

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

B.1 Genetic Structuralism

B.1.1 The Concept of Genetic Structuralism

Genetic structuralism is a literary approach that emphasizes the relationship between literary work and society. The term of “structure” refers to the linguistic and structural framework that forms the basis of language (Soltani & Bacha Hamdi, 2024). This theory developed by Lucien Goldman, a Romanian philosopher and sociologist based in France, who argue that literary works are not just the work of individual creations, but also a representation of the social structure of a specific social class or group (Selden et al., 2005).

Genetic structuralism developed in mid-20th century. Goldman developed this theory as a respond to the limitations of classical structuralism, which often ignored social and historical contexts. Lucien Goldman combines structural analysis with a strong social vision. This approach not only changes the perspective in analyzing literary works, but also reveals the detail languages in text (Soltani & Bacha Hamdi, 2024).

According to Goldman, literary works are structure which does not stand by itself, but it is a reflection of historical process and social structure in which the author’s socio-cultural background. In society, human deals with norms and values, and literature reflect that norms and values. In other words, the internal structure of the text such as theme, characters, plot, and languages have a

correspondence with social structure of society. Therefore, a work of literature cannot be separated from its social context and seen as something exists independently. To understand literary work, one should examine how it connects within larger socio structure (Goldman, 1980).

His theoretical basis is influenced by Jean Piaget of genetic epistemology. Initially, Goldman adopted Marxist (Lukácsian) dialectical method of “totality”, the view that social phenomena are interrelated and must be understood in a boarder social context. Goldman then integrated Jean Piaget’s genetic epistemology, changing the concept of *totality* to *meaningful structure* that views social structure as dynamic. Humans have consciousness and act to change the structure. The making (genesis) is more important than the structure (Zimmerman, 2013). There are main concepts of genetic structuralism:

1. Human Fact

One of the key concepts of genetic structuralism is the idea of *Human Fact*. According to Muniroch (2013), Goldman believes that human has three natural tendencies; the tendency to adapt their environment, the tendency to create consistency as their responses to environment, and tendency to change social structure. Literary works are the result of these tendencies. Authors often raise environmental issues, injustice and oppression toward particular group, or proposed changes. Goldman introduce the concept of human fact. Human fact are the result of human behavior and work of the subject that can change social history (Goldman, 1980). The subject of human fact consists of two type, individual

subject and collective subject. Human facts that play a role in historical events, such as social, political, and economic revolutions, and cultural works, are social facts that emerged only by trans-individual subjects. The author can be said to be a trans individual who represents the aspirations of a group (Goldman, 1980).

2. Worldview

The second main concept of genetic structuralism by Goldman is worldview or in its original term *weltanschauung*, is a shared understanding that is historically formed through dialectics between groups. Goldman (1977) as cited in Sakinah & Kusumayanti (2023) defined worldview as social group's ideas, aspirations, and feelings that shared with and contrast with those of other social group through the author's writing. The structure of literature and the structure of society are interconnected through worldview.

Texts become symbolic structures that exemplify this worldview, offering insights into how a community understands itself and its place in the world. However, a worldview cannot consist solely of individual facts. No matter how great an individual's creative imagination, given the limitations of his life and experience (Goldman, 1980). Worldview is not the result of individual subject, but rather the result of collective or transindividual consciousness, The author acts as a transindividual who articulates the collective consciousness, struggles, and aspirations of a community.

3. Homology

Another central idea is the concept of homology, which refers to the correspondence between structure of literary works and social structure it reflects. In other words, the structure of conflict, themes, values, and languages in literary works have connection between the structure social reality. Homology explain the parallel connection between the literary works structure and social structure. A literary work is correspondence to the collective consciousness of particular social class or classes, which must be understood in the totality of social relations (Goldman, 1980). However, the homology between literary work and social structure are indirectly related. This homology is connected to the worldview of author's social community formed through his work as responses societal problems (Goldman, 1980).

