

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five sub-chapters of the introduction. Those are background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature has a unique aesthetic concept that serves to attract people's attention. This can be found in every work of art such as poems, drama, novels, and other narrative stories, which have a plot that sequences events so as to make the reader feel that the story being told is happening in the real world. The author must have conveyed this element through beautiful language that has denotative and imaginative meanings, which makes the work literary and artistic. The term "literature" can be defined as "imaginative literature," which includes works of fiction, poetry, and other creative writing. It is distinguished from scientific or everyday language by its focus on expression, connotation, and the sound symbolism of words (Werren and Wellek, 1948, p.11). Humans produce literary works to communicate with others in a deeper use of language, they write poems, novels, etc. with various figurative language from formal elements that can be used as a means of imaginative and fictional thinking. Thus, readers will not get the message of these works if they only understand the literal meaning, as the use of language often depicts other things than the denotation.

In this analysis, the literary work concerned by the writer to be discussed is poetry or poem. Poem is a form of literary work that utilizes written language. According to Ollila and Jantas, poem is a type of spoken or written language that is rhythmically arranged and used to tell a story or express any emotion, concept, or state. This artistic expression can be achieved through poem in several ways (2006). It means that the message of the poem is structured in a certain way by using the right diction and the chosen writing style so that the poem looks more aesthetically pleasing. Poem is a way for a person to express their feelings, ideas, or emotions.

According to Ribeiro, the carefully constructed language in a poem provides a vivid picture of the poet's experiences or the narrator's memories. This occurs

because poem writing is intimately related to a variety of formal elements, including metaphor, irony and others (2007, p.197). These elements help the reader to understand a poem by focusing on the text and its formal elements rather than the author's past. Readers could interpret this differently as a result. As a result, a poem's meaning may change. Readers can understand the meaning, themes, and conflicts in a poem through the formal elements used in the text. The reader can understand the meaning or theme of a poem through its lyrics and structure.

Theme is the main idea or message that the poem wants to convey especially in this study. The theme of a literary work is the main idea or message that it conveys. New Critics believed that a great literary work has a theme that helps us understand what it means to be human. A literary text can have more than one theme, but still use New Critical methods to support our interpretations (Tyson, 2006, p. 71). In a poem, the author can convey a theme or message through the feelings and experiences of a character, subject, or object.

One of the most profound and universal themes in poetry is life and death. These themes reflect human existence and are often explored through symbolic and emotional language. In this study, the writer chooses to focus on Emily Dickinson, a famous American poet who is known for her deep and reflective poems, many of which explore life and death. Dickinson uses a unique poetic style to deliver powerful meanings. Through her poems, she reflects on human mortality, the mystery of death, and the emotional experiences surrounding life and dying. Dickinson conveys various feelings and experiences in her writing while reflecting on life and death through various characters and themes. Dickinson carefully integrates these topics into her writing through word choice and literary techniques like metaphors, metaphors, irony, ambiguity, tone, and tension allowing readers to interact with the text and deduce their own interpretations.

Life and death are two of the oldest and most universal themes in literature. Life is often seen as a meaningful journey where each person tries to find purpose, happiness, and goes through various challenges and opportunities. A perceived meaningful life is closely related to psychological well-being and one's ability to survive in multiple conditions (Heintzelman & King, 2014). Then, death is defined

as a complex emotional experience. It includes understanding emotions that are gloomy, disconnected, and insensitive to the surrounding environment. People can experience these feelings while they are still alive, which shows that death is not just about physical leaving, but also about powerful emotional experiences (Arif, 2023).

New Criticism has two main theoretical flaws that limit its effectiveness. First, it mistakenly tries to evaluate poetry based on emotional responses it evokes rather than analyzing the actual content and structure of the poems themselves. Second, it often falls into moralistic judgments, showing it hasn't fully broken free from traditional critical approaches. Moving beyond these restrictions would be advantageous for critics (Ransom, 1941, p. xi). From the quotation, it can be understood that prior to the emergence of New Criticism, traditional literary studies were grounded in two main principles: first, interpretation based on authorial intent, and second, evaluation through reader response. However, this approach contains fundamental weaknesses in terms of objectivity. On one hand, it's impossible to definitively know what authors truly intended, especially for literary works from the past. On the other hand, reader responses are inherently subjective as they are influenced by psychological states, cultural backgrounds, and individual life experiences, resulting in varied and inconsistent interpretations. The practice of literary criticism is no easy task to execute properly, particularly when applying the New Criticism concept as introduced by John Crowe Ransom in his seminal work, "The New Criticism" (1941). "Criticism remains an exceptionally challenging endeavor to execute well, particularly this emerging critical approach. Like any innovation, it lacks certainty, demonstrates inconsistencies, and often appears unrefined. This new methodology being no exception. It commits strategic missteps much like creative works of poetry and fiction might (Ransom, 1941, p. x-xi).

The writer of this study analyzes several of poems by Emily Dickinson, including "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain," "Because I could not stop for Death," "I heard a Fly buzz-when I died," and "After a great pain, a formal feeling comes." The themes of life and death are explored in these poems. Dickinson uses formal elements to illustrate how she shows these themes. Instead of based entirely on the

reader's emotions, the poem's use of metaphors, irony, and other elements successfully conveys the themes based on the text itself.

