberg, 1996, p. 89). To put it in a nutshell, identity is an ongoing process which results in qualities that makes oneself different from others. In addition, Barker (2004, p. 94) adds that identity is not an entity but rather "an emotionally charged description" which is flexible and changeable, depending on the social and cultural context exists. In other words, identity is socially constructed and constantly changing depending on the situation surrounding the individual.

In the study, the writer considers cultural materialism as an appropriate approach to read *F451*. Cultural Materialism itself is a term introduced by the Marxist critic Raymond Williams that refers to a study which examined the historical material aspects within a political framework (Barry, 2002). In cultural

materialism, literary works as one of the historical materials are read and understood “as the material products of specific historical and political conditions” (Brannigan, 2006, p. 135). Holderness (as cited in Barry, 2002) further describes this approach as a politicised form of historiography—the study of historical material within a politicised framework. By using cultural materialism to approach the novel, one may gain a comprehensive knowledge about how the historical and social background behind a work affect the reception and the reading of the work, either in the past or present. In this case, historical information related to the 1950s America as the context of the text publication is considered as a valuable resource for the analysis.

RESEARCH METHOD

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.

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. 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; Besley, 2005). In addition to that, the writer applied Young's (1990) theory on oppression known as Five Faces of Oppression and Hall's theory on identity as the framework of the study. The writer then formulated an assumption based on the previous studies that oppression may affect 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.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that oppression does exist in the fictional society of Bradbury's *F451* in the form of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. It is also revealed that

these oppressions indirectly contribute to the construction of the main protagonist's identity. Furthermore, by approaching the text with cultural materialist perspective it can be seen that the depiction of *F451* society deeply reflects the American society during the 1950s and that the main protagonist's identity is constructed in such a way that shows culture is socially constructed and can be changed. The followings are the detailed analysis on the topic of the study.

Oppression in *Fahrenheit 451* Society

Referring to the categorization of oppression proposed by Young (1990), the analysis of oppression in *F451* shows that there are five forms of oppression evident in the society of *F451*: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Exploitation

Exploitation refers to the act of taking advantage of others without giving them a fair compensation (Young, 1990). In the society of *F451* itself, the exploitation exists in the form of mass exploitation. Specifically, the society is being exploited in a subtle way by the

government who manipulates its people into doing things that could benefit the government, namely the mass media provided by the government who keeps feeding the society with false information that trick the people to do the dirty work of the government without any complain. The evidence can be seen in the following excerpts.

[1]: "In again out again Finnegan, the Army called Pete yesterday. He'll be back next week. The Army said so. Quick war. Forty-eight hours they said, and everyone home. That's what the Army said. Quick war. Pete was called yesterday and they said he'd be, back next week. Quick..." (pp. 90-91)

[2]: ... as he walked he was listening to the Seashell radio in one ear... "We have mobilized a million men. Quick victory is ours if the war comes..." Music flooded over the voice quickly and it was gone. "Ten million men mobilized," Faber's voice whispered in his other ear. "But say one million. It's happier." (p. 88)

Excerpt [1] and [2] above show that mass media is capable of shaping and changing one's perspective on an important issue. In this case, the government tries to brainwash its people and manipulate them into believing that war is not dangerous and making it more favourable.

Marginalization

Marginalization refers to the social process in which a whole category of people expelled from useful participation in social life (Young, 1990). One of the examples of marginalization found in *F451* is the marginalization of the book people—a group of people consisting of old scholars whose service is no longer needed by the society—from the society, as apparent in the excerpt [3] and [4] below.

[3]: **The old man admitted to being a retired English professor who had been thrown out upon the world forty years ago when the last liberal arts college shut for lack of students and patronage.** (pp. 70-71)

[4]: "I've heard there are still hobo camps all across the country, here and there; walking camps they call them, and if you keep walking far enough and keep an eye peeled, **they say there's lots of old Harvard degrees on the tracks between here and Los Angeles. Most of them are wanted and hunted in the cities.** They survive, I guess. There aren't many of them, and I guess the Government's never considered them a great enough danger to go in and track them down." (p. 126)

In addition to this, those who acts differently from the majority are considered as a threat and then marginalize from the society. The evidences can be seen in excerpt [5] and [6].

