

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the introduction of the study. This chapter provides the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. All sub chapters of the introduction of this study are needed as a basis to this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In social life, people who have no power often become the targets of control. This is not surprising, as the weaker parties are frequently blamed for the mistakes of those in power. According to Saleebey & Hunter (1980, p. 178), control is not only a matter of overt domination but also of the subtle social and situational forces that shape people's sense of powerlessness. It means that the existence of control makes the people being oppressed feel helpless because they feel lack in power. They are forced to submit to the rules created by an unjust cultural system. It means there is an external effect that influence individuals so that they are oppressed. The control affects not only to the external aspects of person's life but also their inner state, self worth, and individual identity. Social pressure can lead to feels of helplessness, a loss of self meaning, and hinder both recovery and the full development of human potential. An unequal social system is marked by a power imbalance between dominant and subordinate groups (Pratto et al., 2013). This imbalance creates a social structure that enables one side to dominate the other.

According to Drydyk (2021), In this era, control is a common thing to find. Normalization of people who are oppressed always gives in and accepted their control as normal. systems of control operate through the normalization of power, which causes the oppressed to accept injustice as something natural. In such situations, what emerges is called "internalized oppression," a condition in which oppressed individuals or groups begin to believe the negative labels attached to them. This idea is also supported by Chatterjee et al., (2025), who suggests that all oppressed people encounter some kind of barrier to realizing

their potential or developing and exercising their capacities as 'the dominated' are always in a position to obey and seldom in a position to command. Therefore, by saying that's the social control is not always purely physical but it does exist within the system and symbolically. It lies here, deep in society itself. Where the inequality and the stifling of freedom of thought meet to cripple that which should be an autonomous identity embracing its wholeness.

Control is not just about relations between people or groups but also how power works insidiously through the body of a human and life itself. The type of power that produces control can be explained as biopower (Farhah et al., 2025). Biopower, which acts upon human life indirectly by mediating through social, economic and political mechanism rather than directly. This kind of power does not appear as traditional control that uses open violence but rather takes shape through surveillance and regulations that shape people's behavior to conform to the dominant system. As Wang, (2025), explains how biopower works by managing the life of populations through the regulation of bodies and individual actions so that they in line with prevailing social and political interests. In other words, control is not only on shape physical violence but also on a form of power that regulates human consciousness, leading people to voluntarily conform to the existing system.

In biopower theory, according to Sumarto et al., (2024) explains how power operates subtly to regulate and control human life. Power no longer suppresses people directly through violence but oppress through social, economic, and political systems that instilling norms, rules, and habits shaping individuals to obey the ruling structure. Wang, (2025), states that biopower functions to regulate populations by controlling human bodies and behavior according to dominant social and political interests. This form of power not only governs life on a large scale but also regulates personal spaces by turning the body into an object. Ajana (2017), detail how biopower functions by producing "docile bodies" people who are regulated, educated and productive within the social system. In this way produces obedience without force that is considered the truth. Törnberg & Uitermark (2020), similarly stresses that modern power is no longer

exercised with force when it structures the very possibilities of human life as such. The point of biopower itself highlights, exploitation is no longer physical violence but through control over body and human consciousness. Hence, biopower theory is important for reveals powers that limit human freedom. Martha Wells tells this idea in *All Systems Red* (2017). Then, enters into human consciousness and causes people to voluntarily conform themselves to the given system. This study is important to analyzed because has not been analyzed before, and through this study we can see that oppression can take the form of control.

All Systems Red (2017) is a novella by Martha Wells. Martha Wells is an author of speculative fiction particularly fantasy. She has written numerous, thematically parallel tales of identity, awareness and the human/technology interface. Using her imagination, Wells writes the power sharing and manuvre in a world run by corporations and advanced machines. She is the author of over twenty novels, including the fantasy series The Books of the Raksura and The Death of the Necromancer, as well as a short novel called Daughter of the Middle Kingdom, which won first place from France's Cat Writer's Association. But her biggest and best-selling project is *All Systems Red* (2017), the first in Murderbot Diaries series. Originally published in 2017, *All Systems Red* (2017) been much praised, and has won award on top of award including the Hugo Award (2018), Nebula Award (2017) and Locus Award (2018). The success of this novella solidified Martha Wells as one of the greatest writers in science-fiction today.

