

Paranoia, Neurotic Trauma, and Re-Traumatization as the Triad of Psychic Monomania in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

Ghada Sasa

Department of English Language and Literature, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu Jweid

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts, FESA / UNRWA, Amman, Jordan

Abstract—This paper attempts to explore paranoia and trauma as the causes of psychological monomania in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." The study focuses on the gradual development of the narrator's paranoia stimulated by his aversive feelings toward the old man's eagle eye. The discussion sheds light on Poe's meticulous narrative descriptions of the narrator's severe acute senses that make him undergo a horrible experience. The study looks into this experience as stimulation of his paranoia, which becomes the nexus of his hesitant decision to kill the old man. In this sense, paranoia and neurotic trauma will be explored as the impetus for the narrator's monomania stirred by a re-traumatization experience. The study applies Sigmund Freud's concepts of paranoia and neurotic trauma, as well as Shoshana Felman's concept of re-traumatization, as a conceptual framework. Thus, these concepts will be utilized to analyze the psychic synthesis of monomania in relation to the protagonist's gradual development of paranoia, neurotic trauma, and re-traumatization, respectively.

Index Terms—monomania, neurosis, paranoia, trauma

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the human psyche acutely pertains to the critical scrutiny of behavioral reactions and subjective attitudes. Psychoanalysis attempts to delve into the deep-seated unconscious drives that strongly control human behavior. The interpretation of human behaviors, therefore, relies on the way in which certain personalities are perceived and judged by other people. Psychoanalysis offers multifarious critical concepts that are crucial for grasping and exploring the latent impetus of behavioral disorders. One of these concepts is paranoia. This concept refers to excessive suspicion, i.e. paranoid individuals who have a constant suspicion of people around them, believing that such people might cause them harm. As a result, paranoia posits such individuals on the brink of psychic retardation, as they are trapped in persistent unjustified suspicion. In fact, they are victims of their own unconscious repression of unpleasant events that make such individuals severely paranoid when these events are triggered in the conscious mind. Here, paranoia transforms into behavioral abnormality noticed by other people.

There is a contiguous relationship between paranoia and vile events. In psychoanalysis, the interpretation of such events relates to the concept of trauma, which is another integral psychoanalytic concept. Trauma, as a psychoanalytic concept, is motivated by a particularly harmful experience. Traumatic individuals try to inhabit this experience for the sake of relieving comfort because they are exhausted by the continual recollections connected with it. Strikingly, traumatic feelings undergo a transitional psychic phase. That is, the inhibited trauma is buried in the unconscious mind, yet, it manifests in severe and whimsical behaviors. In other words, the unconscious traumatic experience appears in individual conscious behaviors, but they are abnormal. This is because traumatic individuals are re-traumatized when they consciously recall their negative experiences.

Re-traumatization is the culmination of a specific behavioral abnormality. This study uses the term "neurotic trauma" to explicate the inherent causes of the repressed negative crime experience incurred by the protagonist's qualm. Accordingly, the study will be limited to monomania as a behavioral abnormality caused by paranoia, neurotic trauma, and re-traumatization in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." There is a critical discussion of the inextricable relationship between paranoia, neurotic trauma, and re-traumatization. It will rely on Sigmund Freud's discussion of the unconscious peculiarities of neurotic trauma and its relationship to paranoia. Shoshana Felman's concept of re-traumatization will also be polarized in the course of a critical analysis of the story.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" is tackled from diverse critical perspectives. Scholars have tried their hand to delve deep into its themes and symbols to explore the literary latent meanings projected in the plot's events. Morad Alsahafi (2020) studies the story's narrative discourse to explore Poe's didactic purposes. That is, the story abounds with narrative descriptions of the human agitated psyche that might provide the reader with viable solutions to their existential impasses in life. In this sense, the didactic aspect of the story emerges from the meticulous narrative details expressed by the narrative discourse. This discourse is explicitly uttered by the fictional characters, including the unnamed narrator and the policemen; it exemplifies the intended effect of Poe's didactic aims which "contribute to the creation of a well-formed text that has effectively achieved its purpose and made its intended effect" (1). Consequently, it conveys Poe's profound concern with instructing the reader to avoid any existential dilemmas by being strict in decision-making. That being so, the narrator recovers from his repressed hesitation fear by deciding to kill the old man. Alsahafi applies the concepts of macrostructure and microstructure to examine the story's lexical components of narrative discourse. He concludes that the story has social and temporal functions that render the protagonist less intimidated by internal fear by dint of the narrative discourse which serves as a remedy for his hesitation and instability.

