

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Literature has many definitions. Rene Wellek in his book *Theory of Literature* says “to speak sweepingly one can say, summarizing, that in antiquity and in the Renaissance, literature or letters were understood to include all writing of quality with any pretense to permanence” (20).

McFadden also mentions the definition of literature in his book *‘Literature’: a Many-sided Process*,

I should say, then, that literature is a canon which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. It includes works primarily artistic and also those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary. The self-defining activity of the community is conducted in the light of the works, as its members have come to read them (or concretize them) (56).

Reading literary works may sometimes be difficult. Most of the works contain “hidden” messages. For prose, the texts are rather long, and the readers may be able to capture the meaning inside of it, but for poetry, it is more complicated. There are things that concern sound and structural devices. In one way, it is easy to get the meaning of a poem just by reading it, but on the other hand, poetry can be very difficult.

Poetry is one form of literature, and there are many definitions of poetry. Some of them are coming from the best poets in the world written in the book *Introduction to Poetry* by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. In that book, Emily Dickinson mentioned that, "If I read a book and it makes my body so cold no fire ever can warm me, I know that is poetry;" Robert Frost also defined poetry as "A way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget;" S. T. Coleridge said that poetry is "The best words in the best order," (299-300). But for the writer of the study, poetry is like painting in a blank wide canvas, where the poet uses words instead of paint, and the canvas is the reader. It is the reader's job to absorb its beauty, whether the reader wants to find its meaning, or something else beyond the text. However, to see the meaning behind the text is not always easy. One example to see it can be seen from one of the world's famous poets, E. E. Cummings through his poem, "l(a)". "l(a)" has been one of Cummings' riddle poems to show a possibility of many interpretation of a text, with very limited syntaxes.

The writer is personally attracted to this poem basically because Cummings' works always attract readers to read his poem. Having read the poem for the first time, it brought questions to the writer of the study. The form itself is intriguing, it resembles a uniqueness of poetry, and once the writer of the study attracted to the poem, he also became interested in the poet. "l(a)" is a special poem that should be written by using the typewriter font or the 'times new roman' font, because that is how the poem suppose to be written. The poem brought criticism about the first letter of the poem, and that issue will also be added in this

study. According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, Cummings also never wrote capital letters again since a long time ago which then became his style in writing poems. Cummings used jumbled syntaxes and punctuations in most of his works, and those kinds of things will always become a big question mark for anyone who attempts to read them. And for those reasons, the writer of the study is interested in the poem.

Without knowing what Cummings actually intended in making his poems, common readers might assume that Cummings' works are not poetry, but rather scrambled words joined together. However, the assumptions are not completely correct since Cummings' works are words that may have a lot of meaning. And from this study, the writer would like to show an analysis of Cummings' poem, and try to find the meaning inside the scattered syntaxes, and the poet's intention.

Cummings had created many works of arts beside poetry, he also wrote plays, and prose. Cummings' works are mostly traditional ones, it can be shown in some of his poems. He could be childlike in his poem, "maggie and molly and milly and may/ went down to the beach(to play one day)", bitterly satiric, "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls/ are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds", as well as political, "I sing of Olaf glad and big/ whose warmest heart recoiled at war". Many of his poems, especially the sillier ones, feature comical end rhyme, "the way to hump a cow is not/ to get yourself a stool/ but draw a line around the spot/ and call it beautifool". The sonnet was such a favorite form of his that examples were included in every one of his collections. In "1(a)", the poem really brought the artist in Cummings, where he was able to

create a traditional, yet revolutionary poem that allow the reader to create meanings through illustrations. This poem has very limited syntaxes, and it is the writer's job to find the meaning and elaborate it into an analysis.

Most of literary works leave the meaning to be perceived by the readers, especially poetry, and the public have the freedom to interpret the meaning. Quoting A. Teeuw in his book *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra*, that once a writing is published, it will become public's consumption. Therefore, public have the freedom to make any interpretation to find its meaning. Through the poem "1(a)", the writer will try to analyze this poem to find the poet's intention in writing it. By doing so, the writer will go through the process of interpreting a poem and then find the hidden meaning or the poet's intention from it. The writer will apply the theory of expression to Cummings' work in his poem, "1(a)". The writer wishes to show that by doing so, he can expose the "new" areas of Cummings' work. The description of "new" areas in Cummings poem will lead to a work of thesis.

Simply saying, the theory of expression will lead to the writer's personal interpretation toward the poem "1(a)" because this theory will explain about the creative process that the writer experienced in analyzing the poem "1(a)".

B. Statement of the Problems

The writer would like to state three questions to elaborate his analysis:

1. What does the poem illustrate?
2. What is the meaning conveyed in the poem?
3. What is the poet's intention in writing the poem?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study will be intended to answer the questions mentioned in the statements of the problem, by using the chosen theories as the tool to analyze it. The objectives of the study are:

1. To describe the illustration of the poem
2. To expose the real meaning conveyed in the poem
3. To find out the poet's intention in writing the poem

D. Significance of the Study

People have seen many of literary works in their everyday lives; each of them has their own style, character, or even perhaps color and flavor. Those qualities distinguish one literary works from another. However, the style, and all that have been mentioned above, of a literary work cannot be separated from the author. The author is the one who wrote it, thus he or she has the largest control over it. The author's background, beliefs, ideology, even gender may interfere within the work. Through this study, the writer wishes to present a reading of the famous poet in one of his poems "1(a)".

The writer hopes that the study would become a worthy addition amongst all the study about "1(a)" and E. E. Cummings, not only for himself, but also for the students of English Department of Airlangga University especially for those who major in literature and are interested in poetry, and also for the common readers.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to gain a comprehensive analysis, a scope and limitation are very important to determine. The first thing to be noticed is the work that is analyzed. Here, the intended work is a poem written by E. E. Cummings entitled “1(a)” which was recorded in one of his book of poems collection, *95 Poems* in 1958. The support from other aspects is possible as long as the aspects are able to give support that is needed in the analysis.

The study will be focused on the poem’s illustration, meaning, and poet’s intention. Therefore, the writer of the study will only be concentrating on the data that is taken within the poems and other sources that can support the arguments on the analysis.

F. Theoretical Background

To analyze the meaning and the poet’s intention of the poem, the theory of expression is used. The expressive theory is basically a study of interpreting a literary text from new perspective. By using the expressive theory, the writer wishes to find the illustration of the poem, and therefore will be able to fulfill this study. An expressive study also reveals the relation of the poem and the poet.

In this thesis, the writer would like to explore the “new” areas of Cummings' work. He would like to use the poet’s biography and relate it with the illustration, and to be able to gain full comprehension toward the object under discussion, and to be finally able to find the poet’s intention in writing the poem.

G. Method of the Study

The corpus of the study is the poem entitled '1(a)' which is written by one of the famous poets, E. E. Cummings. The method that is used by the writer in doing his analysis is library research, and the main source is the poem itself. The writer will also use other literatures as well as online sources in order to provide sufficient supports to elaborate the study.

Other method that will also be used by the writer is data collecting. All the data will be taken from the content of the poem and the book of collection of Cummings' poems. The data collecting will be done by having a close reading of the text, making the data classification and selecting the data that can be related with the theme of the poem. Later on, the data will be analyzed by using the theory of expression so that the writer can find the illustration, and thus the meaning of the poem and the poet's intention can be delivered, with the support of other texts concerning the same subject.

H. Definitions of Key Terms

Loneliness: A situation on one's feeling when he/she is alone/lonely.

Illustration: An explanation given in form of examples, pictures, etc.

Bisexual: A type of sexual orientation, where a person is interested and, or capable of loving both sexes.