

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

War has been a common theme in many literary works, often shown in a way that glorifies violence and praises heroism. However, not every writer agrees with this perspective. One of the true example is Wilfred Owen, who is now recognized as one of the most important poets of World War I. He was born in 1893 close to the Welsh borders in Oswestry and grew up in Birkenhead and Shrewsbury in Ireland.¹ Although he became well-known only after his death, Owen had published just four poems while he was alive. His work was not widely accepted at the time because it was too realistic and bleak. Yet, people who knew him also described him as kind, passionate, and highly skilled in writing.

Before joining the army, Owen spent several years developing his poetry, including *Anthem for Doomed Youth* that focusing on rhyming and structure between 1913 and 1917.² He enlisted in the British Army in 1915 but after a difficult time, he returned home and met Siegfried Sassoon, a famous poet who mentored and influenced his writing. Thanks to Sassoon's guidance, Owen's work greatly

¹ Owen, W., & Stallworthy, J. (2004). *Wilfred Owen: Poems*. Faber.

² Hibberd, D. (2019). *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

improved and he was later awarded the Military Cross for his bravery and leadership during the war.³

One of Owen's most powerful poems, *Anthem for Doomed Youth* was written in 1917 during a time of extreme violence. His first-hand experiences as a soldier helped him write with honesty and emotional depth, making his poems especially moving. *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is part of a type of poetry called war poetry known for honestly showing the harsh realities of battle and criticizing its cruelty.⁴ Although published after his death in 1929, Owen's poetry remains a powerful reminder of the many lives lost during the war. His work captures the deep pain and sacrifice that defined that period in history.⁵

The write chose to analyze *Anthem for Doomed Youth* due to its raw portrayal of the horrors of war and the silent suffering of young soldiers, unlike many war poems that glorify battle and sacrifice. Owen's work reveals the emotional and physical toll experienced by soldiers who are often left to die without honor or recognition. This thematic resistance captures the tragic irony of modern warfare presented through vivid imagery, haunting metaphors, and the use of traditional sonnet form. This poem not only for its powerful language but also for the sociopolitical questions it raises about how war is remembered and justified in society.

³ Fussell, P. (1975). *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford University Press.

⁴ Silkin, J. (1998). *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*. Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press.

⁵ *Wilfred Owen Association: Leaflets*. (1993). Wilfred Owen Association.

The poem is analyzed through the lens of Lucien Goldmann's theory of Genetic Structuralism, a framework that connects the internal structure of a literary work: including its themes, style, and form with the historical and ideological background of the author and their social group.⁶ Genetic structuralism assumes that literature is not created in isolation. Instead, it reflects the worldview (*Weltanschauung*) of a particular group shaped by its material conditions and social realities.⁷ In Owen's case, his identity as a soldier during World War I combined with his disillusionment toward war and the British military ideal, so it forms the extrinsic context that shaped his writing.

At the same time, this study acknowledges that effective literary analysis must also be grounded in solid research practices. In line with Mary W. George's concept of library research, this thesis is built on what she calls "a planned process of inquiry" where researchers continually ask focused questions, evaluate sources critically, and synthesize information in order to construct meaning.⁸ George emphasizes that good research is not merely about gathering facts but about asking the right questions and following the intellectual trails they generate. This aligns well with the use of genetic structuralism which also relies on tracing conceptual links between text and context.

⁶ Goldmann, L. (1986). *Towards A Sociology of The Novel*. Tavistock Publications.

⁷ Selden, R., Widdowson, P., & Brooker, P. (2017). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Routledge.

⁸ George, M. W. (2008). *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*. Princeton University Press.

In this case, the research questions evolved from close reading and were guided by deeper inquiries into the poet's life and the sociopolitical environment of his time, thus reflecting George's principle of research as a dynamic and reflective process. Combining George's research methodology with Goldmann's literary theory allows the writer to not only examine *what* the poem says, but *why* it says it that way, and *how* that meaning is shaped by broader historical and ideological forces.

This approach is considered appropriate because it enables a more integrated reading of the poem where intrinsic and extrinsic elements are treated as ontologically complementary that is they exist together and cannot be separated when understanding a literary text.⁹ Genetic structuralism allows for a deeper exploration of how Owen's personal, social, and ideological background contributes to the meaning embedded within the poem's literary elements.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background of the study, the writer concludes some of research problems for the thesis such as:

1. Which intrinsic aspects are described in the poem?
2. Which extrinsic aspects are described in the poem?
3. How do the intrinsic aspects reflect its extrinsic aspect as interpreted through Genetic Structuralism?

