

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

“The Bush” is an interesting term that is also famously known as a hostile, dangerous, and thrilling setting for many kinds of Australian movies or literature. One of the books that contributed to describe the Bush living story is entitled *Bush Studies*. *Bush Studies* is a collection of short stories written by Australian author Barbara Baynton. This book was launched in 1902 with the set-up of Australian rural landscape. It tells about the life of immigrants that originated from Europe (white people) and settled in Australia which is called European-Australian and some other ethnicities. There is an explanation that Australia is an immigrant country. Each of these civilizations has contributed elements of their society to Australia, from the English and Chinese to the Germans, Italians, Greeks, Vietnamese, people from the Middle East, and most recently Africans (“We Love Melbourne”). This book mentions ‘studies’ in its title because it provides an overview about the situation of living in bush with dangerous and harmful environments for women.

Bush studies consist of six short stories with different titles and plots. Three of the short stories will be the main object of analysis in this thesis which is ‘A Dreamer’, ‘Squeaker’s Mate’, and ‘The chosen Vessel’. The first short story ‘A Dreamer’ presents a woman’s journey trying to return to her mother’s home after

disappearing. When she enters the house, she tragically finds her mother's dead body. The second one "Squeaker's Mate", is an important portrayal of women's strengths. It tells about a hard-working woman as a wood-cutter. She becomes a slave employed by his 'mate'. She is being discarded by the man because she is paralyzed after being hit by a tree trunk. The last short story is "The Chosen Vessel". It tells about a woman who lives in the middle of an isolated bush. The story becomes so suspenseful when a man called 'Swagman' come to her house, wanted nothing but to kill and abuse her. Then the story focuses on how a woman or the character escapes from the attack by Swagman who wants to abuse her and her baby. These three short stories have a similar pattern that tells about women's survival skills in short story collections, *Bush Studies*.

The main setting in this short story called 'bush' or sometimes called 'outback', is the part of Australia that is displaced from the denser edge of the continent. This is a set-up of a place in Australian that portrayed the situation of isolated area. In a journal entitled by www.we-love-melbourne.net explained that the word 'bush' in Australia does not mean 'a bush' but rather the surrounding landscape. It helped create Australian identity and enjoys iconic status. It was romanticized by writers like Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson and is a prominent theme in its literature, paintings, popular music, and cinema ("We Love Melbourne"). Richard in his journal *Rural Culture and Australian History: Myths and Realities* stated that in nineteenth and early twentieth century of rural Australia, Europeans see 'bush' as

reach provider of economics in terms of grazing, agriculture, and mining (83). Many traditional values originate in the bush. Today, many families like to go to bush to spend their holiday like camping or just exploring the bush.

Bush Studies was written by one of influenced Australian authors, Barbara Baynton. She was born in New South Wales whose her parents are Irish (Sally 425). Krimmer Sally in *New Light on Barbara Baynton* describes deeply into Baynton's biography of life, not only about Baynton's work. Sally argues that Baynton makes up the figure of her own life with fiction and dramatic effect throughout her writing. Barbara Baynton is known as the only women as 'pioneer of bush' among other Australian writers that also writers about bush living story like Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson. Déborah Scheidt in her article entitled *Mateship and Female Body in Barbara Baynton Squeaker's Mate* stated that the protagonists in the stories of Australian literature have one thing in common: they are all men. In fact, there was no female version in the Australian legend (69). Baynton is the only woman that tackles male dominance from the characters that she creates in her book.

Bush Studies is a quality work that tackles male dominance while any other 'bush writer' narratively left-out women's existence in most of the Australian stories. *Bush Studies* is Australian literary work that presents conceptual information of bush living story which is also well-known in Australian history. Baynton as the writer of this book contributed to portraying the situation of bush life to people around the world.

