

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSIONS

This section explains the results of the analysis of both stories. It begins with a simple look at the intrinsic elements of the characters and the conflicts they face. After that, it goes into a deeper discussion of extrinsic elements regarding trauma using Bessel's theory. The aim is to show how trauma affects the thoughts, feelings and actions of both main characters in the story.

3.1 Intrinsic Elements

In this section, the writer will look at the main parts inside both stories. The writer analyses the character, characterization, and conflict.

3.1.1. Character and Characterisation

In both stories, the focus is just on the main character. And there are also three more characters from both stories, the old man (the former story), the main character's wife and the cat (the latter story). The next section will explain more about the characterisation of these characters.

3.1.1.1. Main Character

The main character in the former story is the narrator himself, who also becomes the storyteller. He tells the story using the first-person point of view and is the one who murders the characters of the plot. From the beginning, he is trying to show the reader that he is not crazy. This is shown in the line, "*True! nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?*" (1843:1). This part the main character admits that he's nervous, but he

strongly denies being mad. However, the way he speaks and emphasises his words shows signs of an unstable mind. His need to explain himself too much makes the reader doubt his mental state. The main character becomes obsessed with the eye, which he calls a “vulture eye.” He explains that he has nothing personal against the old man, but he cannot stand the look of his eye. He says, “*It was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye*” (1843:2). This means that the reason behind the murder is not based on logic or any harm done by the old man, but only on the main character’s irrational fear and obsession. The eye becomes a symbol of something he cannot control, and this leads him to commit the murder. After the murder, the main character hides the body under the floorboards and feels proud of how carefully he planned everything. But later, his guilt starts to affect him mentally. He hears a sound that he believes is the old man’s heart still beating. He says, “*I heard a noise, a noise like the beating of a drum, and the sound grew louder and louder!*” (1843:6). This shows that the sound is not real but comes from his imagination. His feelings of guilt are so strong that they turn into a sound in his mind. This is a sign that he is losing his grip on reality. Eventually, the guilt becomes too much, and he can no longer keep his secret. He confesses, “*Villains! I shrieked, dissemble no more! I admit the deed! Tear up the planks! Here, here! It is the beating of his hideous heart!*” (1843:7). This moment shows the complete collapse of his mental state. His feelings of guilt force him to admit what he has done, even though no one has accused him yet.

A similar portrayal of mental instability is found in the latter story. Just like the main character in the former story, the main character in the latter story also begins

the story by denying that he is mad, “*Yet, mad am I not — and very surely do I not dream*” (1843:1). This shows that he also wants the reader to believe that he is sane, even though his actions later prove the opposite. Both main character’s are unreliable and cannot be trusted fully because their own stories show signs of mental problems. The main character’s behavior becomes worse because of alcohol. He starts hurting the people and animals around him. One of the most disturbing moments is when he injures his pet cat, “*I took from my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket!*” (1843:2). This violent act shows a serious loss of control and emotional stability. Just like in the former story, the eye becomes the focus of the main character’s anger and mental disturbance. Later, he kills his wife and hides her body inside a wall. At first, he feels safe and even proud of how clever he was. But his guilt eventually catches up with him. While the police are inspecting the house, he taps on the wall, and a loud sound is heard, “*From within the tomb, a voice cried out — a long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman — a howl — a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph*” (1843:6). The sound comes from the second cat, which had been buried alive with the body. This strange sound reveals the crime, just like the imaginary heartbeat in the former story. In both stories, a sound becomes the turning point where the main character’s guilt can no longer be hidden.

3.1.1.1 Old Man

The old man is the main character’s housemate and serves as the secondary character in the story. He is portrayed as kind, gentle, and harmless. The main

character explicitly states that the old man has never wronged him. He says, "*Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult*" (1843:2). This shows that the old man is innocent and has done nothing to deserve harm, highlighting the main character's motive is irrational and based solely on the obsession with the eye. However, what deeply disturbs the main character is the old man's eye, which he describes as resembling that of a vulture. He states, "*One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold*" (1843:2). This feature becomes the sole reason for the main character's increasing discomfort and eventual decision to commit murder. The old man's character is revealed primarily through main character's perspective. He speaks very little in the story and does not have significant dialogue or action. From what is conveyed, the old man appears to be trusting and unaware of the main character's inner turmoil. On the night of the murder, the old man wakes up, alarmed by the main character's presence. The main character describes, "*He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall*" (1843:4). This shows that the old man becomes afraid, but remains unaware of the danger he is truly in. Although he plays a relatively minor role in terms of action and speech, the old man is essential to the development of the plot. He is the object of the main character's obsession and ultimately becomes the victim of his delusional mindset. The old man symbolizes innocence and vulnerability, and his presence serves as the trigger for the main character's descent into madness.