[5]: **"My uncle was arrested another time—did I tell you?—for being a pedestrian. Oh, we're *most peculiar*."** (p. 7)

[6]: **"I've got to go to see my psychiatrist now. They make me go. I made up things to say. I don't know what he thinks of me. He says I'm a regular onion! I keep him busy peeling away the layers." ... "The psychiatrist wants to know why I go out and hike around in the forests and watch the birds and collect butterflies."** (p. 20)

Powerlessness

Powerlessness is the inability to participate in making decision that affect one's life (Young, 1990). It refers to a condition in which someone unable to control his life since one have lost the sense of self and authority over his own life. In *F451*, the society voluntarily indulges themselves in the mass media provided by the government which in turns robs their sense of self and their individuality.

[7]: **... in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound ... coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind ... Every night the waves came in and bore her off on their great tides of sound, floating her, wide-eyed, toward morning. There had been no night in the last two years that Mildred had not swum that sea, had not gladly gone down in it for the third time.** (p.10)

Excerpt [7] shows that the society depends on the mass media to make them feel better. However, the mass media actually only giving them the illusion of happiness and calmness.

The powerlessness in this society also apparent in the sense of despair looming over the people.

[8]: **"Montag, go home. Go to bed. Why waste your final hours racing about your cage denying you're a squirrel?"** (p. 84)

[9]: **"We get these cases nine or ten a night. Got so many, starting a few years ago, we had the special machines built."** (p. 13)

In excerpt [8], it can be seen that even though there are people who realize that they are oppressed, they still choose to step back, stop complaining, and spend the rest of their life in "peace". Meanwhile, excerpt [9] shows that there is a special machines built to handle those who committed suicide since there are so many people who decided to conceal their unhappiness and ended up suicidal. It implies how severe the depression that the people of *F451* experienced.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism refers to the universalization of the culture of the dominant class and its establishment as the norm of the society (Young, 1990). *F451* exhibits so many forms of cultural imperialism and one of them is the doctrine that says books are dangerous and should not be consumed for the sake of one's well-being. This doctrine is supported by the mass media which promotes and makes it easier to be accessed and accepted by the people. Even though the reasoning behind the prohibition seems shady and not enough to support the doctrine, most people in the society believe it anyway and conform to the hegemony. This phenomenon is evident in excerpt [10] and [11].

[10]: **“Don't step on the toes of the dog-lovers, the cat-lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico ... The bigger your market, Montag, the less you handle controversy, remember that! All the minor minor minorities with their navels to be kept clean.”** (pp. 54-55)

[11]: **“Coloured people don't like *Little Black Sambo*. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer**

of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Bum the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag. Take your fight outside ... **Burn them all, burn everything.** Fire is bright and fire is clean.” (p. 57)

As can be seen from the excerpts above, one of the main reasons for the cultural imperialism is the minority pressure.

Violence

Violence refers to a random and unprovoked attacks against member of some groups and their property, with the intention to damage, humiliate, terrorize, or destroy the person (Young, 1990). In the world of *F451*, one of the forms of violence is evident in the direct attack by the firemen towards people who kept the forbidden books in their house. If one is caught keeping those books, not only the book but their house will also be burned along with the house. As the result, people who are included in that group have to bear living their life in a constant fear. It can be seen from excerpt [12] and [13] below.