In this thesis, the writer will focus on the rural identity of female characters in *Bush Studies*. 'Rural' is a countryside area or a village that is usually portrayed as a place with a low population and lives traditionally. Meanwhile, Identity is characteristics, beliefs, or traits that distinguish people from another. Identity could be personal or communal. James D. Fearon in his journal entitled *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?* stated that identity means personal characters or features that build an individual's self-respect or prestige (2). The writer will specify the main object of analysis is women. Women's identity is categorized as 'gender identity' which means all the traits, behavior, beliefs, and assumptions that described a female or male. Gender identity that will be emphasized in this thesis revolves around rural society. Gender identity in rural is not only between an individual (personal), but it is also communal because it is attached to a place (countryside area) and the timeline (in *Bush Studies* 19th century). Steitz in her journal *Constructing Rural Identities – A Diverse Narrative* stated that countryside area (rural) still lacks of influence and knowledge about how to live a life. It is because the rural area is isolated from the main-influenced society such as field of education, health, and religion. Most of the identity sticks to culture and hereditary beliefs. As Selma Steitz stated that rural community are still far apart from gender issues and norm (5).

In *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* by Guerin, et. al, Elaine Showalter mentioned that there are three phases of women's participation in literature, first is the feminine phase in 1840-1880, when women duplicated the male

domination, and second is feminist phase in 1880-1920, when women fight for their rights (224). From this statement, the portrayed era of Barbara Baynton while writing *Bush Studies* was at the feminist phase. It can be seen that women in the 19th century are reflected as victims over male's power. However, Baynton builds the characterization of women in her book with the opposite identity that is almost equal to male. Baynton tackles the idea of male domination by highlighting the image of women as a fighter in the middle of isolated rural environment. Richard in his journal stated that there is strong evidence to suggest that women in rural Australia participate in hunting, and even work as "swag women", swing their swag through the Bush as they walk from station to station in search of a temporary place profession (84).

In short story collections by Barbara Baynton *Bush Studies*, women who were initially considered as weak creatures in traditional rural life, instead depicted as brave, tough, determined, independent, and strong figures. These identities will be further described as main discussion in this research. The writer will also solve the curiosity about how women in short story rely on situation of bush that intertwined their rural identity. Moreover, most of the researchers of previous studies about *Bush Studies* by Barbara Baynton just discussed the short story per each title. This is why the writer of this thesis will analyze three titles in *Bush Studies* that lead into similar matter regarding women's identity in rural environment. The focus of the analysis in this paper will be on female characters, therefore the author will also explain how

Barbara Baynton delivers feminist ideas through her short story collections *Bush Studies*.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The short story collections *Bush Studies* describes the struggle that faced by the female to survive in the middle of isolated rural setting of Australia which called 'bush' that intertwined their identity. The three selected short stories are "A Dreamer", "Squeaker's Mate", and "The Chosen Vessel". This identity will be described based on the representation of each female character in the short story. Later, the writer will also explain some feminist ideas conveyed by Barbara Baynton through her work *Bush Studies*.

1.3 Review of Previous Studies

Not so many researchers have analyzed the whole Baynton's work about *Bush Studies*. The first article from Krimmer Sally in *New Light on Barbara Baynton* has completed the fulfillment about Baynton's biography. This research supports the writer's opinion regarding the situation of women who live in bush when Baynton was lived. Sally also mentioned that Baynton is an ambitious woman. Hence, Baynton grow up in the middle of scandalous family and even share her life conflict to her grandson, Henry Gullet, which confirmed it in his 'Memoir of Barbara Baynton' (425). This statement also helps the writer to put a stress that ambitious is one of the identity of woman in bush.

The second article by Kay Iseman in Barbara Baynton: Woman as 'The Chosen Vessel' said that 'The Chosen Vessel' conveys the hostile image in bush is the reflection of Australian tradition (27). He discussed the contrast between Barbara Baynton and A.A. Philips, two Australian novelists. Where these two authors makes their books set in Australia's outback, according to her, A.A. Philips in his work *The Australian Tradition* never gave women significant roles in his stories. Additionally, he compared his work with one of Barbara Baynton's short stories, "The Chosen Vessel." According to Kay Iseman, there was no space for women among male writers during that time. Meanwhile, what I want to discuss in my research is the elaboration on the crucial role of women in works of fiction by Barbara Baynton, *Bush Studies*.