3.1.1.3. The Wife

The wife in the latter story is the main character's spouse and acts as the

secondary character in the story. She is described as gentle, patient, and kind. In the beginning of the story, the main character says that he and his wife shared a love for animals, *“I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own”* (1843:1). This means that his wife had a personality similar to his, gentle and loving toward animals. Her kind character is shown through her tolerance and the way she accepts her husband’s interests, especially during the early years of their marriage. As time goes on, the main character becomes addicted to alcohol and starts to act violently. Even though his behavior gets worse, his wife continues to stay with him and does not fight back. She remains quiet and patient, even when he becomes more aggressive. The story does not show her saying much, but from the main character’s words, it is clear that she never tries to harm him. This shows that she is innocent and does not deserve the violence that happens to her. Eventually, during a moment of anger, the main character kills her. This act happens suddenly and is described in a short but shocking way, *“Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan”* (1843:5). This sentence shows how serious the main character’s mental breakdown is. He murders his wife not because she harmed him, but because she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The murder is irrational and cruel, done without any real reason. The wife does not speak much or take many actions in the story. However, her character is important because she becomes a victim of the main character’s madness. Similar to the former story, she does not do anything wrong, but still suffers from the main character’s obsession and loss of control. Her death becomes a key moment in the story, showing how far the main character’s mind has collapsed. After the murder, the

main character hides her body inside a wall, thinking he will not be caught. But in the end, his guilt is revealed. Even though the wife's role is small, her presence is important to the story. She represents innocence and quiet strength, and her death shows how dangerous the main character's mental state has become.

3.1.1.4. The Cat

The cat in *The Black Cat* is one of the most important characters in the story, even though it is not human. The cat plays a major role in showing the main character's mental decline. At first, the main character has a strong bond with his pet cat, named Pluto. He describes Pluto as a smart and loyal animal, saying, "*Pluto—this was the cat's name—was my favorite pet and playmate*" (1843:1). This quote shows that the cat is not just a pet, but also a companion that brings the main character comfort and joy. However, as the main character becomes addicted to alcohol, his attitude toward the cat starts to change. He begins to act cruelly, not only to Pluto but also to his other pets. One day, in a moment of anger and without any clear reason, he hurts the cat badly, "*I took from my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket!*" (1843:2). This act of violence shows that the main character is losing control over himself. The cat does nothing to deserve this cruelty, which highlights how far the main character's mind has changed. The cat, once loved, becomes a target of the main character's growing anger and madness. Later, the main character kills Pluto by hanging it on a tree, "*I hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offense*" (1843:3). This quote is important because it shows that the main character is aware of what he has

done, and that the cat was innocent. The fact that he kills it anyway proves how deeply disturbed he has become. The killing of the cat marks a turning point in the story, after which the main character becomes even more unstable. After Pluto's death, the main character finds another cat that looks almost the same, except for a white spot on its chest. This second cat becomes a symbol of guilt for the main character. He becomes afraid of it, even though the cat never harms him: "*I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence*" (1843:4). This shows that the main character projects his guilt onto the cat. The second cat reminds him of what he has done to Pluto, and it makes him feel uncomfortable and paranoid. In the end, this second cat is responsible for revealing the main character's crime. After he kills his wife and hides her body inside a wall, the cat is accidentally sealed in with her. When the police come, the cat lets out a loud cry from behind the wall, leading to the discovery of the murder. The main character describes the sound as, "*a howl — a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph*" (1843:6). This final moment shows that the cat becomes a tool of justice, bringing the truth to light and exposing the narrator's guilt. Although the cat does not speak or think like a human, its role in the story is very important. The cat represents both innocence and revenge. At first, it is a symbol of the main character's love and kindness. But as the story goes on, it becomes a symbol of guilt, punishment, and the consequences of cruelty. Through the figure of the cat, Poe shows how the main character's actions cannot be hidden forever, and how guilt will always find a way to return.