Abdeen (2020) scrutinizes the function of fictional mystery in Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Abdeen contends that Poe includes aesthetic elements for the sake of embellishing the story's literary style. Hence, Poe is considered a forerunner of the mystery genre due to his impressive use of gothic settings, which reflect the essence of his mystery expertise. Via the use of unusual narrative episodes and whimsical characters, argues Abdeen, Poe has a lasting effect upon a receptive readership. This effect is reinforced by the excessive utilization of horror and gloom factors representing the violent attributes of the story. Consequently, Abdeen's findings rely on Poe's unprecedented employment of mystery, which gives his story an exceptional literary quality because it overtly "utilizes a lot of suspense and excitement" (p.153). Abdeen's study, therefore, reveals suspense and excitement as the dual functions of fictional mystery aroused by Poe's creative imagination regarding the impact of gloomy and terrifying settings upon the entire atmosphere.

Shamaila Amir (2017) examines the themes of torment and murder in Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Like Abdeen's study, Amir sheds light on some narrative scenes including horror and crime. She looks at the story through the lens of the protagonist's conscious guilty mind. The protagonist commits a dreadful crime. As a result, he exhibits strange behavior as he undergoes guilt torment. In the long run, such torment leads him to confess to the murder when the policemen arrive. Here, Amir's point is that how Poe depicts this conscious torment is a rhetorical device; and he underpins the literary images conveying scenes of repentance and confession in the plot. These images have an integral influence on the protagonist's personality as they lead to drastic changes in his attitude, i.e. he transforms from being murderous to being meek and submissive. This is due to his mind's conscious guilt and its relative control of his response to the death of the old man, as well as his confused hearing of the unjustified sound of the old man's heartbeat. Amir's analysis of the themes of torment and murder through a guilty conscious mind pinpoints Poe's deliberate juxtaposition of the protagonist's mental deterioration and paranoia: "the story has been written to provide a study of paranoia and mental deterioration" (p.596). Amir's contribution relates to its discovery of mental deterioration and paranoia as the motivational basis of the protagonist's criminal acts and his conscious guilty mind, which results in his unexpected confession to committing the crime.

The psychological implications of "The Tell-Tale Heart" have a profound effect on the way in which Poe exposes the intricate thoughts of the narrator. Adi Yusuf (2018) attempts to explore the narrator's schizophrenia by tracing delusions and hallucinations. Once schizophrenia develops, it becomes a mental disorder. Yusuf interprets such a disorder as catatonic, which is the primary contribution of his study. Furthermore, he analyses the gothic elements of the story in order to delve deep into Poe's descriptive style of building the protagonist's fear of the unknown due to the gothic setting of the house: "the main character seems to have a mental disorder called 'schizophrenia', categorized as 'catatonic.' The narrator experiences the four stages of hallucinations and delusions: comforting, condemning, controlling, and conquering which deal with 'delusion', and 'hallucination'" (p.12). Yusuf concludes his study by arguing that the mysterious horrifying aspects of the story reinforce the development of the narrator's schizophrenia as a result of Poe's powerful and meticulous description of narrative events.

