

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework covers the explanation of the relevant approach, and theories which are necessary to confirm the framework and to equip the analysis with a clear description of the context.

The focus of this study is to find the meaning of the poem "l(a)" and also to find Cummings' intention in writing the poem "l(a)" by relating it with Cummings' biography with the poem. In doing this, the writer applies the theory of expression to support his analysis.

This study tries to uncover the intention of the poet, therefore expressive theory fits perfectly, because expressive theory looks at the window of the author of a literary text. There are namely three ways to read the verbal nature of literature, which are represented into three theories, the theory of imitation, theory of effect, and lastly theory of expression. The differences, which separate the three, are infused in each of the theories themselves.

In general term, Abrams summarizes the expressive theory in his book *the mirror and the lamp* as "a work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions" (22).

In the book *An Introduction to Literary Criticism* created by Marlies K. Danziger and W. Stacy Johnson, Plato mentioned a little about theory of imitation,

that arts are copies of man-made objects, which were just the copies of a copy (8). The second theory is called the theory of effect. According to the same book as the previous, this theory is said to be “the second traditional way of defining literature regards it in relation to its public” (10). And the third is the one that the writer decided to use, which is the theory of expression or also called as the expressive theory.

As mentioned before, this theory will be able to elaborate comprehensively to the subject matter. Theory of expression mainly seeks clear description of a literary text by looking at its illustration, and at the same time also works by looking back at the historical background of author of the text itself, in this case, Cummings’ background or biography. Still looking at the same book with the previous two theories, the theory of expression is also what is called the “divine madness”. It is what Plato explained as, “At the moment of creation, therefore, the poet is supposedly almost out of his senses” (12). From the explanation given, it is clear that any author, either novelist, poet, or dramatist, must have the moment in themselves when they created their works out of their senses. When the authors of literary texts were out of their senses, it could happen because of anything, even perhaps when they are under the influence of anything. Related to that of the poet’s background, the writer of this study tries to reveal Cummings’ intention in writing the poem “1(a)” by using the theory of expression. By using this theory, the writer would like to explore the new areas of illustration in the poem “1(a)”, and then relates it with Cummings’ personal background, and finally be able to find Cummings’ intention in the poem “1(a)”.

The main difference between the theory of expression with those of the two aforementioned theories is that, naturally this theory raises the evidence of the background of the poet to create a creative process of understanding the poem through illustrations. Despite of the fact that expressive theory is also talks about the psychology of the poet, the reader of this study must recognize that they are forsaking the field of literary criticism for that of psychology (13).

B. Review on Related Studies

There are several studies that concern about the poem “1(a)”, some of them are online journal and essays written by Iain Landles, Lewis Turco, and Ann L. Itical. Each of them gives different analysis and perspective toward the poem itself. Iain Landles once wrote an essay about “1(a)” entitled *An Analysis of Two Poems by E.E. Cummings, An Essay by Iain Landles*. Using Derrida’s deconstruction theory in his work, he investigated that Cummings' experimental work provokes a crisis in language by showing the unstable and undecidable relations between meanings, between meaning and form, and between different grammatical categories. Derrida claims that this crisis is as a result of the “logic of language and not an aberrant distortion of it.” Furthermore, that the crisis is both new— “we are still developing critical methods adequate to it”—and very old—as old as Plato and Aristotle (*Acts* 111). In his essay, he wrote:

Cummings' poem supports Derrida's radical conclusion that since all the words in this poem can be decomposed, there are no more words. Art is artificial: it is no "transparent window" showing

universal truths and realities, and the construction of poems such as “1(a)” is an obvious rejection of art as a transparent medium (41).

Other study is coming from Lewis Turco who wrote an essay about the poem “1(a)” entitled *Corn and Creativity: The Paradoxes of E. E. Cummings*. In his essay, he tried to create meaning by reconstructing the poem. His idea about loneliness in the essay concerns with the letter “el” which creates diffusion. He concludes that the letter “el”, used in place of the numeral 1 which, on old typewriters was left off the keyboard, and by dispersion, Cummings even brought the fact that the word “one” is part of “loneliness” (73).

Ann also wrote an essay based on the poem “1(a)”. Her essay entitled *One Is the Loneliest Number: The Structures of Solitude in E. E. Cummings' "1(a)"*. In her essay she analyzed about the embodiment of the feeling of being alone. She wrote that the metaphor of “a leaf falls” absorbs the meaning of the word that surrounds it, and that the poem's shape registers the pattern of a leaf falling strengthens the image's connection to the notion of being lonely. She also explains that by containing the textual version of the dropping leaf within “loneliness” and this again within the shape of that same dropping leaf, the poem effectively fuses feelings of solitude to the image of the leaf.

She basically talks about the shape of the poem itself, how it is shaped and how it is representing loneliness. Her ideas about interpreting the meaning of the poem by explaining the imagery, is similar to this study, however, this thesis will be different, since the writer of this study explains differently with the one Ann had. However, Ann provides his essay with different conclusion with this study's.

She concludes that “one” may be the loneliest number, but, ironically, Cummings’ “1(a)” prevents us from truly feeling alone by distancing the reader from the pathos of the leaf falling. In this study, the writer would like to give his own perspective of how does the poem illustrates, and tries to relate it with the biography of the poet.

Other important aspects are comments and responses from the readers of many online forums. A lot of readers have thought about what is the poem talking about, and they made their arguments. All of them land on the conclusion that the theme of the poem is loneliness. The writer was not the first to conclude the meaning of the poem, this study was not intended to invent or create the existing meaning, but to elaborate them into the same conclusion by using the theory of expression, and the feature that distinguishes this study from those related ones above is the new ideas and the use of the poet’s backgrounds. In this study, the writer tries to relate the meaning of the poem with the poet’s background by various events in the poet’s life. Due to this, the study will also be focusing more on the historical background or the biography of the poet compared to the previous ones which are mentioned above. (americanpoems.com)