3.1.2 Conflict

This section will explain the internal and external conflicts faced by both main characters. In the former story, the internal conflict appears in the main character's struggle with his thoughts and fear as he plans the murder. In the latter story, the main character also faces inner conflict, especially as guilt and anger start to control him. Both characters show signs of emotional instability, which influences their violent actions. The external conflict in the former story comes from the main character's discomfort with the old man's eye, which leads to tension between them. In the latter story, the external conflict is seen in the main character's relationship with his cat and wife. Although they do nothing wrong, he turns against them. These external problems reflect both the main character's worsening mental condition and help explain his extreme behaviour.

3.1.2.1. Internal Conflict

The main internal conflict in the former story is the main character's struggle with his thoughts and emotions. From the start, he tries to convince the reader that he is not insane, "*True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?*" (1843:1). Although he denies being mad, this line already shows signs of mental disturbance. He becomes obsessed with the old man's eye, and this obsession begins to control his thoughts, "*It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night.*" (1843:1). This quote shows the idea of murder comes from within himself and becomes something he cannot ignore, reflecting his deep inner conflict. After killing the old man, the main character begins to feel intense guilt. This guilt grows stronger and turns into a hallucination. He starts to hear the sound of a heartbeat under the

floor, even though no one else hears it, *“It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton... I talked more quickly—more vehemently—but the noise steadily increased.”* (1843:6). The heartbeat is not real, it is a symbol of the guilt inside his mind. As the sound gets louder in his imagination, he loses control, *“I foamed—I raved—I swore!... but the noise arose over all and continually increased.”* (1843:6). This moment shows that his guilt is stronger than his ability to stay calm. In the end, he breaks down and confesses: *“Villains! I shrieked, dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!”* (1843:7). His mental conflict reaches its peak, and he is fully defeated by his conscience.

A similar internal conflict can be found in the latter story. The main character also begins the story by denying that he is mad, *“Yet, mad am I not — and very surely do I not dream.”* (1843:1). Like in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, this denial is followed by actions that clearly show mental instability. As the story continues, the main character struggles with feelings of guilt and rage. After killing his cat Pluto and later his wife, he tries to act as if nothing happened. However, his inner guilt does not go away. This guilt becomes stronger when he is haunted by a second cat that looks like Pluto. He becomes uncomfortable and paranoid, saying, *“I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing... as from the breath of a pestilence.”* (1843:4). The cat becomes a reminder of his crime and creates constant emotional pressure. When the police visit his house, he unknowingly reveals the place where his wife’s body is hidden. From behind the wall, a loud cry is heard, exposing him, *“A howl — a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph... such as might have arisen only out of hell.”* (1843:6). This moment shows that the guilt he tried to hide has now returned in a

form he cannot escape.

In both stories, the internal conflict becomes the main reason for the main character's downfall. Their guilty minds create fear, paranoia, and hallucinations. Although they try to stay in control, their thoughts slowly destroy them from within.

3.1.2.2. External Conflict

While internal conflict dominates the story, the former story also presents an external conflict between the main character and the old man, focused mainly on the old man's eye. The main character is not disturbed by the old man's behaviour or personality, but by the appearance of his eye:

“One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.” (1843:1).

This line shows the eye becomes a symbol of fear and discomfort. The main character even explains, *“It was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye.”* (1843:1), showing that he does not hate the old man himself, but treats the eye as something dangerous. The conflict is not based on reality, but on how the main character sees and feels about the eye. Still, this fear becomes strong enough to make him act violently. This external conflict grows stronger as the main character begins to watch the old man every night, *“And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently!”* (1843:2). His quiet actions show his obsession with the eye. Eventually, the old man becomes aware of the danger. The main character describes, *“Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror.”* (1843:3). At this moment, the conflict becomes real for both of them. Although the eye is only a part of the old man's body, the main character treats it as a

threat that must be destroyed. His decision to kill comes from this external source of fear, making the eye a key part of the conflict in the story.

A similar form of external conflict appears in the latter story. In this story, the main character's fear and discomfort are directed at the second cat, which looks very much like the first one he killed. At first, he accepts the cat into his home, but over time he begins to feel uneasy, "*I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing... as from the breath of a pestilence.*" (1843:4). Just like in the former story, this fear is irrational, the cat never harms him, but the main character starts to believe that the cat is watching and haunting him. This creates an external conflict, where the cat becomes the object of his fear and hatred. The situation becomes more intense after the main character kills his wife and hides her body in the wall. The cat accidentally gets trapped inside the body. Later, during a police inspection, the cat lets out a cry that reveals the truth, "*A howl — a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph... such as might have arisen only out of hell.*" (1843:6). The cat's cry brings justice and turns the main character's fear into a real consequence. Just like the eye in the former story, the cat becomes a symbol of the main character's external conflict, something outside himself that he cannot control, but that reflects his inner guilt and fear.