Whitin this context, Goldman applies the concept of homology to his analysis of Jansenism (a French religious movement) and Racine's Tragedy. Goldman shows how literary works (Racine's Tragedy), *weltanschauung*, social groups (Noblesse de Robe), through formal structure, not direct content. Jansenism as a structure has a worldview similar to Pascal's philosophy, the noble social position of the noblesse de robe and the tragedy of characters in Racine's Tragedy.

In literary studies, genetic structuralism used to analyze literary work, which *Milk and Honey* poetry that reflect socio-cultural conditions, community struggle, cultural changes. Rupi Kaur is positioned as trans-individual subject that

aspire collective consciousness and struggles of diasporic and marginalized women through her expressive poetry. Goldman himself applied this theory to analyze novel by Pascal and Racine, and the poem by Saint-John Perse. Therefore, genetic structuralism has evolved as a flexible framework of interrogating contemporary literary expression, including insta-poetry.

B.1.2 The Figurative Language of Poetry

According to Perrine in Yulidar as cited in Yulianda (2022), figure of speech is a language used to give additional meaning to the words. There are 12 types of figurative language:

a. Simile

Simile is a parable or direct comparison between two different things. Simile is usually characterized by the use of words “like”, “as”, “than” or “similar to”. These words create an explicit comparison. For example: *like water off a duck’s back*.

b. Personification

Personification gives human qualities to something not human, to makes them feel alive or emotional like people. Example: *when proud-pied April, dress’d in all his trim* (Yulianda, 2022).

c. Metaphor

Metaphor is a comparison without using comparison words such “like” or “as”. It directly compared one thing to another, for example: *everything is a piece of cake* which means everything is so easy.

d. Symbol

A symbol is something that conveys more than its literal meaning. Symbolism occurs when a word has a literal meaning, but also represents another meaning. For example: red rose symbolize love.

e. Allegory

An allegory is a story or description to interpret hidden meaning. Allegories often relate to moral, religious, or political values. It usually found in a fable like *The Tortoise and The Hare*, which is intended to convey the moral message of the importance to not disrespect someone.

f. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that exaggerates something to give a dramatic effect. For example: "I was dying for a laughter" is an expression of people who experiencing amusement and laughing out loud, and it is not an expression of someone faced death.

g. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech where the actual meaning is the opposite of what is said. Example, "the food is so delicious until I want to spit it out."

h. Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure used to the name of an object or characteristic to represent something related to it. For example: *lend me your ears*, which means want someone attention or someone to listen.

i. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech that uses parts of something to represent the whole, or vice versa. For example: "how many heads are here?" Head refers to people, as cited in Yulianda (2022).

j. Understatement (Litotes)

Litotes is a figure of speech that states something in a humble manner using double negative to express a positive statement. Example, "she is not as bad as I thought" means that "she" is a good person.

k. Paradox

A paradox is a statement or situation that appears to be logically contradictory, but actually contains truth. For example, the statement of "the more you give, the more you get". Logically when someone give something means they lost that thing, but the statement said when someone give something they will get return whether from someone else or something unexpected.

l. Apostrophe

Apostrophe is a language style in the form of a greeting or exclamation to someone or something that is not present or not alive, as if they were there. For example: "O Romeo, Romeo, where art thou Romeo?" - Juliet in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet greets Romeo, who is not actually present.

B.1.3 Rupi Kaur's Short Biography

Rupi Kaur is an Indian-Canadian poet and illustrator. She was born in Punjab, India in 1992 and four years later moved to Canada. Kaur and her family migrated to Canada to escape the anti-Sikh persecution when she was four.

In the 1980s, there was a serious conflict between the Indian government and Sikh nationalists. According to Singh (1999, as cited in Masini, 2019), in 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered a military attack on the Golden Temple in response to the Sikh demand for an independent Punjab. For Sikhs, the Golden Temple is a sacred site, and its invasion was seen as deeply offensive. This triggered a series of violent conflict, including the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Following this, Sikhs faced widespread retaliation. In India, many Sikh men were at risk of being arrested or killed.

