

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the Background of the Research, Statement of Problems, Purposes of the Research, Significances of the Research, Conceptual Framework, Procedure of Research, Research Organization.

A. Background of the Research

Poetry is one the oldest form of literature. Poetry has also been an inseparable part of life that follows the development of civilization through time. Poetry is a kind of literary work that play some words. Different from prose, which uses familiar language, poetry uses strange language, so that language of poetry is called defamiliarization. According to Horace it is not enough for poetry to be beautiful, it must be affecting, and must lead the heart of the hearer as they will. Thus poetry must influence the hearer and makes them feel happy or sad. If it is about the sadness the hearer must be sad and if it is about happiness the hearer must be happy.

The earliest work of literature ever known was in the form of poetry. The world's biggest creations, such as Oedipus, Antigone, Hamlet, Macbeth, et cetera were even written using the form of poetry (Waluyo, 1995: 1).

In the early era of poetry development, poetry was identical with the value of beauty as its main attraction. People considered that poetry has

always been touching a romantic side of every reader. However, this view has changed during the course of time.

Literature is no more seen as a work to arouse sentimental side of human life. Literature is also seen as a social criticism. When the genre of poetry moved from romanticism, naturalism and then to realism, the view toward poetry changed from the sense of beauty as the main parameter of literariness to the sense of messages inside poetry.

This, then, also influenced the era of experimentalism. Though in the sense of message, experimentalism era was still influenced by realism, this era has created a new stress. Poets in the era of experimentalism tended to express the messages not in the term of vulgar and explicit languages, but more to create implicit messages by creating unordinary ways.

The poet that is identical with this style is E.E Cummings. He rejected the conventional understanding upon poetry. He tried to explore the part of the poetry that had never been explored by the poets of the previous era, such as typography, word structure, and ungrammaticalities.

Another interesting part of Cummings' view is how he sees that the poems are basically in the form of direct relationship between himself as a writer and the reader. It can be seen on how Cummings' view towards poetry in the following quotation:

“the poems are for you and me and are not for most people. It's no use trying to pretend the most people and ourselves are alike. Most people have less in common with ourselves than the *square root* of *minus one*. You and I are human beings; most people are snobs.”
(Cummings in Scully, 1965: 1).

The view shows how Cummings' creations are mainly based on how he views that a work of art as a subjective creation that must be based on the satisfaction between the writer's freedom of creation and the response of the readers as individuals. This, in anyway, has attracted the writer to make a deeper exploration.

In the writer's mind, the reason that makes Cummings experiment in making poems that are contradictive with conventional poems is more than a creative idea, but a way of saying criticisms. He never considers public's opinion upon his creations. From his statement that "You and I are human beings; most people are snobs", we can see that Cummings does not stress his attention on how his poems can be accepted by most people. However, Cummings' stress is how on making an individual relationship with the readers without considering what most people say. In short, the writer sees this phenomenon as an implicit way of criticizing the behaviors of the society.

Cummings, however, is not the only poet that did experiment with the new form of poetry. Many poets had raged against the conventional platforms of poetry. T.S Elliot, Ezra Pound and Robert Frost are the examples. However, those poets did not explore much with explicit, such as deviations on the grammatical structure and physical form, as Cumming did.

There are six poems explored in this research. The poems are, "mortals", "if you can't eat you got to", "anyone lived in a pretty how town," "love is more thicker than forget," "as freedom is a breakfast food", and "will you teach a."

Some of the poems use unordinary typography, while some others use strange word figure that does not exist in common poems written by other writers. Many of Cummings' poems use ungrammatical words that merely have been created by Cummings himself.

In exploring the poems, the writer applies semiotic approach. However, as the main approach, the writer uses Riffaterre's semiotics of poetry. The writer applies the theory because the writer thinks that Riffaterre has been recognized as a specialist in poetry analysis. There are some points that the writer expects by composing this research. Common people think that Cummings' poems are difficult to understand. However, the writer thinks that this is even the most interesting part to explore. Thus, the writer would like to give a reference on exploring Cummings' poems.

B. Statement of Problems

The research is a study of literature. Therefore, to overcome bias on this study, the researcher focuses on analyzing things that are still related to literature. The writer only works in the frame of literature study. Though Cummings poems have visual aspect that may also have deeper meanings, the writer does not focus on analyzing the visual arts deeply, for it can be analyzed only by using the theory of visual arts.

As mentioned in the background, the most interesting part of Cummings' poems is that how he packs the realism inside his poems. Therefore, to explore

Cummings poems, the writer has formulated questions as a main framework. The questions are:

1. What social criticisms appear in Cummings's poems?
2. How does Cummings deliver the social criticisms in his poems?

C. Purposes of the Research

Based on the answers expected from the research questions as the focus of the study, the purposes of the research are:

1. to describe what social criticisms appear in Cummings's poems,
2. to describe how Cummings delivers social criticisms in his poems

D. Significances of the Research

The writer hopes that the research will give benefits as follows:

1. giving an input to the readers one of the alternatives in understanding modern poetry, especially Cummings' poems,
2. giving input to the next researchers studying related subjects.

E. Conceptual Framework

This research is mainly directed to answer the problems formulations mentioned in the previous chapter. The problems, at first, came from the writer's interest of Cumming's poems. As the writer explores the poems, there is a significant assumption rises. This assumption is what the writer translated into problems formulation, and "social criticism" concept. Then, to answer the

problems, the writer picks Riffaterre's Semiotic of poetry. The writer assumes that Cumming's poem cannot be separated with Cumming's background as a social being. This is, then, formulated by the writer into two problems mentioned in the previous chapter. The problem formulation, however, cannot be let go from the social frame, so the writer picks the term "social criticism".