Ari Surahman Kurniansah, who has written a diploma thesis *Comparison of Gender Roles Shown in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies and The Lowland* shows the similar topic regarding gender and identity but from the perspective of male and female characters by applying feminist theory. Basically, this research depicts the changes of identity by going deep into characterization of books by Jhumpa Lahiri. It is concluded some intrinsic elements of the story which are characters, plot, and theme. With the background of cultural issues that affect the development of the characters, this research focuses to the perspective about traditional and modern roles. He also mentioned 'patriarchal binary thought' from Cixous to support that women do not deserve equality. Female characters in

Interpreter of Maladies represent as a character that is good at motherhood, not be able to speak up among society and got so much pressure and oppression from male. Meanwhile male characters pictured as superior (Kurniansah 3). Hence, this previous studies is having contribution to be reference considering the similar energy that experienced by the women in *Bush Studies*. Ari's research is useful to enrich writer's knowledge and understanding about how the feminist theory implies the woman characterization in story which is really matter for this research.

Sri Wahyuni in her thesis entitled *Feminist Messages: Women's Oppressions, Empowerment, and Identity as Seen in Half of Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* has also raised the same topic regarding female. The thesis uses feminist literary criticism theory by applying Jane Freedman's perspective on women's self-liberation from patriarchal domination. The conclusion of this study is the way the author describes the main female character in dealing with the pressures, the efforts made to resist, and the conflicts faced by the modern and educated female main character against the traditional Igbo culture. This research has the same topic regarding female characters in a book, but the research I do will be different because I analyze the identity of rural women while Sri Wahyuni's thesis raises the object of modern female characters. Even though both thesis (My thesis and Sri Wahyuni's) discussing about female identity in a book, it will be very different considering the surroundings, conditions and situations in isolated rural will form a different identity compared to modern female characters. This thesis also delivers feminist messages

from the way the author of the book *Half Yellow Sun* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explained the action of main character who wanted to escape from their culture namely Igbo culture in patriarchal society. Meanwhile, in my research in *Bush Studies*, feminist ideas will be conveyed through how Barbara Baynton highlighting female not only from the actions and behavior of the character, but also how the characters are described as physically similar to men.

The last study is from Deborah Scheidt in an article entitled *Mateship and Female Body in Barbara Baynton Squeaker's Mate*. This article is also analyzing one of the stories in *Bush Studies* which is *Squeaker's Mate*. This article discusses about mateship and female body that portrayed in "Squeaker's Mate". Women were not allowed to engage in mateship and were frequently relegated to supporting roles as mothers and housewives or did not appear at all in the stories' plots. Deborah also mentions the same statement about the stereotypes of the "mate" is a strong, independent, and hard-working woman. She also stated that woman is barely appeared as the main character and becomes supporting role in a story. Some of the findings in this article have confirmed that the female characters in *Bush Studies* are independent, hard-working and portrayed as heroic and historical. However, this findings lead specifically to female identity in bush Australia. This previous research can also be a reference and validation that rural women in Bush have the same identity as those depicted in Barbara Baynton *Bush Studies*' short story. All these identities are only pieces of the further findings of my research. Therefore, I would

like to explore another uniqueness of the identity of females in Bush through the representation of female characters in *Bush Studies*.

1.4 Research Questions

To guide this research clearly and not out of topic, the writer proposes two research questions below:

1. What are the rural identities of female characters that represented in *Bush Studies*?
2. How does Barbara Baynton deliver feminist ideas in *Bush Studies*?

1.5 Scope of Research

The thesis will aim on how the female characters are portrayed in the selected short stories by identifying their identity. The thesis does not seen from the perspective of the author, the aesthetic value of the work, or the readers' opinion simply because the problem revolves around society in explicit case about gender.

1.6 Objective of Study

In order to understand more deeply about the objective of the study which is the identity of woman, the writer will focus to how the woman in *Bush Studies* characterized, behave, and act.