For safety reasons, Rupi Kaur's father moved away from the family shortly after her birth to avoid hate crimes targeting Sikh men. Facing economic hardships, Kaur's father supported the family by sending supplies during her early years. In Canada, Kaur lived in a modest basement apartment, sharing a bed with her parents and three younger siblings. Her family finally relocated to Brampton, Ontario, alongside a significant South Asia diaspora community.

Growing up as part of a diaspora community, Kaur often felt as she was in constant survival mode. She was generally self-conscious of her identity. Despite living in western country, her family still often practices their cultural beliefs. Due to traditional beliefs of her culture, her mother was sometimes distant from Kaur

during her menstruation. The abuse she experienced in childhood strained her relationship with her parents. She growing up with low self-esteem because witnessing her parents become target of religious fanaticism, along with seeing her friends and family suffer domestic and sexual violence.

In spite of these challenges, Kaur felt a strong desire to engage in visual arts. She took study of rhetoric and professional writing in University of Waterloo. She started performing poetry live in 2009. For Kaur, performing poetry is a spiritual experience. At first, many people thought it was ridiculous. Her poetry has often been perceived as assertive, even unsettling, due to its candid exploration of trauma and womanhood.

After escaping from an abusive relationship, Kaur started writing as a way to express her trauma. She initially shared her poems on Instagram, with simple illustrations. From there she began gain recognition. Her poetic style which in simple structure, free verses, and with visual hand drawn illustration align with the rise of insta-poetry, a digital literary form which in brevity, accessibility, and emotional rawness (Roje & Vojnović, 2023). Her background greatly impacted her lyrical style, allowing her to advocate for diasporic and marginalized women.

Rupi Kaur identity as a Sikh also plays a significant role in her writings. Sikhism is egalitarian religion, which emphasizes equal treatment and respect for all people, regardless of gender, social status, or other differences, in a religious context. Guru Nanak Dev Ji, as the founder of Sikh emphasizes equality, justice and fundamental human rights. He emerged as a voice of truth during a period of

oppression under Mughal rule in 15th century, when cruelty and injustice were rampant under a corrupt and discriminatory government (Singh, 2020). Kaur voiced issues such as violence, abuse, love, loss, trauma, identity, and family through her writings as a form of manifestation of his beliefs as a Sikh. Kaur stated Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scriptures of the Sikh people which contains hymns, teachings, and prayers from the 10 Sikh Gurus, as well as several saints from other religions, became her inspiration in writing poetry (Kaur, 2014). Her first Instagram poem told the story of a wife dealing with alcoholic husband, which she described as a liberating experience.

According to Bonoko in *Writer's Block Magazine* (2017), Rupi Kaur's work emerged at a time with the advancement of social media. Her poems are recognized by many of her readers because of its straightforward language. Her poems are relevant because it discusses the issues that many women face but are often considered taboo. Kaur has ability to build emotional connection with her Instagram readers, besides her followers which are mostly female, and the issues she covers are closely related to women's experiences (Aspany & Murni, 2024).

Furthermore, at that time, there was a movement called #MeeToo poetry, a movement designed to raise awareness of sexual harassment against women (especially in the workplace) and to help victims of sexual violence (Danesi et al., 2021). Although Rupi Kaur is not directly related to this Movement, the themes in her poems that raise issues of patriarchy, violence, trauma, identity, and emotional healing are related to the spirit of the #MeeToo poetry Movement and her poetry

being recognized. Poetry has the power to connect with the oppressed, marginalized, and those who have a story to tell (Tahaka, 2021).

However, Kaur's voice represents not just a personal narrative, but the lived realities of women in her community. Many of her family and friend experienced patriarchal culture which women often subordinate and being objectified. In this way, Kaur functions as a transindividual subject, articulating the worldview of a broader collective of feminists and diasporic women. Through her poems Kaur internalized Sikhi concept of *seva*, which refers to serving others without expecting anything in return, which also understood as a specific act aimed at challenge caste-based hierarchies and patriarchal norms (Singh, 2024).

After gained international recognition, Kaur decided to compiled her write into book. Her first poetry collection, *Milk and Honey*, was self-published on 2014 due to many rejections from publisher, and surprisingly selling millions of copies and becoming a #1 New York Times bestseller. Three years later, in 2017, she wrote another poems collection called *Sun and Her Flower* and *Home Body* in 2020. Her work highlights about trauma, healing, love, loss, identity and femininity.

