

## CHAPTER II

### THEORY AND METHOD

#### 1.1. Theoretical Framework

According to René Wellek and Austin Warren, “Literary studies may be conducted through intrinsic or extrinsic approaches. The intrinsic approach examines the internal elements of a work, such as its plot, characters, and setting, whereas the extrinsic approach explores its connections with external fields, including psychology.” (1949:139).

##### 1.1.1. Intrinsic Elements

Stanton states “The most important of the internal elements of fiction are plot, character, and setting. These determine the total structure of the work.” (1965:15). On the other hand M.H. Abrams state that, “In works of narrative fiction, the primary intrinsic elements—such as plot, character, setting, theme, point of view, and style—work together to form the structure of the text and enhance its overall artistic unity” (1999:97). The writer just focuses on character, characterization, and conflict.

##### 1.1.1.1. Character and Characterisation

According to Stanton, “A character is a fictional figure created by the author to take part in a narrative” (1965:17). Meanwhile John Gardner explain that, "Character is the life of fiction. Without it, stories have no drive or emotional impact" (1991:45).

In the view of Robert Stanton, “the process by which an author creates the personality of a character in a literary work” (1965:36). On the other hand Janet Burroway explain that, “the fictional technique of presenting the nature of a character to the reader” (1982:112).

### **1.1.1.2. Conflict**

Based on Stanton, “Conflict plays a crucial role in the plot and can manifest as an internal struggle within a character, involving conflicting desires or values, or as an external struggle against outside forces such as other characters, societal pressures, or nature.” (1965:16). Meanwhile Kirszner and Mandell state that, “Internal conflict occurs when a character faces opposing emotions or moral challenges within themselves, often serving as a key force that propels the narrative forward.” (2007:105).

### **1.1.2. Extrinsic Elements**

As stated by Wellek and Warren, “The extrinsic approach in literary analysis considers the connection between a work and external fields, including psychology. Through this perspective, readers can interpret characters and themes using psychological concepts and theoretical frameworks..” (1949:73). According to Bessel, “Trauma impacts not only a person’s memory but also the brain mechanisms responsible for managing stress and regulating emotions.”. (2014:66). He describes trauma as the lasting mark of pain, horror, and fear that remains within individuals, emphasizing its ongoing psychological impact.

In this thesis, the writer examines the psychological perspective on both main character’s trauma in the former story and the latter story by Edgar Allan Poe.

In *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Black Cat*, the extrinsic elements of the story reveal important insights into the main character’s psychological condition. The main character shows symptoms of trauma, the causes of his trauma, and the effects of his trauma. Together, these signs show how trauma can damage a person’s thinking and

sense of self.

### **1.1.2.1. The Symptoms of Trauma**

As stated by Judith Herman, “The core tension in psychological trauma lies in the opposing impulses to suppress the memory of horrific events and to express them openly.” (1992:1). This quote highlights the dilemma between wanting to deny a terrible event and the urge to express it, which is at the core of psychological trauma. In his work, Bessel explains that trauma does not merely affect the mind, but also leaves profound physical and emotional imprints. He states, “Individuals who have experienced trauma often experience a persistent sense of insecurity within their own bodies, as the past lingers through continuous internal unease.” (2014:97).

The main character in the former story shows several psychological symptoms that suggest he is experiencing trauma. These include paranoia, intrusive thoughts, auditory hallucinations, and hypervigilance. And also in the latter story, the main character shows similar signs through his erratic behavior, violent actions, and the hallucination of a cat's cry, which ultimately leads to his confession. These symptoms are reflected in the way both character perceives reality, reacts to both surroundings, and justifies the actions. The following sections will explore how each of these trauma symptoms is portrayed in the story.

#### **1.1.2.1.1. Paranoia**

According to Bessel, “Following a traumatic experience, individuals may perceive the world in a stark division between people they can trust and those they cannot.” (2014:81). This is about seeing things as only good or bad (black-and-white

thinking) and being overly suspicious of others, common in paranoid disorders. On the other hand David Bell explain that, “Paranoia involves a profound distortion of reality caused by unconscious conflicts, leading individuals to hold unfounded beliefs with complete certainty..” (2003:117).

#### **1.1.2.1.2. Intrusive Thoughts**

As stated by Bessel, “For those who have experienced trauma, the past does not remain a mere recollection but intrudes into the present, causing them to re-experience the event as if it were happening in the current moment..” (2014:66). This quote highlights how trauma is re- experienced rather than remembered. Traumatized individuals often feel as if the past event is happening again, triggered by certain stimuli, which blurs the line between past and present and disrupts their emotional stability. Meanwhile David A. Clark Aaron T. Beck state that, “Obsession refer to repetitive and intrusive thoughts, urges, or images that are perceived as inappropriate and lead to significant anxiety or distress..” (2010:127).