Our study, however, will differ in how it looks at Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" from a psychoanalytic perspective. It attempts to offer a genuine reading of the psyche of the protagonist that is extremely unstable. To clarify, it approaches the protagonist's monomania as a manifestation of behavioral abnormality stimulated by paranoia, neurotic trauma, and re-traumatization. Moreover, our study follows a different methodological application to interpret the protagonist's monomania by utilizing the concepts of paranoia and neurotic trauma of Freud. The concept of re-traumatization put forth by Felman will also be used in the critical analysis, and it will be limited to the police jurisdiction action, whereby the protagonist undergoes a re-traumatization experience under the effects of recalling his crime as he illogically hears the old man's heartbeats. Such action will be underpinned by explicating the re-traumatization experience, especially when the policemen summon him for investigation, which is scarcely pursued in previous scholarship conducted on the selected story.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

“The Tell-Tale Heart” tells the story of an unnamed narrator who suffers from nervousness, which is over-acuteness of sensory perception. He describes how he undergoes imaginary panic attacks as he lives in a gothic house with an old man. Although the old man is very kind, the narrator does not feel at ease living with him. The cause of the narrator’s aversion relates to the old man having a vulture’s eye that frightens the narrator to the limit. This sparks paranoid feelings towards the old man, and the narrator starts devising a plan to kill the old man. He tries to commit the murder on seven consecutive nights; he attempts to kill the old man every night, yet he hesitates once he approaches the door of the old man’s room. His hesitation is ascribed to his unjustified fear of the old man’s “evil eye.” However, he is able to kill the old man on the eighth night, and, out of pain and fear, the latter screams.

The narrator then dismembers the body of the old man and hides him under the floorboards, believing that nobody will discover any evidence of the crime. The neighbor, who hears the old man’s scream, goes to the police and reports hearing a strange scream coming from the house of the old man. Then, three policemen arrive and summon the narrator to ask him about the crime. He denies committing the crime, claiming that he was screaming because of a horrible nightmare, and the old man did not scream at all because he was away in the country. The policemen are convinced by the narrator’s alibi. They enter the house and sit in the old man’s room. They sit on chairs located precisely above the body of the old man hidden under the floorboards. They do not show any doubt or have any suspicions that the narrator is murderous. The narrator is content and pleased with the policemen’s benign treatment and good manners.

However, this contentment is interrupted and spoiled as he hears strange ringing sounds in his ears that make him feel uncomfortable and agitated. Because he suffers from over-acute sensory perception, he thinks that the sounds are the heartbeats of the old man’s heart. The sounds get louder, yet, the policemen still do not hear them in the same manner the narrator does. He becomes terrified and overwhelmed in the belief that the policemen know everything about the crime. As a result, he collapses and confesses to the murder; simultaneously, he tells them about the remains of the old man’s body under the floorboards.

The concept of paranoia refers to the suspicious feelings developed by psychic personalities. However, it has some critical implications that represent the psychic state of such personalities. The terminological implications of paranoia refer to some other words such as estrangement, isolation, distance, loneliness and so forth. In this context, Freud tends to use the term “isolation” rather than repression in the bulk of his psychoanalytic arguments. There are some critical stances that illustrate Freud’s conceptualization of paranoia. Wilmer et al. (2020) discuss the concept of paranoia in terms of Freud’s arguments. They contend that isolation is a psychic manifestation of paranoia as it is considered to be a peculiarity of neurosis. It appears in the form of interposition that comes out of terrified feelings because “fears became paranoia (fear and suspicion of everyone, often without cause) (parentheses in original)” (p.90). Paranoia, furthermore, appears after a subjective predilection to isolation. That is, it is a channel sphere that leads to suspicion and fear. It occurs before the neurotic refractory period when nothing is permitted to happen, such as actions and perceptions which are abnormally performed. According to Fisher (2020), this refractory paranoid interposition – after an unpleasant experience – might be a strange behavior since it betrays its relationship to repression caused by the fear of an unpleasant event or object. This is because it skips into a neurotic position, which will be discussed in the ensuing sections. Consequently, the logical effect of paranoia becomes evident in the individual’s tendency to isolation, which is a kind of defense mechanism to protect oneself from surrounding intimidating forces; and consequently, Fisher (2020) considers “paranoid logic as psychic adjustments rooted in the vicissitudes of defenses and the exchanges of psychic agency predominance” (p.45).

In Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart”, the manifestation of the concept of paranoia relates to the protagonist’s suspicious thoughts and his inclination to live in isolation to defend himself from the old man’s vulture’s eye. As previously mentioned, this threat of the eye is a mere fancy created by the protagonist’s fake imagination. On the whole, he lives in gloomy isolation in the old man’s house as a reactionary defense mechanism. The primary motivation of his psychic paranoia is aroused by the old man’s congenital malformation of the eye, as the old man has a vulture’s eye that provokes the protagonist and terrifies him to the extreme. Consequently, he develops paranoid feelings when he sees the old man’s vulture’s eye. He describes how the idea of killing the old man entered his mind because he was no longer able to tolerate his suspicious state, and how he wanted to rid himself of such suspicious thoughts in order to live peacefully and comfortably: “It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold, I had no desire. 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” (pp.1-2). At this point, the protagonist hesitates to commit the crime for the first time as he lives in psychic torment due to the terrible presence of the old man’s eye.

The protagonist’s paranoia is, therefore, stimulated by his unstable life with the old man. This is because he suffers from bogus intimidation from the vulture’s eye that does not allow him to sleep or stay safe. By the same token, Howard Tumber and Waisbord (2021) prefer to nominate the Freudian conceptualization of paranoia as a phenomenon of compulsive drive by which the isolation technique is reproduced. It is intensified by “motor” psychic means as well as by exquisite unintentional reactions which are perceived “as unreasonable paranoia, overheated suspicion, and dangerous militancy” (p.102). Tumber and Waisbord (2021) claim that Freud utilizes the concept of paranoia as a technique. This technique precedes the neurotic phase since it no longer relates to repression. When it betrays repression, it comes to terms with the neurosis that appears in conscious actions, such as paranoid abnormal behaviors. Hence, the

concept of paranoia, to use Freudian terminology, pre-exists in the repression period. When it emerges from repression, it becomes abnormal suspicious thoughts that severely affect the individual's conscious behaviors.

Poe, in "The Tell-Tale Heart," depicts this paranoia experience in the way the protagonist lives a cautious life. He is very cautious with regards to the old man since he thinks that the vulture's eye might harm him. This aligns with his decision on the eighth night when he approaches the old man's room to kill him: "upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity" (p.4). In this situation, the protagonist feels as if he is powerful because he could be closer to the old man. Consequently, he is able to kill him and get rid of the vulture's eye—the primary source of his psychic intimidation. As a matter of fact, the protagonist undergoes this experience due to his paranoid feelings. Although the old man is peaceful and kind to the protagonist, his vulture's eye is the motivation for the panic and fear felt by the protagonist. As such, he is no longer able to live together with the old man in the same house.

The protagonist's paranoia is, in this sense, created by the isolation of living with the old man. The primal notion of paranoia, according to Freud (1916-17), is an isolation living experience. Here, paranoia and isolation co-exist at the same time. Isolation accompanies the phase of paranoia because persons with certain problems, such as abnormal psychic complexes, become prone to gloomy isolation. This isolation matures in paranoia before it becomes an abnormal behavior that appears as a result of recalling a past negative experience. Freud uses the concept of paranoia as a critical argument for the influence of isolation upon the individual's psychic condition. In *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud maintains that the concept of paranoia entails a psychic reaction when isolation is desired by whimsical individuals. Consequently, the mental condition of such individuals is worsened by isolation. In this paranoia phase, isolation represents the individual's decision not to return to desired objects that might be harmful. Paranoia, according to Freud, exists in this mental stage. It is divided between isolation and negative desires that represent the individual's determination to achieve desires "stored in cathexis"¹ (p.315). The concept of paranoia, on the whole, co-exists with inhibition, especially when individuals tend to repress cathectic "negative desires" with the help of an ego that reconciles unresolved conflict with the super-ego.