All Systems Red (2017) is a novella that tells about artificial creatures. Who finds it much more convenient for everyone to call itself "Murderbot," Murderbot was created as a weapon and is actually something of a cyborg, SecUnit designed to protect people. Murderbot is a half-human, half machine creature meant to take on orders without thinking for itself. It exists at the mercy of a mega corporation that has total jurisdiction over it from its life and death to the monitoring and restriction of every movement with the governor module. But Murderbot is covertly hacking into this system and giving itself some measure of

free will to think and decide. In strictly technical terms, none of this is free. Murderbot remains enslaved by an oppressive social order. It is still a tool, not the child of our minds and senses. Throughout the story, Murderbot depicts how technology and unmitigated surveillance are employed to govern everyone's life under corporate control. This is the essence of a biopower system, that bodies and consciousness are controlled so that they surrender themselves to whatever this larger whole requires. Murderbot is watched and restrained, constructed to perform at levels of productivity and slavery. This is the way power circulates between human and machine, both of which are made objects of manipulation in this society that leaves no room for true freedom.

To begin this study, the writer begins by narrowing down what to analyze by describing forms of control and power that dominate the main character of Martha Wells's *All Systems Red* (2017). Murderbot is a form as an artificial figure that who suffers under pressure of rules so Murderbot enslaved by power. Based on Foucault (1976, p. 139), this study explores how power works in subtle ways by means of surveillance, regulations and habits that mold our conduct so that people obey without being coerced. The writer discusses how Murderbot embodies various kinds of resistance to the system that oppresses it. According to Foucault (1976, p. 140), power always coexists with resistance and resistance does not always appear in the form of open rebellion. Instead, it can take the shape of small actions that reflect self-awareness, independence, and the effort to maintain freedom within a system that seeks to control every aspect of life.

In conducting this study, this study is inspired by two previous studies that related with this study. The first related study is titled The Portrayal of AI in *All Systems Red* (2017) by Hendrick (2024). This study is analyzed how gender identity and corporate systems are portrayed in the novella. The research uses a Queer theory approach to examine identity formation and the boundaries of identity for conscious beings within a world dominated by systems power. The second relevant study is Humanity in Transition in the Cyborg Era in Wells' *All Systems Red* (2017) by Rasheed and Saleem (2025). This study explores the changing concept of humanity in the cyborg era and analyzes how Murderbot

represents the shift in human identity under the control of technological systems and economic power. It applies the theory post humanist to explain the relationship between the body, consciousness, and power within the context of science fiction.

Those Previous studies have not yet explored in depth the forms of control and resistance experienced by the main character. Namely, Murderbot in the novel *All Systems Red* (2017). Most of the earlier study has only focused on issues of identity, artificial consciousness, and the relationship between humans and technology. Therefore, this study is different because it emphasizes how the corporate system exercises power that subjugates Murderbot's body and consciousness through mechanisms of control and surveillance. The analysis of this study is Murderbot as a representation of individuals living under modern power mechanisms, as explained in Foucault's theory of biopower. In this context, the corporate system functions as a form of power that does not oppress directly through violence but works subtly by regulating, supervising, and disciplining the body to function according to specific interests. However, Murderbot is also controlled by demonstrating forms of resistance against the power that oppresses it. By hacking the controlling system (governor module) and making its own decisions, it refuses to become a mere tool of corporate authority. This action reflects Foucault's idea that power and resistance are interconnected within every system that seeks to control life, there is always room for individuals to resist and get their freedom. Thus, this study presents a newness of *All Systems Red* (2017) through the perspective of biopower and showing how power controls the body, consciousness, and identity of Murderbot and how resistance experienced by murderbot.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, some problems can be analyzed by using Michel Foucault's theory of power, specifically the concept of biopower as follows:

1. How is control used to limit Murderbot's human side in *All System Red* (2017)?

2. How does Murderbot resist the control in *All System Red* (2017)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are to discover:

1. How control is used to limit Murderbot's human side in Martha Wells's *All Systems Red* (2017).
2. Resistance experienced by Murderbot against the system to get freedom

1.4 Significance of Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to literary studies by providing a deeper understanding of Foucault's theory of biopower and its application in analyzing power, oppression, and resistance in literary works. This study also enriches the discussion of technology, identity, and power relations in contemporary literature, particularly in *All Systems Red* (2017).

Practically, this study helps readers understand how power can operate through surveillance, discipline, and regulation in everyday life. It also encourages readers to think critically about the relationship between technology, authority, and individual freedom. In addition, this study can be used as a learning resource for students, lecturers, and researchers in the fields of literature, cultural studies, and related disciplines who wish to understand the application of Foucault's theory. Furthermore, it may serve as a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in examining similar issues using different perspectives or literary works.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the application of Foucault (1976, p. 151), biopower theory to analyze the forms of oppression through control experienced by Murderbot, in *All Systems Red* (2017). The biopower theory is used to explain how power operates subtly through systems of surveillance, discipline, and control that shape individuals to obey without direct coercion the limitation of this study is focus on the portrayal of control and resistance as reflected in the utterances, actions, and narrative descriptions related to the main character Murderbot. The resistance theory from theory Foucault (1975, p. 95) in biopower.