[12]: **They crashed the front door and grabbed at a woman,** though she was not running; she was not trying to escape. She was only standing, weaving from side to side, **her eyes fixed upon a nothingness in the wall as if they had**

struck her a terrible blow upon the head. (p. 33)

[13]: Montag's hand closed like a mouth, crushed the book with wild devotion, with an insanity of mindlessness to his chest. The men above were hurling shovelfuls of magazines into the dusty air. **They fell like slaughtered birds and the woman stood below, like a small girl, among the bodies. (p. 34)**

The Impact of Oppression on Identity Construction of the Main Protagonist

The findings of the study reveal that the main protagonist's identity is constructed by the oppression that he observes and notices through his interaction with others. In so doing, Montag is transformed from an ignorant into a non-conformist. However, before moving further to the analysis of the main protagonist's identity construction, it is necessary to learn a brief background of the main protagonist.

Guy Montag is the main protagonist of *F451* who undergo a complex identity quest throughout his life. He works as a fireman and described as an obedient servant of the state who dedicate his life for the purpose of the state. Firemen, in the world of *F451* that he lives in, serves as the official protector of the society that 'protect' them from the danger of

books. Their job is simple, to burn the illegal books along with the house in which they are kept. Initially, Montag is content and happy with his current job as a fireman. However, as the story goes by, his contentment and loyalty are gradually subsided. Through his interaction with other characters and things around him, Montag finally tries to complete the puzzle of his identity and finds his place in the society.

Montag's Identity Transformation from Ignorant to Non-Conformist

The findings reveal that Montag's identity is constructed through interactions with characters and things around him. Since this study seeks to reveal how the oppression affect Montag's identity, each interaction opens Montag's eyes toward the oppression in his society. In this case, Montag have intense interactions with Clarisse McClellan, Mildred, his work, Professor Faber, and Granger. As the result of this awareness, Montag undergoes an identity transformation from an ignorant to a non-conformist.

Clarisse McClellan is Montag's teenager neighbour whose interaction

with Montag serves as the catalyst to Montag's transformation. Before his encounter with Clarisse, Montag is a quintessential fireman who proud of his job, enjoys burning books and wholly dedicates his life to the purpose of the authorities. However, since Clarisse's appearance in Montag's life, his life turns in such an unexpected way. In his interaction with Clarisse, Montag finally becomes aware of marginalization, culture imperialism, and violence in society.

Ever since their initial meeting, Clarisse's curiosity and perceptive insight into the society helps Montag to juxtapose his own life to hers. Clarisse serves as a mirror that reflects everything that Montag has been missed all this time and gives him the opportunity to examine himself. Through a series of simple yet haunting questions, such as whether he is happy or whether he is in love, she leads Montag to observe the society that he lives in and his own life.

Challenged by Clarisse's confrontation, Montag abruptly defends the threatened ideology of the

state. His futile efforts to reassure himself on his state-given belief can no longer avoid the seed of doubt which is eventually planted in his mind. In the end, his struggle with his own denial results in his awareness towards the society in general and his life.

Realizing that all this time he merely "[wears] his happiness like a mask" (p. 9), Montag has to face the fact that up until now he was living a meaningless and superficial life. Soon, this self-awareness takes him to another stage in his transformation, the identity crisis. He is torn into two sides, one that holds on to his old beliefs and one who desires to change his present state, and he is undecided about which side should he choose.

As the story goes by, Montag shows his tendency toward the latter as he is gradually infected with Clarisse's curiosity and takes his own action. As evident in the text, Clarisse's influence toward him is so strong as can be seen from how he starts doing things which is considered forbidden such as reading the illegal books. Even though Clarisse is a new addition in his life,

she has a special spot in Montag's life and evidently plays a significant role in his life. Indeed, with the death of Clarisse, it can be seen that Montag actively takes Clarisse's place as a keen observer of the society and continue the legacy that she leaves behind. Beside Clarisse, there is another woman who inspires Montag's awareness and becomes the second trigger in the Montag's identity transformation: his wife, Mildred.

Mildred is the epitome of housewives in the *F451* society who drowns herself in the ecstasy of the mindless mass entertainment provided by the authorities. Her interaction with Montag plays an important role in his identity construction as it makes Montag aware of the other oppressions exists in the society, which are exploitation and powerlessness.