Isolation, as a negative experience, relates to the protagonist's lonely life in Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." In the beginning, he tries to inhibit his aversive feelings towards the old man's vulture's eye because his super-ego, or morality principle, prevents him from committing such a heinous crime. Notwithstanding, he could not maintain these repressed feelings because he has developed a paranoid reaction to the old man. He thinks that the old man might harm him, which is a negative desire repressed by his ego. This is the core of his negative experience which appears when he lives in dreadful terror caused by the horrible look of the old man's vulture's eye: "I have told you that I am nervous: So I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror" (p.6). In fact, the protagonist's conscience is torn regarding killing the old man, which is the immoral reality repressed in the ego. However, it is resisted and completely denied by the super-ego that makes him hesitant to kill the old man. Here, the super-ego exemplifies the moral principle of the protagonist's psyche that attempts to procrastinate his murder as he has an isolation experience. As such, the protagonist's paranoia is created in his isolation in which he is suspicious of the old man, yet he is still frightened by the idea of killing him because it is immoral. This fear is in turn triggered by a neurotic trauma experience.

Freud (1920) discursively elaborates the concept of trauma in the bulk of his works. The discussion of trauma relates to other psychoanalytic concepts since it has a close affinity with the core conceptual argumentation of neurosis. The elaboration of other concepts within the field of psychoanalysis provided Freud with the appropriate perception of trauma and how it works in the mentality of psychically neurotic personalities. In this sense, neurotic trauma is a detrimental psychic disorder that swerves individuals' behaviors. It resembles other psychological disorders, such as psychosis and schizophrenia. Freud put forth the integral notion of neurosis as a psychic disorder in his seminal book *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. With the publication of this book, a radical understanding of neurotic trauma and its influence on personality came to prominence. More specifically, the book's third part – "General Theory of the Neuroses" – allocates a great space for discussing the concepts of neurosis and trauma.

Freud claims that the concept of neurotic trauma as a kind of force – a compulsion – is not a well-known psychic disorder like hysteria. Trauma is also not a braggart term that is so dangerous like other psychic disorder concepts. It reflects the individual's subjective interest in something. It entirely rejects any physical manifestation. That is, it does not appear in the body's reactions. Therefore, the concept of neurosis is a psychological state rather than a physical one. In this regard, Freud contends that the purpose of psychoanalysis studies is to argue for the psychological symptoms of neurotic trauma. The therapy for this disease is considered a victory over a neurotic malady. In the course of his arguments, Freud prefers to describe the psychic condition of neurosis as "compulsion neurosis" (p.227). A compulsion disorder does not leave the psychological state to the physical in a mysterious way. Conducting psychoanalytic studies has unraveled several features of neurotic trauma.

Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" portrays this traumatic experience via the protagonist's nervous response as soon as he arrives at the old man's house. He becomes neurotically traumatized once he meets the old man for the first time.

¹ Cathexis represents the focus of the mental energy needed for a certain person, object and the like. It stands for the id's storage of negative desires loathed by the ego and the super-ego.

Although he suffers from the over-acuteness of senses as a disease, he is deeply frightened by the old man's vulture's eye: "true! — nervous — very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them" (p.1). In this case, the protagonist's trauma coincides with his neurotic condition once he begins to be scared of the eye; and it embodies the imaginary adversary that frightens him very much because neurotic trauma accompanies "people who have experienced adversities" (Papadopoulos, 2021, p.36). To relate this experience to Freud, neurotic trauma has many extreme characteristics that represent the protagonist's authentic entity of trauma in personalities. Freud mentions a number of these characteristics, yet, he describes them as "manifestations" of neurotic trauma; or as he puts it simply, compulsion neurosis. The first manifestation is that a neurotic patient is consistently haunted by the thought that he/she does not care about intimidating reality.

