

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Poetry differs from other literary genres, such as prose and drama, in that it is defined mainly by its meter and stanza, which can captivate the reader promptly (Chen, 2019). It is explained by Riffaterre in *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978) that the frequent use of terms that are not widely used and particular grammar, which is often flawed, imprecise, and does not match the standard, shaped the language of poetry distinctly. Despite its poetic aspects, many assume that poetry is intricate to comprehend, as sometimes the poetry's message is nowhere seen on the surface or, in other words, requires a deep level of understanding. Addressing this issue, this study attempts to focus on the dominant elements which can be seen from the words and phrases in a poem as a way for understanding the poem's meaning as a whole.

The poem chosen to be further analyzed in this study is "The Rhodora," written by a pioneer of Transcendentalism—a philosophical belief in the unity of the universe and God—and one of the influential American writers in the 19th century, Ralph Waldo Emerson (Brewton, n.d.). Emerson composed the poem in May 1834, shortly after he returned from New Bedford and had a magnificent vision in Mt. Auburn Cemetery. This poem consists of 16 lines, a sort of

lengthened sonnet (Richardson, 1995) divided into two parts, each of which has eight lines. The first eight lines suggest questions as indicated in the poem's subtitle, whereas the latter eight lines present the answer promptly and without consideration (Yoder, 1978).

“The Rhodora” is selected as the object of analysis due to its constant mention of flower and color, which aligns with the focus of this study. Also, even though the lines of the poem are not as extended as some poems out there, there seem to be many that can be learned by focusing on the existing elements. Those elements present in “The Rhodora” make it possible to discover their meaning through language of flowers or floriography and the colors symbolism. With that in mind, the seven types of meaning theory by Leech is applied in analyzing the poem because the distinct classification it has is considered appropriate to unpack the meaning that can be found in “The Rhodora.” The previous studies analyzing “The Rhodora” that can be found are not yet utilizing Leech’s seven types of meaning and some of them, which are Amri's (2018), Zheng and Zhang's (2019), and Matti's (2021), mostly connect the poem directly to Emerson's transcendental beliefs. Therefore, this study challenges to perceive the poem as it is while applying the seven types of meaning, so that a thorough understanding of the poem can be achieved.

1.2. Research Problems

Questions stating the research problems emerge from the background of the study are as follows:

1. What types of meanings do the flowers and colors in "The Rhodora" have?
2. What is possibly intended by the poet from the types of meaning found in "The Rhodora"?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research problems, the study aims:

1. To identify which types of meanings are present in the flower and color elements of "The Rhodora."
2. To reveal the poet's possible intention that can be seen from the types of meaning found in the flower and color elements in "The Rhodora."

1.4. Previous Studies

In the process of writing the present study, the author found a total of ten prior studies categorized into two groups. The first group is composed of five studies with "The Rhodora" as the object of the study. Even though the objects are similar, the focus of the present study and five prior studies is different, especially since most of the studies brought up Emerson's transcendentalism belief.

The first study from the first group by Amri (2018) utilizes Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism to find relations between the poem's structure

and the social structure influencing the transcendental worldview. The dialectal method used in the study later revealed that the poem represents transcendentalism.

The second study from the first group by Raquiño (n.d.) applies four levels of stylistic analysis to identify the functionality of applied elements so that there is relevance between literary effects and linguistic causes. Differing from other studies with similar objects, Raquiño's is the only study whose findings has no connection to the poet's belief, which is transcendentalism, since it focuses solely on the poem's delivery and the poet's purpose.

The third study from the first group by Peiwei Zheng and Jingling Zhang (2019) is fairly similar to Matti's short essay (2021), which is the fourth study from the first group, in that both attempt to view Emerson's perspective on nature. The differences between the two studies are that the third study assesses the structure and artistic form of the poem to recognize the nature conception, while the fourth study merely focuses on beauty and aesthetic conception in transcendentalism.

The last study from the first group turned out to use flowers as the focal element, similar to the present study, but this study views flowers as a native symbol. By native symbol, Phuyal (2021) has the idea that the flower found in the poem has a relationship with the poet's nationality. The distinct feature of this study is that it analyzes two poems with flower elements found in them to determine the poet's way of expressing their nation through symbolism.

The second group also contains five prior studies, which differ in objects but are similar in focus or theory applied. Three out of five studies in the second group have a similar theory to the present study. The theory used is Leech's seven types of meaning meant to analyze poems like "A Red, Red Rose" by Robert Burns (Jimmi & Juniato, 2019), "An Ode to Death" by Daud Kamal (Kehar, 2018), and "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost (Afzal & Zaki, 2023). The application of seven types of meaning theory fits those three studies because they distinguished the lines in the poem into seven types of meaning gradually with Jimmi & Juniato's as the most comprehensive analysis among the three.

Two studies left in the second group have a similar focus as the present study: those by Inčiuraitė (2013) and Qatatsheh (2015). Both focus on color elements but vary in perspective because Inčiuraitė uses a semantic perspective to examine the symbolic use of colors in John Milton's poem "Paradise Lost," just like the present study. In contrast, Qatatsheh's perspective is pragmatic and is utilized to find out the use of colors in Shakespeare's poem "Venous and Adonis."

Grouping the studies into two made it obvious that these studies have gaps, like most prior studies of "The Rhodora" tend to associate it with transcendentalism and the application of Leech's seven types of meaning to a poem is often done on the stanza and not on smaller parts. Aware of the gaps, the present study is meant to fill those by perceiving "The Rhodora" as what can be seen in the poem's text and applying the Geoffrey Leech's theory of seven types of meaning to classify words or phrases related to elements, which are flowers and

colors, found in “The Rhodora.” Despite some studies already focused on those two elements, the previous studies found so far are not yet using Leech's theory and compared to other theory regarding meaning types, the seven types of meaning by Leech has more specific order of the types which makes it applicable to provide meticulous explanation.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The present study is within the purview of semantics, as evidenced by the application of the seven types of meaning distinguished by Geoffrey Leech to inquire into the meaning of flowers and colors found in the text of "The Rhodora" poem. The poem's text serves as the data for the study, which is available digitally on the Internet Archive in the poet's early poem collection. Focusing on the flower and color elements, the study only views the words or phrases related to both elements, which are then interpreted under Leech's meaning distinction.

1.6. Writing Organization

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter consists of the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter contains the theoretical framework that presents the main theories applied in the study, Leech's

seven types of meaning. Aside from that, the chapter also contains a research method that covers details about the data and methods of collecting and analyzing the data.

CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents systematically the findings and explanations of the data in three parts. The first part presents a list of words or phrases related to flowers and colors, which are then specified in a table with a brief conclusion; the second and third parts discuss the table of flower and color elements respectively, so that the research problems can be answered, and the study can be concluded.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The conclusion chapter summarizes the results of the study.