In both stories, external conflict is not based on real danger, but on how the main character sees the world around him. Whether it is the old man's eye or the black cat, the main character projects their fear onto something physical. These external conflicts add tension to the stories and become the triggers that lead each main character toward madness and confession.

3.2. Extrinsic Elements

This section will show a more in-depth analysis of the psychological trauma of the main character in both stories. The first analysis will start from the trauma symptoms, the symptoms are paranoia, intrusive thoughts, auditory hallucinations, and hypervigilance. Next, there are causes of trauma, such as obsession, social isolation, and emotional instability. And the last thing that the writer analyses is the effect of trauma. Which contains feelings of guilt, delusion, and psychological breakdown.

3.2.1. The Symptom of Trauma

This part looks at the signs of trauma shown by both main characters. Each symptom helps us understand the mental condition and how the trauma affects the way they see the world. The analysis is based on Bessel's trauma theory and includes examples from the story to support each point.

3.2.1.1. Paranoia

The main character in the former story shows clear signs of paranoia, especially during his interaction with the police. Although the officers do not act suspicious, he becomes increasingly convinced that they already know about his crime. This fear makes him anxious and overly defensive, "*You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work!*" (1843:1). In this line the main character tries to prove he is sane by describing how carefully he planned everything. However, his strong need to explain himself shows his paranoia; he believes others are judging him and might discover

the truth. As the story continues, his paranoia grows. While speaking with the police, he hears the sound of a heartbeat, which he believes is coming from under the floor, “*They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!*” (1843:6). Even though the police appear calm, he becomes convinced that they are mocking him and secretly accusing him. This shows how his mind creates fear that does not exist in reality, a common sign of paranoia.

A similar experience happens in *The Black Cat*. The main character also shows paranoid behaviour, especially after killing his wife and hiding her body in the wall. He acts overly confident when the police come to inspect his house, even showing them the place where the body is hidden, “*I rapped, with a light heart—upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.*” (1843:6). His action seems bold, but it also shows a paranoid need to prove that everything is under control. Like the main character in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, he tries to appear calm, but his behaviour suggests that he is deeply anxious. His paranoia becomes worse when the hidden cat makes a loud sound from behind the wall. This unexpected noise causes him to panic, and the truth is revealed, “*A howl — a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph... such as might have arisen only out of hell*” (1843:6). The main character’s fear quickly turns into panic because he realizes that his crime is about to be exposed. His earlier confidence disappears, and his guilt and paranoia rise to the surface.

In both stories, paranoia plays a central role in the main character’s mental breakdowns. They both believe that others are watching, judging, or planning to expose them, even when there is no clear threat. Their attempts to appear normal only make their fear grow stronger. This intense paranoia leads them to confess their

crimes, showing how powerful the mind can be in shaping fear and guilt.

3.2.1.2 Intrusive Thoughts

The main character in the former story experiences repeated and unwanted thoughts, especially about the old man's eye and the idea of murder, "*It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night*" (1843:1). This line illustrates the thought of killing the old man becomes fixed in his mind. The word "haunted" suggests that the idea keeps returning without his control, making it a clear example of intrusive thinking. His obsession becomes stronger as he stalks the old man each night, "*For seven nights I stalked the old man, every night just at midnight. But I found the eye always closed, and so it was impossible to do the work*" (1843:4). This shows that the same thought repeats in his mind every night, and he feels he cannot act unless he sees the eye. The pattern becomes a cycle; he watches, waits, and repeats, driven by the thought that he cannot stop. This obsessive behaviour reflects how intrusive thoughts can grow more powerful when left unchallenged. Even after the murder, intrusive thoughts return in the form of guilt. The main character hears what he believes is the old man's heart still beating. In his breakdown, he screams, "*It is the beating of his hideous heart!*" (1843:7). This shows that even though the old man is already dead, the main character's thoughts do not go away. His guilt brings back the same idea he tried to silence through violence. These thoughts continue to disturb his mind and lead to his confession.