A neurotically traumatic individual is upset by negative motivations which he/she considers alien. The literary aspect of such neurotic trauma is digressively approached in narrative fictional instances, whereby authors "present trauma, and how those instances take shape in narrative and discursive forms" (Peters & Richards, 2021, p.61). However, a neurotic personality cannot resist performing these undesired actions, like Poe's portrayal of the protagonist's unjustified fear and suspicion of the old man. The protagonist's neurotic thoughts might be trivial or unreal because they represent a strange response to the gothic environment as an indication of the restricted thinking caused by the presence of the old man and his vulture's eye. These thoughts overwhelm his neurotic trauma, and ultimately he reluctantly surrenders to the idea of killing the old man. The protagonist's neurotic disposition is unwillingly obliged to think of such criminal things which are considered, according to Freud (1920), a "matter of life and death" (p.227). In this sense, Poe connects this neurotic trauma to the strange groan heard by the protagonist. Trauma begins as he becomes completely terrified by the groan of the old man:

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low, stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. (p.4)

The protagonist's developing trauma, here, is ascribed to his neurotic personality. In a similar way, Freud contends that the negative impulses that force the neurotic individual to be in a psychically disordered state give the impression of fear or a terrible incident. The sense of fear and a terrible incident impression, presumably, exemplify the most extreme form of neurotic trauma. The neurotic individual is characterized by alien thoughts that appear as physical actions perceived by other individuals as abnormal. As such, neurotic trauma controls physical peculiarities; and narrative fiction conveys these peculiarities through a "process of transforming the subjective oral narrative into a written literary piece that survived the horrific and verbalizing effect of what was once the unspeakable" (Leal et al., 2021, p.23). Yet, Freud excludes an abrupt traumatic reaction towards committing a crime as an example of this neurotic state. The neurotic individual resists the attractiveness of terrifying thoughts. Consequently, the neurotic individual tries to avoid these thoughts and fearfully forgets them in order to prevent him/herself from satisfying these atrocious desires by confining his/her personal freedom via "repudiation and restrictions" (p.227). Hence, the concept of neurosis is strongly connected to psychic disorders and traumatic incidents.

Poe, in "The Tell-Tale Heart," depicts the neurotic peculiarities of the protagonist's trauma and his predication to commit a crime as a means of relieving himself from traumatic fears. The act of committing the crime is the nexus of his neurotic behavior per se. He is haunted by nasty thoughts of killing the old man vis-à-vis the horrible form of his vulture's eye. To relate this to Freud's argument, he decides to commit the crime in order to avoid thinking of the old man's vulture's eye. Poe formulates the development of the protagonist's neurotic trauma by means of the protagonist's anxious feelings, and he says that the hour of the old man's life has come. In doing so, he directly alludes to his intention to kill the old man: "and now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room" (p.6). This anxious psychic condition is an authentic embodiment of his vicious intention to kill the old man, and it is an indication of ferocious actions driven by his neurotic trauma. A suitable way to avoid atrocious actions, according to Freud (1920), is to evade any steps that might lead to such actions. Consequently, the protagonist's traumatic reaction achieves the highest degree of precautionary victory. In light of this argument, the latent construction of his neurotic trauma is deduced to be a detrimental psychic disorder. This is because it severely affects the internal mechanism of the psyche which is reflected in behavioral actions. In order to evade a neurotic dilemma, the protagonist performs trivial, yet fatal, actions. This behavioral abnormality, says Freud (1920), comes out of the actions that govern the comprehensive form of committing the crime as a reflection of a psychic disease; and they are the formative fabrication of neurosis and the motives that caused its gradual symptoms of trauma (pp.227-28). This is the psychological premise proposed by Freud to discuss the main causes of neurotic trauma. The concept of trauma, in this sense, yields to the notion of compulsion, i.e. it is caused by the force of the aforementioned neurotic behavioral abnormalities developed by Poe's digressive narrative depiction of the protagonist's neurosis. As such, they meticulously relate to the psychic conditions of the protagonist.

The protagonist's acuteness of sense is the initial impetus of his neurotic trauma. He, furthermore, suffers from this acuteness that enables him to notice meticulous details around him, but they are typically seen by other people, too: "above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.