Some critics consider the minimalist style of Kaur to be artless poetry that ignores the rules of traditional poetry. In contrast, others argue that this genre empowers voices that invite readers to healing from the trauma of women have been marginalized, whether because of gender, race, appearance, or economic background, by providing an easily accessible (Knox et al., 2023).

B.2 Review of Related Research

This study relies on several relevant academic research studies about genetic structuralism to support and enhance a comprehensive overview of this research.

The first research entitled *“Social Criticism in A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens: From the Perspective of Genetic Structuralism”* was conducted by Tang et al. (2025). This article examines the social issues and critiques presented in Charles Dickens’ novel. The findings highlight the stark differences between the aristocracy and the lower classes, systemic injustice, and the cycles of violence during the French Revolution. Using qualitative methods, researchers identified themes such as the vast gap between social classes reflected in the opening line of the novel, *“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”* (Dickens, 2012, cited in Tang et al., 2025, p. 1683). Characters such as Madame Defarge and Marquis are used to show how violence and revenge can become a vicious cycle when social structures are ignored. Marquis is an example of an aristocrat who is cruel to people from the lower social classes. In contrast, Madame Defarge, who has a hatred for aristocrats, seeks vengeance during the revolution. This research argues that the novel not only reflects the realities of society at the time, but also serves as a warning about the importance of social reform based on empathy. These findings are relevant to today’s discussions about justice and equality, making Dickens’ work relevant today.

The second research entitled *“A Genetic Structuralism Analysis of Materialism in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s A Little Princess”* by Sakinah &

Kusumayanti (2023). Using genetic structuralism, this study focuses on revealing how materialism is depicted in the novel and Burnett's worldview on the issue, considering the socio-historical context of Victorian England. The results of the study show that the Industrial Revolution has given rise to materialism, which causes social problems such as class divisions (upper, middle, labourers), social inequality, and exploitation of child labour. Burnett criticizes materialism through the binary opposition between a materialistic character (Miss Minchin) and a non-materialistic character (Sara). This novel reflects Burnett's worldview as a member of a collective group that rejects materialism and fights for a better life for poor children. This study concludes that *A Little Princess* is a product of human facts that depicts the social structure of Victorian England while criticizing the negative impacts of materialism through Burnett's humanist perspective.

The third was research by Abbas et al. (2023) about *Willa Cather's Notion on Traditional American Women in the Novel "My Antonia": An Approach of Genetic Structuralism*. This study analyzed Willa Cather's worldview about traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia* (1913). This novel shows the characters such as Grandmother and Lady Shimerda, who dedicated their life to domestic life, being housewives, and handling family care. The novel reflects the lives of immigrant women in 19th-century rural America, influenced by Puritan and Victorian values. Raised in rural Nebraska, Willa Cather both critiques and affirms traditional gender roles, emphasizing family harmony but also potentially limiting women's autonomy.

Another research is by Maulana et al. (2022) entitled “*Genetic Structuralism Analysis on The Color Out of Space by H. P. Lovecraft*”. This research explores how the narrative structure of the story is related to the social background of New England and Lovecraft's biographical conditions. The findings show that Lovecraft’s personal experience and historical social situations play an important role in forming the distinctive cosmic horror elements in the work. His interest in astronomy and Puritanism influenced the horror narrative he used. The story of a vampire panic originating from tuberculosis destroyed entire families and several areas in New England, which is in line with the conditions of America at that time, which was experiencing moral weakness. After World War I, America experienced social degradation, such as economic depression, political violence, and moral panics. Lovecraft's work reflected fears of industrialization and urban alienation, symbolized by "color" as an incomprehensible and destructive force. The theme of *The Color Out of Space* is cosmic horror, depicting the insignificance of humanity in a hostile universe. The story critiques the expansion of science and industrial exploitation.