In the latter story, there is also evidence of intrusive thoughts, although they are less directly stated than in the former story. The main character shows repeated

emotional reactions to the second cat, which reminds him of the first cat he killed, “*The more I hated it, the more it seemed to love me. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, prevented me from physically abusing it.*” (1843:4). The quote shows that memories of the past, especially guilt over killing the first cat, keep returning to his mind. Although he tries to ignore the new cat, he cannot stop thinking about what he has done, and these thoughts disturb his peace. Later in the story, the main character’s discomfort grows stronger as the cat follows him everywhere, “*Beneath its pressure I again fell into the old vices... and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.*” (1843:5). Here, he admits that the mental burden becomes too much to handle, and he tries to escape the thoughts through drinking. Although not described as clearly obsessive as in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, these thoughts are still unwanted and hard to control, showing that intrusive thinking also affects the main character in *The Black Cat*.

In both stories, intrusive thoughts play a significant role in the main character’s decline. They try to escape these thoughts through violence or denial, but the thoughts return even stronger. These mental intrusions disturb their ability to think clearly and eventually lead them to confession or punishment.

3.2.1.3. Auditory Hallucinations

The main character in the former story clearly experiences auditory hallucinations, especially after committing the murder. He believes he hears sounds that others cannot. Early in the story, he says, “*I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad?*” (1843:2). This line reflects his distorted sense of hearing and reality. Although he uses this statement to

defend his sanity, it reveals how detached he is from what is real. His claim that he hears supernatural sounds is a sign of hallucination. The most significant hallucination comes in the form of the heartbeat he believes he hears under the floor, where he hides the body, *“It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!”* (1843:6). The quote shows that the main character becomes completely overwhelmed by a sound that exists only in his mind. He thinks the police are mocking him by pretending not to hear it, which pushes him toward full mental collapse. The imagined sound, created by his guilt, becomes the main reason for his confession. In contrast, the latter story does not present clear evidence of auditory hallucinations. The main character does not describe hearing things that do not exist. Instead, his mental disturbance is shown more through emotional instability, irrational behaviour, and growing guilt. However, there is a dramatic moment at the end of the story when the main character and the police hear a loud cry from behind the wall, which turns out to be the trapped cat. While the sound itself is real, the main character describes it in an exaggerated and frightening way, saying it sounded like it came *“out of hell”* (1843:6). This reaction reflects his emotional state rather than a hallucination. He does not imagine the sound, but his fear and guilt make it feel terrifying and unnatural.

Therefore, while the former story includes a strong and specific example of auditory hallucination, the latter story does not. Instead, it focuses more on psychological guilt and emotional tension, without showing the main character

hearing unreal sounds. This difference helps us see how each story uses different symptoms to show the decline of the narrator's mental health.

3.2.1.4. Hypervigilance

In the former story, the main character shows signs of hypervigilance, an extreme state of alertness and sensitivity to sounds, movements, and imagined threats. One early example appears as he carefully watches the old man during the night, *“And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern... and then I thrust in my head.”* (1843:4). This line shows how cautious and focused he becomes. His movements are slow and controlled, and he is deeply aware of every small sound or action he makes. This behaviour reflects a constant fear of being discovered or making a mistake. As the story progresses, his tension becomes stronger. When the police arrive, he tries to act normal, but his body reacts differently, *“I was careful to make it sound as if I was smiling, and I talked with the most perfect composure. But, as I spoke, I felt the heart's burden growing heavier, the sound increasing, and the pressure on my chest growing stronger.”* (1843:6). Although he pretends to be calm, he is highly aware of every noise and every detail in the room. He believes the police are watching him closely, even though they show no sign of suspicion. His intense alertness causes him to misread the situation and pushes him toward panic and confession.

In the latter story, signs of hypervigilance are less direct but still visible, especially as the story moves toward its end. After killing his wife and hiding her body in the wall, the main character becomes more defensive and controlling during

the police visit. Although he appears confident, he watches the officers closely and cannot resist pointing out the exact spot where the body is hidden, perhaps as a way to prove he is not guilty, *“I rapped, with a light heart—upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse...”* (1843:6). His action shows a nervous need to stay in control of the situation, possibly caused by anxiety and a fear of exposure. Even though the main character in the latter story does not describe being as physically sensitive or reactive as the one in the former story, his behaviour still suggests a heightened level of awareness. The way he monitors the police and tries to control what they see reflects a deep fear that the truth will be discovered. This type of psychological alertness, though more subtle, aligns with symptoms of hypervigilance.

3.2.2. The Causes of Trauma

This section explains what have caused both main character’s trauma. These causes come from within the character himself and how they experiences the world around them. By looking at the obsession, social isolation, emotional struggles, we can better understand how his trauma started and grew worse.