#### **1.1.2.1.3. Auditory Hallucinations**

Based on Bessel, “Trauma is relived rather than merely remembered, as sensory fragments such as images, sounds, and physical sensations intrude upon the present..” (2014:68-69). In this quote, he explains that trauma is not remembered like a regular memory, but relived through sudden sensory fragments such as images, sounds, or physical sensations. These intrusive experiences make trauma survivors feel as if the past is happening again, even when they are safe in the present. This explains why trauma often causes overwhelming reactions and a distorted sense of time and reality. While Cathy Caruth state that, “Trauma is a reaction to a sudden or overwhelming act

of violence that is not fully processed at the time, but later resurfaces through recurring flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive experiences..” (1996:11).

#### **1.1.2.1.4. Hypervigilance**

According to Bessel, “In the aftermath of trauma, individuals often remain in a heightened state of vigilance, with their nervous system persistently activated and unable to relax. This hyperarousal becomes their default state, causing them to interpret every sensation as a possible danger..” (2014:53). This quote explains that trauma causes the body to stay in a constant state of tension. The nervous system remains overactive, making it difficult for individuals to feel safe or calm, as their body continuously interprets ordinary sensations as threats. On the other hand Peter Levine state that, "The body remains stuck in survival mode, scanning for threats even in safe environments." (1997:72).

#### **1.1.2.2. The Causes of Trauma**

Based on Sigmund Freud, “A patient may be unaware of what has been forgotten and repressed, yet reenact it through behavior, reproducing the experience as an action rather than a memory..” (1914:150). He explained that trauma is often not consciously remembered, but instead gets "replayed" through behavior. This means a person may not recall their traumatic experience, but still suffers from it through anxiety, phobias, or compulsive actions. According to Bessel, “Trauma is not merely a past event, but also the lasting impact it leaves on a person’s mind, brain, and body” (2014:21). He explains that trauma is not limited to the past event itself. Instead, its true impact lies in the lasting effects it leaves on a person’s mind, brain, and body. This means that even long after the traumatic event is over, the body and nervous

system may still react as if the danger is ongoing.

In *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Black Cat*, the trauma experienced by the main characters is not caused by a single violent event, but rather by continuous psychological pressure. In the former story, the main character's obsession, social isolation and emotional instability, reflects mental stress that leads to trauma. Similarly, in the latter story, the main character's descent into violence is influenced by alcohol abuse, unresolved emotional conflict, and increasing guilt. This causes shows signs of mental stress that lead to trauma. The following sections will discuss these internal causes in more detail.

#### **1.1.2.2.1. Obsession**

As stated by Bessel, "When individuals are repeatedly drawn back to moments in the past marked by intense emotions and deep engagement, they experience diminished imagination and reduced mental flexibility." (2014:82). He notes that traumatized individuals often remain fixated on the past, losing mental flexibility and becoming trapped in repetitive patterns of thought and behavior. This fixation resembles obsession, as their inner world is dominated by unresolved experiences that limit their ability to engage with the present. Meanwhile Viktor Frankl state that, "When individuals are unable to attain a profound sense of meaning, they may seek distraction through pleasure or power, or become ensnared in repetitive, obsessive behaviors." (1946:112).

#### **1.1.2.2.2. Social Isolation**

In the view of Bessel, "Trauma diminishes an individual's capacity for interpersonal connection, fostering profound isolation that becomes one of its most

challenging consequences. This disconnection hinders the healing process by limiting access to supportive and restorative relationships.” (2014:82). In this quote, he explains that one of the most damaging effects of trauma is emotional isolation. Trauma can make people feel disconnected from others, even from those who care about them. This sense of being cut off is not only painful, but it also prevents healing. Meanwhile John T. Cacioppo explain that, "Loneliness activates neural pathways associated with threat responses, exacerbating inflammation and cognitive decline." (2008:102).

#### **1.1.2.2.3. Emotional Instability**

According to Bessel, "Individuals who have experienced trauma frequently suffer from profound emotional instability, characterized by heightened anxiety, anger, sadness, or fear, with these emotions often feeling uncontrollable and overwhelming." (2014:89). In this quote, he highlights how trauma disrupts a person's ability to regulate their emotions. Survivors of trauma may frequently feel overwhelmed by intense feelings such as anxiety, anger, sadness, or fear, often without knowing why. These emotional responses may appear sudden, excessive, and difficult to control, making daily life challenging. On the other hand Daniel Goleman explain that, "When emotions overpower rational thought, individuals lose the capacity to respond adaptively, resulting in emotional disarray" (1995:13).

#### **1.1.2.3. The Psychological Effect of Trauma**

According to Gabor Maté, “Trauma isn't about the event itself, but how it affects your mind and emotions” (2022:20). This quote highlights trauma is not just about something bad that happened to you, it's about how it affects you on the inside. It's

the emotional wound you carry after a painful event. Two people can go through the same thing, but only one might be traumatized, because trauma depends on how deeply the event hurts your inner world, like your feelings, safety, or sense of control. Based on Bessel, "Trauma not only impacts the mind during the event but also alters how memories, emotions, and sensations are organized and stored. It disrupts the ability to feel safe, regulate emotions, and trust others, often leading to a fragmented sense of self." (2014:66). In this quote, he explains that trauma has long-term psychological effects beyond the immediate moment of the event. Trauma not only causes distress in the present, but it also alters how the brain processes and stores memories, emotions, and bodily sensations afterwards.