The research entitled *Power Dynamics, Social Variability, and Perspective on Belief and Religion in the Context of Genetic Structuralism in the Trilogy of Dağın Öte Yüzü by Yaşar Kemal and The Spider’s House by Paul Bowles* by Akman Kaplan (2022). The research examines the concept of “self-colonialization” in the novel using a genetic structuralism approach within post-colonial theory. Both novels depicted a power dynamic in which the oppressors are the people’s leaders. The

societies in both works are divided by gossip, distrust, and conflicting interests, which hinder collective resistance to the oppression. Religious beliefs and superstitions are exploited by those in power to control the uneducated people. For instance, Muhtar Sefer, a character in *Dağın Öte Yüzü*, uses religious rhetoric to justify exploitation. At the same time, the Istiqlal Party in *The Spider's House* prohibits religious practices to consolidate its authority.

The research, entitled "American Dream in the Eye of Asian Immigrants: A Genetic Structuralism Analysis of Kevin Kwan's Rich People Problems" (2017), was conducted by Adhitya & Hapsari (2022). This article used genetic structuralism to explore how the author of the novel, Kevin Kwan, a Singaporean writer who immigrated to the US, internalized the myth of the American Dream in his novel. The findings show that the author's worldview is reflected in characterization and plot, with a focus on discipline and hard work. Furthermore, this rags-to-riches journey emphasizes entrepreneurship, education, and hypergamy. Through this novel, Kevin Kwan critiques racism and the marginalization of Asians that often occur in the US.

The research by Irmayani et al. (2021) entitled *Ideology in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Short Story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Using Genetic Structuralism Approach*. The research focuses on analyzing both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the work. The novel reflects Gilman's feminist ideology, emphasizing how patriarchal culture oppressed women. The main character, a new mother with postpartum depression, is limited by her husband under the pretext of "rest cure"

treatment, which represents subjugation. Through the narrative, Gilman's feminist ideology is reflected in her actions in challenging patriarchal norms and promoting women's economic and mental autonomy. In this story, the main female character experiences hallucinations about women trapped behind wallpaper, depicting the suffering of women in domestic roles. This story shows how patriarchal pressures cause mental disorders in women.

The research entitled *Genetic Structuralism Analysis in "Go Set a Watchman" by Harper Lee* by Atmana & Sumitro (2020). This research uses genetic structuralism to examine relations between a novel's structure and the author's social background and historical context. The finding shows Harper Lee's worldview, especially her criticism of racial injustice in the South in the 1950s. *Go Set a Watchman* depicts moral ambiguity. The main character, Jean Louis, was portrayed as someone who initially sides with morality; however, her beliefs about morality were shaken and blurred. Additionally, Harper Lee's background as a white woman in Alabama at that time and moving to New York influenced her perspective on racial tensions and white privilege. This novel was inspired by historical events that occurred in the 1950s, such as the Brown v. Board of Education case (1954), which challenged discrimination against certain social groups. Lee advocated the importance of individual integrity and multiracial understanding, criticizing systemic racism and collective prejudice.

Another research is by Jayanti & Mustofa (2020) entitled *Worldview in Maya Angelou's Poems: Lucien Goldman's Genetic Structuralism Approach*. This

research examines three of Maya Angelou's poems which *Still I Rise*, *Harlem Hopscotch*, and *Caged Bird* to justify that literary works reflect the author's worldview, influenced by her socio-historical context, and clarify David Kelly's personal opinion that Angelou's poetry comes from her life experiences and instincts. In this case, she acts as a collective individual representing her group. This study shows that the themes in each poem analyzed are deeply rooted in Angelou's social and cultural background as a black activist. Her worldview stems from the collective struggles experienced by her people. Her poems are shaped by historical oppression and the resilience experienced by African Americans.

The studies mentioned above support the researcher in conducting this research. Although each study examined different topics, they collectively contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the supporting theories underlying this research. These studies demonstrate how genetic structuralism can expose the socio-historical context of literary texts. This understanding confirms that this approach can be applied to analyze *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur, a contemporary poet influenced by diasporic, feminist, and traumatic experiences. These studies make the findings more evident by addressing various dimensions and tightening the research conclusions.