

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In a Western patriarchal society, traditional gender roles have heavily paved the way for the dominating party because of the *status quo*'s emergence (Catalano 2002, 45). Andrews and Lomas (2017, 524) stated that the existence of World War II makes people rethink ideas about traditional social and cultural norms, which classify ideas about traditional gender roles. Thus, men perceive their duty to be morally responsible for exercising power over human and non-human (Gaard 1993, 44). The prejudice of women inevitably labelled as significantly inferior to men (Keller 1985, 104). In America, during the 1950s, the social life conceived that men and women shall carry out their respective gender roles, namely masculinity, and femininity, to be compiled with society's standard (Yates 1998, 50). Thus, gender roles and norms are socially enforced, which triggers dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, which used to be the fundamental ideology for classifying one's identity.

There is an imbalance in society's hierarchy of people's lives that still gives stereotypes and prejudices to women. At the same time, men are considered superior because they influence politics, the economy, and society. Men respond to this by popularizing ideas of masculinity as the ideal soldier and evaluating gender roles in the context of race, class, region, and other factors. However, dissatisfaction with the *status quo* was increasing, and the 1950s were a period of conformity to

traditional gender roles. Decades of change have further strengthened the message to promote equality, even though the reality of women does not reflect the values of existing ideas. Industrial progress, suburbanization, and vehicle mass production changed and facilitated traditional sexual norms (Logemann 2007, 4).

Women were still alienated from the economy, politics and are illustrated with domestic tasks as their primary responsibility to provide care (Knutilla 2008, 10). Feminist writer Betty Friedan, in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1968, 26), states that she opposes the traditional idea of women because it is in the nature of women to marry and give birth, and not only seen as an object of men's advantages. This movement for rights by many white and middle-class people known as second-wave feminism in the 1960s. The birth of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 set the agenda of the feminism movement. Women who are associated with nature which is equally oppressed due to the conceptual framework of culture started to challenge the system. Women who are aware of their individualist rights are aroused, and they demand women's participation in all aspects of American life.

Power with nature is emphasized because a cultural framework concept categorizes the division of nature, culture, feminine, and masculine (Plumwood 1993, 17). Nature is considered inferior in the nature-culture dichotomy, and femininity is deemed inferior to the feminine-masculine paradox (Gaard 1993, 37). The spread of ideologies and ideas to challenge environmental classicism exists because of the detrimental and unsustainable development. According to Gaard

(2017, 128), women's nurturing function is also threatened because patriarchy can affect women, children, and gender minorities to experience inequality. In responding to patriarchy, women have a social relationship with nature, which is why a movement called eco-feminism started to arise. Ecofeminism aims to emphasize that natural aspects of life are related to an effort or action from women.

This issue is highlighted in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*, written by Delia Owens. This novel was popular and became The New York Times Fiction Best Sellers in 2019 and 2020 (The New York Times 2020, 1). Delia Owens, as the author of this fiction novel, is a wildlife scientist who won several awards for her nonfiction books. One of her best-known books is *Cry of the Kalahari*, for which she received the John Burroughs Award (Owens 2020, 1). She also has a degree in zoology from the University of Georgia and a Ph.D. in Animal Behavior, which influences the majority from the female protagonist's perspective, placing herself in the midst of nature. The story and timeline of this novel tell of a female protagonist Catherine Danielle Clark, or mostly known as Kya. Kya's life was isolated from social encounters from 1952 to 1969 in the marsh of Barkley Cove, North Carolina, United States. The issue is emphasizing women's steps to achieve freedom as a form of her response to patriarchy due to abuse she received.

She was the youngest daughter of five siblings, she had become the victim of physical and verbal abuse by her father, or Pa. Periodically, her siblings and parents left her alone in the shack and make Kya have to depend on nature for her daily needs. Accustomed to living alone without receiving formal education or school,

Kya has knowledge from her experience living side by side or co-existing with nature. In her teenage, she had an encounter with Chase Andrews. He had a reputation for his background as a son of a business owner of Western Auto who sells automotive goods. In Barkley Cove, white people dominate as business owners, indicating their influence in the town. Chase's family owns Western Auto, which is a big success due to the rapid automotive development. However, Chase sexually harassed Kya's body later to bring fear and anger into her mind. Noticing she is getting abused, Kya attempted to murder Chase Andrews and left no trace where she could get away with the murder.