3.2.2.1. Obsession

In the former story, the main character develops an intense and irrational obsession with the old man’s eye. This obsession becomes the driving force behind his thoughts and actions, *“I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold.”* (1843:3). This line shows that the main character cannot stop thinking about the eye. His emotional reaction, feeling cold whenever the eye looks at him, demonstrates how deeply the image disturbs him. His obsession becomes so

overwhelming that he believes the only way to free himself is through murder, *“Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.”* (1843:3). The main character no longer sees the old man as a person, but only as the source of his discomfort. He also makes it clear that his hatred is not directed at the man himself, *“For it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye.”* (1843:2). The use of “Evil Eye” suggests that he believes the eye has some kind of power, which is a sign that his obsession has distorted his understanding of reality. The main character’s daily behavior also shows obsessive tendencies, *“Every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night”* (1843:3). This routine of pretending to care while secretly planning to kill highlights how the obsession controls both his thoughts and actions. He becomes completely focused on waiting for the right moment to see the eye open, showing how the obsession shapes his entire life during that time.

A similar form of obsession appears in the latter story. The main character’s obsession is not with an object, like an eye, but with the black cat itself, especially the second cat that resembles the first one he killed. At first, he is affectionate toward animals, but his attitude changes drastically. After abusing and killing his first cat, Pluto, he becomes fixated on the second cat, which reminds him of what he did, *“I continued, for some weeks, to avoid the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, prevented me from physically abusing it.”* (1843:4). This line shows that even when he tries to ignore the cat, he cannot stop thinking about it. The cat’s presence becomes a constant reminder of his guilt and

violence. His obsession grows as he starts believing that the cat is haunting or watching him, *“It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend.”* (1843:4). The word “pertinacity” here reflects how he sees the cat as always present, always watching, whether true or not. This obsessive thought shapes his behaviour and deepens his sense of fear and guilt. Eventually, his hatred toward the cat leads him to kill his wife in a moment of rage, which shows how the obsession builds up to violence, just like in the former story. Although the focus of obsession is different in the two stories (the eye vs. the cat), in both cases, the main character’s become consumed by a single image or presence. This unhealthy fixation causes them to lose touch with reality and commit violent acts in an attempt to escape their inner torment.

3.2.2.2. Social Isolation

In the former story, the main character shows signs of social isolation. He does not have real relationships with others and spends his time alone with the old man. Even though he claims to be kind, it is only a performance to hide his true intentions, *“I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.”* (1843:4). This quote shows that his kindness is a mask. In reality, he is emotionally detached and focused only on his growing obsession. The main character’s isolation becomes more obvious during the interaction with the police. Even though he is surrounded by people, he remains mentally alone, *“I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased.”* (1843:5). This quote shows that even in the presence of others, he cannot truly connect. He

becomes overwhelmed by his inner thoughts and feelings, which shows a disconnect from reality. His inability to express himself calmly suggests that his mental world has taken over, leaving him socially and emotionally isolated.

In the latter story, social isolation is also a key aspect of the main character's decline. At the start of the story, he describes himself as having once been gentle and kind, especially toward animals and his wife. However, after he begins drinking heavily, his behaviour changes, and he becomes more violent and withdrawn. He admits, "*But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.*" (Poe, 1843:2). This shows how alcohol becomes a barrier between him and those around him, including the animals he once loved. His relationship with his wife also suffers. Although she remains in the house, he distances himself emotionally. He eventually kills her in a moment of rage, which shows the complete breakdown of the last significant human relationship he has. After hiding her body, he continues to live with the second cat, which he both fears and hates, further deepening his isolation. He becomes trapped in his guilt and paranoia, with no one to talk to or trust. While the main character in the former story isolates himself due to obsession and madness, the main character in the latter story isolates himself through addiction, violence, and guilt. In both stories, social isolation plays a major role in the characters' mental breakdown. With no meaningful connection to others and no outlet for their emotions, their inner struggles grow unchecked. This isolation creates the perfect condition for obsession, guilt, and psychological collapse to take full control.