⁹ Helaluddin, H. (2019). *Strukturalisme Genetik Lucien Goldmann Dalam Pengkajian Karya Sastra*. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/hfaeb>

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem, the objectives of the study that can be concluded for the thesis are:

1. To examine the intrinsic aspects of the poem.
2. To examine the extrinsic aspects of the poem.
3. To examine the reflection between intrinsic aspects and extrinsic aspects of the poem.

1.4 Previous Studies

There are several previous studies on this topic. First study is an article “Wilfred Owen’s Anger Over the Loss of Young Soldiers Lives in the Poem *Anthem for Doomed Youth*” written by Ibrahim (2024) which provides useful background of the poem. In the article, it stated that the poem follows the structure of a sonnet which includes an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines). Owen uses a poetic rhythm called iambic pentameter to create a contrast between calm and violent images showing how war brings chaos and instability¹⁰

The second study is “The Literary Critics: A Study of English Descriptive Criticism” written by George Watson (1962). In this book, Watson explores the role of history and ideology in interpreting English literature particularly poetry that emerges from times of conflict. When discussing Wilfred Owen, Watson notes that

¹⁰ Ibrahim, A. M. (2024). Wilfred Owen’s Anger Over the Loss of Young Soldiers’ Lives in the Poem “Anthem for Doomed Youth.” *Humanities and Educational Sciences Journal*, (37), 780–795. <https://doi.org/10.55074/hesj.vi37.1007>

Owen's work is deeply shaped by his direct experience as a soldier. He describes Owen's poetry as an act of resistance not only against the war but against the language used to glorify it. This research will support this writing to argue that *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is not just a personal lament but also part of a larger ideological critique of militarism and nationalism.¹¹

The third and the last fundamental study for this research is written by Lucien Goldmann (1967) titled "Structuralism and the Sociology of Literature". In this foundational essay, Lucien Goldmann outlines the concept of genetic structuralism as a bridge between formalist literary analysis and sociological interpretation. He argues that a literary work is not an isolated artifact but a structured whole that reflects the "world vision" (*vision du monde*) of a social class. According to Goldmann, a literary structure (themes, symbols, form) arises in response to collective human experiences and ideologies within specific historical contexts. Goldmann proposes that the critic must analyze both: the structure of the text itself (intrinsic elements) and the social and ideological conditions (extrinsic elements).¹² This essay offers the core theoretical justification for this writing and directly supports the goal of bridging intrinsic and extrinsic elements in *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.

¹¹ Watson, G. (1962). *The Literary Critics: A Study of English Descriptive Criticism*. Penguin.

¹² Goldmann, L. (1967). 'Genetic Structuralism' in the Sociology of Literature. In *The Sociology of Literature and Drama* (pp. 195–211). essay, *Littérature et Sociologie*.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the analysis of Wilfred Owen's poem *Anthem for Doomed Youth* through the lens of genetic structuralism as formulated by Lucien Goldmann. The analysis focuses on two primary components: (1) the intrinsic elements of the poem including structure, imagery, diction, and figurative language; and (2) the extrinsic elements which consist of Wilfred Owen's social, cultural, and ideological background during the context of World War I.

The study does not attempt to examine all of Owen's poems nor does it provide a comprehensive historical account of the First World War. Instead, it emphasizes how the selected poem reflects the collective worldview (*vision du monde*) of a disillusioned wartime generation, as seen through Owen's personal and ideological stance.

This research also limits its theoretical framework strictly to Goldmann's genetic structuralism and does not apply or compare other sociological or literary theories. In line with Goldmann's framework, the study analyzes how the form and meaning of the poem are structured by the historical and social conditions that shaped the author's consciousness.

1.6 Writing Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, research problem, objectives of the study, scope of the study, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter contains a theoretical framework. The intrinsic aspects discussed based on Reaske and the extrinsic aspect discussed is the theory of Genetic Structuralism by Lucien Goldmann.

CHAPTER III

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes the research question mentioned above using theory in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the conclusion of the research that the writer has finished.