This study aims to understand how these formal elements contribute to the overall meaning and impact of selected Dickinson's poems. By examining how structural aspects like metaphors, irony, ambiguity or other formal elements to convey themes of life and death. The study will uncover the intricate ways these elements enhance the poems' emotional resonance. Additionally, the study will explore how formal elements such as metaphor, irony, ambiguity or other formal elements and etc intensify or clarify the contrasting ideas of life and death. This analysis will provide insights into the complex interplay between form and meaning in Dickinson's work. The study demonstrates how Dickinson's use of formal elements invites various interpretations and deepens the reader's engagement with her themes. The study will contribute to a greater appreciation of Dickinson's poetic artistry.

This study is necessary because it helps to appreciate how poetry communicates deep human experiences through artistic techniques. By examining four selected poems "Because I could not stop for Death," "I heard a Fly buzz-when I died," "I felt a Funeral in my Brain," and "After great pain, a formal feeling comes," the study shows how Dickinson uses formal elements to represent the tension between life and death. This approach is based on New Criticism, which focuses on analyzing the text itself rather than the author's biography or the reader's feelings (Tyson, 2006, p. 136). The analysis will contribute to a better understanding of Dickinson's poetic style and provide insights into the emotional and philosophical meanings of life and death in her work.

In this case, the writer wants to highlight the themes of life and death in Emily Dickinson's poems. This is because many of Dickinson's poems encompass multiple themes, each carrying its significance. The author is particularly drawn to poems that not only explore these themes but also showcase the formal elements employed by Dickinson. By focusing on these poems, the study aims to understand how structural aspects like metaphors, irony, ambiguity or other formal elements contribute to portraying life and death. Additionally, the study will examine how

formal elements enhance these themes. Eventually, this analysis will provide deeper insights into Dickinson's poetic techniques and their impact on the reader's interpretation of life and death.

Emily Dickinson is a well-known American poet. His hometown is in Massachusetts. She's well known for his poems, which are full of unusual and difficult language. spent much of his time at home. Emily Dickinson is a passionate poet who frequently uses flowers in her poetry to convey her feelings (Tawali & Firman, 2019). Emily Dickinson's experimental use of language appears in her poetry, especially when it comes to discussing the themes of life and death. She offers deep insights into human existence through her unconventional punctuation, slant rhyme, and unexpected elliptical style. However, readers often have to interpret the philosophical and emotional depth of life and death (Poetry Foundation, n.d.).

There are several previous studies that analyze Emily Dickinson's poems from various perspectives and several other poems that share the same theory. The first study is a thesis entitled "An Analysis of Figurative Language on Emily Dickinson's Poem Entitled 'I'll Tell You How The Sun Rose,'" by Sindi Werdiningsih (2021) from the State Institute of Islamic Studies Ponorogo. The study focused on analyzing figurative language in the poem, specifically identifying types such as metaphors, personifications, and imageries, and interpreting the content meaning within the framework of figurative language theory. The second study is a thesis entitled "An Analysis of Metaphor in Emily Dickinson's Poems" by Habib Syarwani (2017) from the State Institute of Islamic Studies Ponorogo. The study focused on identifying types of metaphors in Dickinson's poems, using cognitive metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson. The study analyzed structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors to uncover implicit meanings within the poems. The third study is from a thesis entitled "The Death in Emily Dickinson Selected Poem's" by Dewi Ananda (2020) from Hasanuddin Mataram University analyzes the theme of death in selected poems by Emily Dickinson through a structural approach, highlighting formal elements such as diction and imagery.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on background of the study that has been formulated above, there are two research questions as follows:

1. What formal elements are found in Emily Dickinson's selected poems that convey the themes of life and death?
2. How do the formal elements in Emily Dickinson's selected poems interact to create tension that highlights the themes of life and death?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study:

1. To identify and analyze formal elements that effectively convey the themes of life and death in selected poems by Emily Dickinson
2. To examine how formal elements interact in Dickinson's poems to create tension that emphasizes the themes of life and death

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study enriches literary analysis by investigating how Emily Dickinson's poems use formal elements to convey themes of life and death. The study improves literary criticism by examining these formal elements, especially in the context of New Criticism. It contributes to a deeper comprehension of how formal approaches and textual evidence influence theme interpretations by providing a thorough framework for analyzing other literary works' structural elements.

Practically, this study can be used as a reference for students, especially those in the English Study Programs, who are interested in analyzing poems or other literary works using formal elements. It gives students a methodological guide for their own literary studies and offers insights on how to use the New Criticism methodology, especially when examining complicated topics like life and death in poem. Furthermore, this study can be a helpful reference for scholars and students who want to concentrate on related topics in various types of literature.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Based on the theory applied in this study, the theory used in this study is New Criticism by Ransom (1941) and supported by the theories Bressler (2011) and

Tyson (2015). The focus is on analyzing the formal elements in selected poems by Emily Dickinson, particularly how these elements convey the themes of life and death. This study is limited to examining the formal elements such as ambiguity, tone, metaphor, irony, tension used in the poems. The analysis concentrates on how these elements through specific words, phrases, and sentence structures, express the profound themes of life and death.