3.2.2.3. Emotional Instability

In the former story, the main character displays clear signs of emotional instability. From the beginning, he admits to being highly anxious, “*I was nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous. But why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them.*” (1843:1). This line reveals that his emotions are unbalanced. While he tries to argue that he is sane, his repeated mention of nervousness and “disease” suggests an unstable mental and emotional condition. His emotions continue to shift as the story progresses. When he believes he hears the sound of the old man's heart, he becomes increasingly agitated, “*The night waned, and I heard the sound of the heartbeat. It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not?*” (1843:6). This quote shows how his anxiety grows in contrast to the calmness of the police. The imagined sound overwhelms his senses, pushing his emotions to the edge. Eventually, the emotional pressure becomes too strong, and he confesses, “*Villains!*” *I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!”* (1843:6). He is not caught through evidence, but by his own emotional breakdown. His confession is sudden and dramatic, showing how his inability to control his emotions leads directly to his downfall.

In the latter story, emotional instability is also a major symptom in the main character's behaviour. Early in the story, he mentions that his personality changes due to alcohol, “*But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!*” (1843:2). This quote shows that he is aware of his emotional changes but unable to control them. His mood swings become violent, leading him to harm the animals he

once loved. After killing his first cat, Pluto, he immediately feels regret, saying, “Hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence.” (1843:3). This quote reflects a moment of guilt and emotional contradiction, he commits a cruel act, yet is overcome with sorrow afterward, revealing how unstable his emotions have become. The arrival of the second cat, which reminds him of Pluto, causes his emotional state to worsen. Eventually, the main character's instability reaches its peak when he murders his wife in a sudden outburst. He describes the moment by saying, “Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain.” (1843:5). This violent reaction demonstrates a complete loss of emotional control.

While the main character in the former story is driven by anxiety and guilt, the main character in the latter story is controlled by impulsive anger, guilt, and self-destruction. Both characters try to hide their crimes, but their unstable emotions reveal the truth. In both stories, emotional instability contributes directly to their downfall. Their inability to manage guilt, fear, and anger leads to irrational behavior and eventual confession or capture.

3.2.3. The Psychological Effect of Trauma

This section looks at how the trauma affects the mind and behavior of both main character's. These effects include deep feelings of guilt, delusion, and eventually having a total psychological breakdown. Each effect is explained using scenes from the story and connected to trauma theory to help us understand how serious the

condition becomes.

3.2.3.1. Feelings of Guilt

In the former story, the main character's feelings of guilt begin to grow even before he commits the murder. He admits, "*I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire.*" (1843:1). This quote shows that he is aware the old man does not deserve harm, and this awareness sets the foundation for the guilt that comes after the murder. Because the murder is based only on obsession, not on any real wrongdoing, the main character cannot justify his actions to himself. After the murder, the guilt becomes stronger and starts to affect his senses. He begins to hear a sound that others do not hear, "*It was a low, dull, quick sound, much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not.*" (1843:6). This heartbeat is not real, but a product of his guilty conscience. It symbolises how the crime continues to disturb him internally, even when no one else suspects anything. His guilt grows louder in his mind, just like the heartbeat, "*The noise grew louder! Louder! Louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!*" (1843:6). This moment shows that guilt has taken over his mind. He becomes convinced that others know his secret, even though there is no evidence. The pressure becomes so great that he finally confesses, not because he is caught, but because his guilty conscience is too strong to bear.

In the latter story, guilt also plays a significant role in the main character's mental breakdown. After killing his first cat, Pluto, he describes feeling immediate remorse,

“Hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart.” (1843:3). This quote shows that although he acts violently, he is not free from guilt. His actions haunt him emotionally, and this guilt remains even as he continues to deny or ignore it. Later, when the second cat appears, which resembles Pluto, the main character’s guilt resurfaces. He sees this new cat as a living reminder of what he has done *“I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.”* (1843:4), showing that even recalling his crime fills him with shame and emotional discomfort. This guilt builds until he eventually kills his wife in a violent outburst. After hiding her body, he feels confident he will not be discovered, claiming, *“The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little.”* (1843:6). This quote reveals a moment of emotional denial, where the main character attempts to suppress or reject his guilty feelings. However, his guilt returns when he unknowingly exposes the hidden body himself by knocking on the wall where she is buried, just as the police are about to leave. He proudly says, *“I rapped, with a light heart—for what had I now to fear?—upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.”* (1843:6). This moment reflects a deep, unconscious desire to confess, and guilt-driven self-sabotage. Even though he believes he is being clever. His actions show that guilt continues to influence him, even when he tries to act in control.

In both stories, guilt grows stronger over time and becomes impossible to suppress. In the former story, guilt manifests through imagined sounds and inner panic. In the latter story, guilt appears through emotional regret, symbolism (the second cat), and self-sabotage. Both characters are not caught by others, but by the emotional weight of their own consciences.