Initially, Montag does not really complain about his marriage life or questions Mildred's habit and personality as an individual. All that he believe is that he leads a perfectly happy life with his perfect wife. However, things changed after his

first encounter with Clarisse. He starts questioning things and eventually senses the emptiness in their marriage. The illusion of happy marriage has finally shattered, and what is left is the distant and void relationship between "a silly empty man [and] a silly empty woman" (p. 41). Montag recognizes the distance between them and blames this detachment to Mildred's fixation with mass media. Montag suspected that mass media—in the forms of Wall-TV and Seashell Radio—is responsible for the air of detachment surrounding them. Indeed, the two have a hard time communicating since "the walls were always talking to Mildred" (p. 42) and creates an illusion of her socializing. Consequently, Mildred often ignores Montag because she prefers to keep in touch with "the family" rather than have a real conversation with her husband.

Apparently, Mildred and her obsession for mass media is just the tip of the iceberg. The real problem lies deep in her subconscious; the sense of powerlessness that slowly consumes her from the inside.

Montag realizes this problem when he finds out that her wife has attempted suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills. To his surprise, it turns out Mildred is not the only person in the society who is suicidal. As the mechanics who 'fix' Mildred inform him, the suicide case in this society happen in daily basis to the point that the authorities built a special machine to deal with this case. Following the incident, Montag finally notices that Mildred's fixation on television stems from the invisible oppressions she experienced. Thus, by consuming these entertainment, Mildred wishes to drown her unhappiness and worries.

Witnessing the invisible oppression gets its claws into Mildred and plunges her into such depth of despair, Montag determines to take action and fight the oppression. He is no longer in denial and finally embraces the agitation that keeps building up when he encounter the oppression in the society. Departing from this attitude, Montag begins to speak up and say what he really thinks about the society.

Another factor which affect Montag's transformation is his work as a fireman. The firemen is the figure of authority in *F451* society. It is the established institution of the book burners which serves as the "official censors, judges, and executors" who are responsible to track those who possess the illegal books which are considered to be dangerous, burn the books along with the house in which the books are hidden, and lastly prosecute or execute the criminal. In addition, the firemen are said to be a profession with a noble purpose, which is to protect the stability and maintain the happiness of the society. However, it seems that there is something wrong with the method, considering that the suicide rate among its people has skyrocketed despite the effort. Montag, who is no longer an ignorant, notices the fatal flaw in the system. With this new mindset, this time Montag manages to recognise many forms of oppression apparent in his line of work, such as marginalization, powerlessness, and violence.

In the society of *F451*, the Mechanical Hound and the book

burning practice functions as a means to reinforce the existing rule. The Mechanical Hound is a robotic dog capable of tracking specific person and locate the illegal books. Since the beginning, Montag actually has shown his dislike toward the mechanical hound. But, he does not think that it is a big problem and decided to dismiss his thought. However, as he grows awareness toward the oppression in the society, when Captain Beatty points out that “[The Mechanical Hound] doesn't think anything we don't want it to think” (p. 25), he immediately realizes that the Mechanical Hound implicitly represents the *F451* society in which every citizen is being dictated and brainwashed by the authorities to act accordingly.

The next one is the book burning practice, which is executed by the firemen. Books are believed to be the source of social disintegration because it seems that they never agree on each other. They believe that the destruction of these books will bring them peace. But Montag knows for facts that these people are merely pretending that they are happy. Later

on, Montag responds to the act of book burning by stealing the books that he is supposed to burn. Upon stealing the book, he encounters yet another episode of identity crisis by this act of rejecting his own body part as his. But the identity crisis gradually subsided and Montag once again put things on his hand and makes a change. When Captain Beatty caught him possesses books, Montag knows that the only thing that he can do is act and be the agent of change. Thus when he is asked to burn his own house, he really does it with his whole conviction. This event symbolizes Montag's determination to ‘burn’ his old alive and start anew. Even though until the end he still experiences the identity crisis and blames “the hands” for burning his own supervisor, Montag proves that sometimes difficult times demands difficult measures and at this point he manages to win the battle inside him.