Kya also has an encounter with science through Tate Walker. He has an intimate relationship with Kya, and they meet when all members of her family have left. Tate, who was impressed with a woman's ability to live alone, had the initiative to help Kya read and understand nature's basic knowledge based on scientific facts. He is the son of a fisherman who also enjoys reading poetry, which influenced Kya to become a writer. He became the one who helped her by being by her side during the trial of Chase's murder case and a husband later on. Meanwhile, Kya often interacts with gulls, birds and likes to collect feathers and shells. Her relationship with Tate made Kya have the ability to read and interested in biology, ecology, and science. From her knowledge and experiences, Kya published her books to thanks to Tate's support.

The wisdom of nature and experiences make her understand many things so that she can respond to patriarchy. Kya's liberation is a result of a long journey from

being abused, isolated, and outcasted by the people of Barkley Cove. On the other hand, Kya used her knowledge about nature and characteristics that uphold empowerment because she has to defend and save herself to murder Chase Andrews, the perpetrator. The eco aspect is highlighted from how she lives a simple life by utilizing natural resources with a fairly primitive lifestyle. Kya's ethical form is an effort to confront the patriarchal culture in her life and prove her ability as a woman who has the same position as nature.

The novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* was published in 2018, and there has been no research using this object, except for online reviews uploaded by several mass media. However, an article entitled "*Ecofeminism as a Means of Spiritual Healing of Kate's Character in Alice Walker's Novel 'Now is the Time to Open Your Heart'*" was written by Ahmed Ghazi Mohasien in 2019 using Ecofeminism's theories by Ynestra King, Karen J. Warren, and Susan Griffin. Although the objects are different, hybrid ideas from Environmental and Feminist criticism both analyze that women have an intimate relationship with nature, even though she was controlled by men and abused physically and mentally. Based on this previous study, the concept that breathes the essence of the urge to act endorsed by nature is emphasized. The findings highlighting that women's spiritual beliefs and their interconnection with nature helped to enabled to be empowered to defend their rights. Therefore, the transformation has become the critical aspect of shaping a better future for women, contributing to this study shaping the focus comprehensively.

In this case, Ecofeminism plays a role in forming Kya's spiritual healing force and empowering her to tackle the hardships of patriarchy. Therefore, Ecofeminism is an approach to see the relationship between humans and nature that includes nonhuman nature in theory to analyze the dualism of nature-culture from other feminist schools (Mack-Canty 2004, 158). Ecofeminism is a critical tool for the reinterpretation and revaluation of literary works that raise the issue of the revisioning process of human relationships with nature (Legler 1997, 229). Furthermore, ecofeminism emphasizes reorganizing nature and the relationship between humans and nature. It is considered an achievement not to oppress humans based on gender, race, class, or sexual preference.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

According to the background stated above, there are problems that raise questions:

1. How do forms of abuses affect the life of the protagonist in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*?
2. How does nature empower the protagonist to respond to patriarchy portrayed in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*?
3. How does the protagonist generate the eco-social transformation depicted in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study aims to determine the issue of interconnection between nature and gender. Based on the statements of the problems, there objectives of the study are:

1. To disclose forms of abuse that affect the life of the protagonist in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*.
2. To disclose nature empowers the protagonist to respond to patriarchy in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*.
3. To disclose the protagonist generating eco-social transformation depicted in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The significance of this study is to provide a more in-depth insight into women and the interconnection on nature in the literary text. The writer will do further analysis of ecofeminism to connect the relationship between nature and women, following the significant bond and the interconnection. Hopefully, the conducted study from this research will help contribute to applying the theory of ecofeminism into literary work. Furthermore, this work would be helpful to be used as related studies on literary research related to a similar theory. The third is to share and give contributions from this analysis to the students of the English Department Universitas Airlangga, who majored in the literature area. Students will be enlightened while conducting a further study using Ecofeminism theory and apply

it to literary texts. A better understanding of applying theory to literary texts is expected to produce decent analysis by English Department students.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

This study contains five different chapters. The key terms are the prominent part of the analysis to help the reader get more insight and perceive the topic with a better understanding of analyzing the novel.

Eco-social : Eco-social is activism that emphasizes attention to personal, individual, collective, and political dimension practice towards a paradigmatic shift, that offers an alternative conceptualization that makes humans at the center of social duty towards transformative change to sustainability (Boetto 2016, 64).

Empowerment : Empowerment is a process that involves personal development, and the transfer from insight to collective action for change (Rowlands 1998, 22).

Nature : Nature is the material that existed in the physical world not made by people, including humans and not human beings such as plants,

animals, oceans, rivers, lakes, et cetera
(Williams 2011, 185).