The term "social criticism" arises basically from ancient Aristotle's concept on literature that states literature as a reflection of reality. However, a more instant definition has been delivered by Yeats. Thus, the writer uses Yeats' opinion as a fundamental definition of the social criticism.

The choosing of Riffaterre's semiotics of poetry is mainly based on three arguments. The first is because this theory is focused on poetry analysis, so that the writer can efficiently apply the whole theory to analyze the poems. The second is because the writer thinks this theory is the most representative tool to uncover symbolic signs (both in the frame of linguistics and stylistics) that dominates the poems. The third argument is because this theory includes social backgrounds that become the background of the poetry as one of the important matter as its fundament on the process of analysis.

Riffaterre's theory is based on assumption that poetry is in the frame of indirection. It means that the meaning of the poem is not delivered explicitly by the poet. The second assumption is poetry has a significant character. the character is its unity.

The other main point that the writer gets is that it is a reader oriented theory. In this way, Riffaterre seems to include a part of receptions concept

as a philosophical fundament into his theory. It is reflected in the first level reading (heuristic) that depends on the readers' perception as a brainstorming process before moving to the next level of reading. The truly semiotics concept arises in the second level which is mainly based on the intertextual fragment decoding. This intertextual decoding process includes the process of sociological and historical tracing. Here, the "social criticism" theme taken in this research takes role. In analyzing works of art, one of the most important element in Riffaterre's theory is hypogram. In a broader sense, hypogram may be defined as anything that supports the analyzing process. In other words, social background can be considered as hypogram.

Though in simple words it can be said that this theory does not make a boundary for readers in a specific value, it does not mean that the readers can freely discover the poetry without a framework. The concept of hypogrammatic derivation concept is actually made to make a broad sense that leads the readers make an interpretation based on the view that a poetry of a work of art is a product of various related elements.

F. Procedure of Research

1. Method of Research

In the analyzing the subject materials, this research uses structural method, based on assumption that structural research is "in the structuralist approach to literature there is a constant movement away from the interpretation of the individual literary works and a parallel drive towards understanding the large

abstract structures which contain them” (Barry, 1995: 40). For analyzing this research with structural method first is close study of the text in isolation from all wider structures and contexts, and the second is relentlessly “text based” and tended to exclude wider questions, abstract, issues, and ideas (Barry, 1995: 41).

2. Data and Source of Data

The data consists of primary and secondary data. The primary data is in the form of word, phrase, sentence, stanza, or even a complete poem, for the writer should not neglect any part of the poems. It is because every single word or the whole form of the poetry can be the “sign” of social criticisms. The source of primary data is the six poems already mentioned in Introduction.

However, in order to fulfill information adequacy in conducting the research, collecting the right interconnected data is necessary. This is, then, to make the data into a thick description (Holliday, 2002: 75). The data are in the form of documents that contain notes of supporting methods that may be helpful in analyzing the primary data, background of both the writer and social conditions, as the social illustration of the era when the poems were written. This is, then, what is called as the secondary data. The secondary data is taken from any literal resources that support the analysis of the data, both from books and online resources.

3. Data Collecting Technique

In the term of collecting data, the research can be classified as a library research. It is because the method that is used by the writer is done by doing some steps that are dealing with written documents.

The primary data were collected by reading the source of the primary data, and then listing both semantic elements and the complete form of the poems. The reason that the writer also included the complete form of the poems is because the complete form of the poems are also essential as the object of analysis.

The collection of the secondary data, however, is different from the collection of the primary data. Since the secondary data were done in order to gain the information adequacy of the data, the writer collected any documents that deal with the poems and the method of analysis, and then selected parts of the documents that may support the analysis.

4. Data Analyzing Method

The analysis of the data is done in there major steps.

a. Classifying the data

The first step done by the writer after finishing the data collecting method is classifying the data. The data that had been collected are still in the form of raw data. As the data consist of semantic units, the writer must classify them into classes. For instance, many of Cummings poems contains ungrammatical words. In analyzing these, the writer must classify which can be understood at the first stage of reading, and which need a higher interpretation.

b. The analysis of the poem

The analysis is the stage where the writer did the core of the research. In this step, the writer conducted the research by putting the classified data into the semiotics theory to answer the problem formulation. The essence of this step

is to find signs inside the poems indicates the existence of social criticisms inside Cummings' poems.

c. Drawing conclusions

The last step in this thesis is drawing conclusion. This last step was done by summarizing the result of the second step. The results of the second step were arranged into a systematic description so that the result is acceptable.

G. Organization of Writing

The research is composed in the combination of five chapters. The chapters contribute each other, and compose a chronologic description in order to make the research easier to understand. In another side, the organization reflects the flow of the idea. The chapters are as follows:

First chapter is introduction. It contains the background of the research, statement of problems, purposes and significances of the research, and research organization. Second chapter is literary review, contains approaches applied in analyzing the poems and other substances that helps the process of analysis.

Third chapter is methodology, that contains, method of research, data, source of data, technique of collecting and analyzing data. Fourth chapter contains the analysis of the poem. Fifth chapter is conclusion and recommendation. The writer concludes the research in this chapter and also makes the recommendation to the readers.