3.2.3.2. Delusion

The main character in the former story is strongly affected by delusion, especially as his mind becomes more unstable throughout the story. One of the earliest signs appears when he describes the old man's eye as something evil, "*I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it*" (1843:1). This shows that he develops a false belief that the old man's eye has some kind of power or threat, even though there is no real reason to fear it. His intense reaction to the eye is irrational and becomes his main reason for committing the murder, which shows the beginning of his delusional thinking. The strongest and most dangerous form of his delusion happens when he starts hearing the heartbeat of the old man:

"I heard many things in the old man's room. There was a slight sound of movement from within the door, and I turned to look. It was nothing. I thought the old man was still sleeping...but I heard something else, too—a low, soft sound like the beating of a heart."(1843:5).

At this point, he fully believes that he hears the sound of the old man's heart, even though there is nothing to suggest that such a sound exists. His mind creates the sound, and he accepts it as real. As the sound continues in his imagination, his delusion becomes stronger, "*I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not. It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not?"* (Poe, 1843:6). This quote shows that although no one else notices anything, he becomes convinced that the sound is not only real but unbearable. He believes the police are pretending not to hear it, which makes him more delusional. His belief in this false sound becomes so powerful that he can no longer control himself. In the end, his delusions completely take over. He can no longer tell what is real and what is imagined. His false belief about the heartbeat

becomes the final push that leads to his confession. This shows how his mental condition has collapsed under the weight of his delusions.

In the latter story, the main character also shows signs of delusional thinking, although they appear in different forms. One example is when he starts believing that the second cat is haunting him or watching him with intent, “*It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend.*” (1843:4). This suggests that he believes the cat is intentionally tracking his movements with purpose, which reflects an irrational and exaggerated perception. His belief that the cat is connected to his guilt and punishment shows a form of delusional attribution, where he assigns meaning and motive to something that is likely just acting normally.

Although the main character in the latter story does not suffer from auditory hallucinations like in the former story, his paranoid thoughts and irrational beliefs about the cat indicate a delusional breakdown rooted in guilt and fear. Both main character’s lose touch with reality, but their delusions manifest in different ways, one through imagined sound, the other through perceived symbolic punishment.

3.2.3.3. Psychological Breakdown

The main character’s mental breakdown in the former story happens when he can’t handle his guilt and the false heartbeat anymore. His breakdown reaches its highest point when he confesses to the murder because he can’t bear the mental pressure, as shown in the quote, “*I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! Here, here! It is the beating of his hideous heart!*” (1843:7). This quote shows the main character finally breaks down because of his guilt and anxiety. His strong feelings make him

suddenly confess, believing the heartbeat means he will be caught soon, *“I felt that I must scream or die! And now—again!—hear!—I hear the heartbeat! It was a low, dull, quick sound, much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.”* (1843:6). This line shows the main character’s mind gets worse until he is almost falling apart. He can’t tell what is real and what is a hallucination, showing that his full mental breakdown is starting. The breakdown does not happen all at once, but starts from the beginning of the story. He claims, *“I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell”* (1843:1), which shows that his sense of reality is already disturbed. He hears things that are not real, and this becomes worse later in the story when he hears the sound of the heartbeat. These strange experiences slowly lead to his mental collapse. At one point, the main character insists he is not mad, saying, *“You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me”* (1843:1). However, this line actually shows that he is trying to deny his mental condition. His obsession with the old man’s eye, his extreme behavior, and his hallucinations all lead to the final moment when he can no longer control himself. His confession marks the point where his guilt and disturbed mind fully take over.

In the latter story, the main character also shows signs of psychological breakdown, though expressed in a different way. At first, he commits violent acts while under the influence of alcohol, but over time his cruelty becomes more intentional and driven by emotion rather than just intoxication, *“But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!”* (1843:3), showing that he is aware of his decline but unable to stop it. After killing Pluto, he is filled with guilt, and the appearance of the second cat leads to more fear and instability. When he kills his wife

in a sudden outburst, it marks a moment of emotional collapse. Instead of taking responsibility, he hides her body and pretends nothing happened, but his final mistake, tapping the wall where the body is hidden, shows that his mind is no longer functioning rationally. He describes this moment with pride, not realising that he is exposing himself: *“Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast... I had walled the monster up within the tomb!”* (1843:6). This final moment reflects his full breakdown. Like the main character in the former story, his downfall is not just because of his actions, but because his disturbed mind can no longer hide the truth.