Professor Faber is the next person whose interaction with Montag holds the key to Montag's agency. Faber serves as the life guru for Montag and helps him to see the world of *F451* in a different light. Faber himself is a

retired English professor who is exiled from the society into the wilderness due to the nature of his job. Through interaction with Faber, Montag notices the marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness in the society.

A year prior to Montag's meeting with Clarisse, the ultimate trigger for his drastic transformation, he had met Professor Faber and had an interaction with him. Montag recalls that Professor Faber told him that he "[doesn't] talk things" but talk about "the *meanings* of things" and mentioned how it makes him feel alive (p. 71). As time goes by, Montag finally understands what he means by saying that. It implies that the society is shaped to be a like thus left no space for individual thoughts at all. When Montag contacts Professor Faber, he is disappointed to find out that Faber himself has succumbed to his own despair and thinks that Montag's notion to rebel as stupid as "committing suicide" (p. 83). Disappointed by Faber's passiveness and lack of interest in his revolutionary plan, Montag is pushed and forced to initiate the action

himself. Montag refuses to be discouraged by Faber's words and eliminate his dependency toward others by putting himself as the agent of change.

His frequent interaction with Faber really helps Montag to discover his new self. He is no longer confused by his own choice nor feeling guilty when acting not accordingly to the norm of the society. His new self is illustrated as "Montag-plus-Faber, fire plus water ... there would be neither fire nor water, but wine. Out of two separate and opposite things, a third" (p. 99). Fire represents Montag and symbolizes the passion, the rage, and the spirit that he possesses, while water represents Faber with all his calmness and patience. In the end the imagery of wine symbolises the new Montag who is 'richer', better, and more favourable than the former Montag. After that, Montag finds his way to join these Book People. This action shows that Montag is readily stripped off from his old life and starts a new journey toward his new life. This also secures the position of Faber as the catalyst for the new Montag. However, this is not the end because

Montag's journey continues to go on. This time, he aims to join the book people—a community of the marginalized who dedicate their life to memorized a book which is hoped to be beneficial for the humanity and civilization.

Granger is one of the few intellectuals who manage to survive and escape from the inhumane society of *F451* and join the book people. His interaction with Montag marks the final stage in Montag's transformation from his old self to his new self. His interaction with Granger offers Montag a chance to act and actually do something for the sake of humanity. He encourages Montag to forgive himself for his past and live at the moment. As an encouragement, Granger tells Montag the story of Phoenix, a bird that built a pyre and burned himself up every few hundred years. However, "every time he burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again" (p. 156). This story of phoenix symbolizes the cycle in the society that in order for something to be totally changed, they have to face the destruction first. The allusion also

foreshadows the future of the *F451* society and implies that it is totally possible for a society to change for better. In addition, Montag's 'death' in the public television also symbolizes the final chapter in Montag's transformation, which is the death of the old Montag and the rebirth of the new Montag who is ready to bring hope and humanity back by starting building a new civilization with the book people.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to reveal the portrayal of oppression in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and examine its impact to the main protagonist's identity construction. The findings show that there are five forms of oppression evident in the novel: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. It also shows that the main protagonist's identity is constructed by the oppression that he observes and notices through his interaction with others. Since this study seeks to reveal how the oppression affects Montag's identity, each interaction opens Montag's eyes

toward the oppression in his society. In this case, Montag have intense interactions with Clarisse McClellan, Mildred, his work, Professor Faber, and Granger. As the result of this, Montag undergoes an identity transformation from an ignorant to a non-conformist.

Seeing from the cultural materialism perspective, the fictional world of F451 portrays the oppressive American society in the 1950s which

should be resisted. Since cultural materialism is more interested in the act of resistance, Montag's identity construction can be interpreted as the representation of the resistance. In addition, Montag's identity transformation symbolizes the oppressed attempt to overthrow the authorities, in this case, the government with mass media as its means of oppression.

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