

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

World War I, also known as The Great War, lasted from 1914 until 1918. This war began with the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. However, in a short time, the conflict dragged other European countries and led to a global war. The occurrence of World War I which caused many casualties drew considerable attention. People had different reactions and perspectives regarding the war. Some of them expressed their views on war by the means of literature. It was during the war time, poetry with war theme emerged.

One of the war poets was Wilfred Owen. He was well recognized as one of the leading poets in the course of World War I. Dylan Thomas, a fellow English poet, commented on Wilfred Owen as the poet of all times, all places and all wars (“Wilfred Owen: Poet of the Trenches”). Owen was also a British soldier. Having served in the military, he wrote his war poems in the battlefield. His writings on war, influenced by Siegfried Sassoon, created vivid pictures for the readers (“Wilfred Owen”). Those war poems depicted the horrible and miserable

condition in the battlefield. Some of his notable works on war are “Dulce et Decorum est” and “Anthem for Doomed Youth.”

Although Owen wrote many war poems, I only choose three of them to be analysed in my thesis as they strongly reveal his personal thoughts and experiences of World War I. They are “Dulce et Decorum est,” “Arms and the Boy” and “The Chances.” In those poems, Owen attempted to be realistic about war and depicted the awful battlefield. A source stated that “during the war, poets such as Jessie Pope and Rupert Brooke wrote patriotic poems saying that it was good to die for your country. Wilfred Owen disagreed. He thought it was important to tell people what war was really like” (Trueman).

Another poet I would like to discuss in my thesis is Sir Owen Seaman. He was a British writer, journalist and poet. Seaman wrote many books and articles in his lifetime, one of them was *Horace at Cambridge*. His first successful work was “Rhyme of the Kipperling.” At the time of World War I, Seaman was influenced by the British Propaganda to promote and support England in World War I. Seaman’s writing about patriotism reflects his optimism and devotion to England (“Biography of Sir Owen Seaman”). In regard to his writing, Seaman received his knighthood in 1914.

Seaman’s support on war is strongly seen in the poems entitled “Pro Patria,” “Probation: To a King’s Recruit” and “In Memory of Field-Marshal Earl Roberts.” These works had been published and spread widely during the war. Moreover, “Pro Patria” is one of his best-known war poems. In contrast with Owen, Seaman depicted the war as the glory and honour of the people. He attempted to arouse the patriotism in the hearts of British people with “his verse

[which] is a clear, competent call to support official Government policy” (“Owen Seaman”).

Having read some selected poems of both poets, I can infer that the theme in each of the poems is the most dominant element. Thus, I would like to discuss the poems by analysing the theme. Both poets wrote about World War I. However, Wilfred Owen and Sir Owen Seaman had different views on war. In the poems, both poets reflected their thoughts on war through the diction. Diction itself means “the choice of words and style of expression that an author makes and uses in a work of literature” (“Diction”). By studying the diction, the poets’ views on war can be concluded, as revealed in the theme, which is “a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work, which may be stated directly or indirectly” (“Theme”).

The method I choose in my analysis is formalism, which “refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical, or intellectual contexts” (“Formalism”). My focus is solely on the poems in which the themes are revealed through the diction.

Statement of the Problem

The statements of the problems are as follows:

1. What are the themes of the poems?
2. How do the diction of the poems help to reveal the themes?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To show the themes of Wilfred Owen's and Sir Owen Seaman's poems.
2. To show how the diction of the poems help to reveal the themes of the poems.

Method of Research

In writing my thesis, I did some library and online research. First, I read the selected poems of Wilfred Owen and Sir Owen Seaman. Then, I analyzed the theme of each poem through the diction. I did some online research in order to find some references to support my opinion and analysis. Finally, I drew some conclusions from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis comprises four chapters, which are preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents and Abstract. The first chapter is Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter contains the analysis of the themes in three of Wilfred Owen's poems whilst the third chapter contains the analysis of the themes in three of Sir Owen Seaman's poems. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of the analysis of the six poems. This thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which present the poems and Biography of the Poets.