In both story, the main characters show not only actions that reflect trauma, but also deeper psychological effects. These include strong feelings of guilt, delusional, and signs of psychological breakdown. In the former story, the main character feels haunted by the sound of a heartbeat, which reflects his guilt and stress. In the latter story, the main character also loses control after hurting those around him, and his guilt appears through strange thoughts and fears. The next sections will discuss how these effects are shown through each character's thoughts and the way they tell their stories.

#### **2.1.2.3.1 Feelings of Guilt**

As stated by Bessel, "Trauma survivors often bear intense guilt and shame, blaming themselves for events beyond their control. This self-blame creates a heavy emotional burden that hinders healing and deepens their sense of isolation." (2014:102). This quote shows how people who suffer trauma often feel guilty even

when it's not their fault. These feelings make their pain worse and make it harder for them to heal. On the other hand Martin Seligman state that, "Survivor guilt stems from the belief that one could or should have acted differently." (1975:102).

#### **2.1.2.3.2 Delusion**

According to Bessel, "When the thalamus shuts down, people lose a sense of time and place... This can look like dissociation or even psychosis" (2014:65). He explains that trauma can disrupt the function of the thalamus, the part of the brain responsible for processing sensory information. During severe trauma, the thalamus may temporarily stop working properly. As a result, trauma survivors often lose their normal perception of time and space, which explains why they frequently experience dissociation, a feeling of being detached from reality or oneself. Meanwhile Karl Jaspers explain that, " Delusions are not simply incorrect beliefs; they represent a fundamental alteration in the individual's overall perception and experience of reality.." (1913:93).

#### **2.1.2.3.3. Psychological Breakdown**

In the view of Bessel, "Trauma is kept in the mind not as a clear story, but as scattered pieces of feeling and sense memories" (2014:176). He explains that trauma disrupts the mind's ability to process information normally, making it difficult for survivors to respond to situations in a calm, rational way. This damage often shows up as panic, uncontrollable anger, or dissociation. These are the signs of how trauma breaks down healthy psychological functioning. While Pierre Janet state that, "The mind becomes overwhelmed and splits off traumatic memories, leading to a fragmentation of the self." (1889:132).

## **2.2 Research Method**

This research thesis uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis method. The goal is to explore how trauma affects the characters' psychology, based on Bessel's theory on trauma. This method allows for an in-depth interpretation of trauma symptoms and their representation in the literary text.

### **2.2.1. Method of Approach**

This research uses a psychological literary approach. This approach focuses on analyzing the inner thoughts, mental condition, and emotional struggles of the main character, particularly how trauma influences his perception, behaviour, and narrative style. Since the study centres on psychological interpretation rather than numerical data, a qualitative analysis is the most appropriate method. This approach enables the researcher to explore the meaning, symptoms, and themes related to trauma in the text.

### **2.2.2. Method of Collecting Data**

According to Booth, Colomb, and Williams, "Library research involves gathering, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of knowledge on a topic through resources available in libraries, which provide a solid foundation for any research inquiry" (2008:14). The data collected from these sources will be analyzed qualitatively using a psychological literary approach. Specifically, the study applies Bessel van der Kolk's trauma theory to examine the psychological trauma experienced by the main characters, and Robert Stanton's conflict theory to explore the internal and external conflicts that influence their behavior and mental state. Close reading techniques will be employed to interpret narrative elements such as diction,

symbolism, and character development, providing a comprehensive understanding of how trauma is portrayed in Poe's both stories.

### **2.2.3. Types of Data**

Library research encompasses two types of data, primary and secondary data. Creswell explains "primary data refers to data collected directly from the source through various methods such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, or experiments" (2018:159). In literary studies, primary data consists of the original literary text being analyzed. In this case, the primary data will come directly from both stories. The study will involve a close reading text to identify specific elements that reveal both main characters' psychological trauma. Key passages, such as the main character's obsession with the "vulture eye" in the former story and the hallucinated cries of the hidden cat in the latter story, will be analyzed as primary data to understand how trauma shapes their actions and behaviour.

Given states "secondary data refers to information that has been previously collected and is obtained from existing sources, such as books, articles, journals, research reports, or data compiled by other researchers" (2008:804). Secondary data will provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the effects of trauma on the main character. Additionally, secondary sources will be used to compare the findings in the former story and the latter story with broader psychological theories and interpretations of trauma in literature. Both stories depict psychological trauma leading to madness and violence, but differ in its expression. The former focuses on obsession and hallucination, while the latter highlights substance abuse and cruelty. Despite these differences, both stories reveal trauma as a key factor in the

characters mental decline.