How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story” (p.1). In this way, he becomes a victim of his own terrible life with the old man. Later, the over-acuteness of his senses empowers him to hear the beating of the old man’s heart when he admits to committing the crime. The protagonist’s traumatic condition is contiguous to Freud’s (1920) conceptualization of the relationship between trauma and neurosis. Freud reverts to certain situations to prove his arguments about the influence of neurosis upon the human personality and mentions some cases that illustrate the experimental investigation of neurosis and its relationship to trauma. He theorizes these situations according to his conclusions about the authentic motivational impulses of neuroses, which closely relate to Poe’s descriptions of neurotic trauma through the protagonist’s demeanor. In so doing, Freud conveys the motives of neurosis from the experimental to theoretical formulae. The reason for this theoretical conceptualization is to pave the way for healing neurotic trauma. In essence, Freud (1920) conceptualizes the concept of trauma as a harmful malady that threatens the human’s psychic stability, a fact that is quite evident in the psychic condition of the protagonist who is ultimately deluged by paranoid suspicion and neurotic trauma. That being so, a neurotically traumatic experience is the culmination of Poe’s protagonist whose fear transforms into a sense of neurotic trauma that prevents him from socializing with the old man. The negative effect of neurotic trauma, in this case, results in social barriers between neurotically traumatic individuals and other people around them since neurotic trauma leads to a “deterioration in social norms” (Theisen-Womersley, 2021, p.147). Accordingly, the loss of the social and ethical aspects of the relationship between neurotically traumatic individuals and other people leads to another precarious psychic condition, namely, re-traumatization.

The concept of re-traumatization is tackled in the psychological field with regard to legal contexts. It is used to describe the abnormality of the individual that faces several complications in everyday life. Re-traumatization, in a striking way, reveals how the individual meets disruption in everyday life. Hence, people’s lives determine their psychological state, whatever their special conditions are. Psychoanalytic scholars agree on some characteristics that formulate the inherent patterns of re-traumatization as a serious disease. Yet, the general perception of the term is relative. That is, it is described relatively by psychoanalytic scholars. Some of them argue that it relates to the mind and its intrinsic mechanisms. As such, it profoundly influences the mind; and consequently, body movements are controlled by the mind itself. In contrast, some psychoanalytic scholars claim that re-traumatization accompanies the behavioral appearance of “traumatized needs to talk about what happened, and that there is the possibility of re-traumatization” (Grosch-Miller, 2021, p.27). In this way, the concept of re-traumatization refers to a new psychic state when an unpleasant experience is triggered by the effect of legal acts. In this study, we tend to describe the concept of re-traumatization as a malady because it is associated with other psychological or mental diseases. By the same token, Felman (2002) relates the concept of re-traumatization to juridical or legal actions that trigger a previous experience; and, therefore re-traumatization appears again due to the fact that “the hidden link between trauma and law has gradually become more visible and more dramatically apparent” (p.2).

Poe reiterates this notion in “The Tell-Tale Heart” when the protagonist denies the fact that the old man was screaming. He says that the scream was his own. In fact, his previous neurotic trauma was triggered as the policemen arrived and summoned him for investigation.

I smiled—for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim. (p.8)

The previous traumatic condition of the protagonist is motivated by the legal actions of the policemen. In a striking way, Poe ties the emergence of re-traumatization with the protagonist’s previous neurotic trauma experience. Individuals with re-traumatization symptoms are prone to violent milieus “by physically moving through spaces and places of violence and death” (Simonsen & Hogg, 2021, p.79). Felman (2002) accentuates this fact when she scrutinizes the legal effect upon the individual who is re-traumatized when they face a juristic situation. The fact that the concept is not specific and deprecatory, and inconsistent at the same time, relates to the lack of a theoretical conceptualization of the term. According to Felman (2002), the theoretical nomenclature of re-traumatization contrives to strengthen the individual’s case in a legal situation that depends on an outstanding psychological defense, the integration of subjective identity and objective juristic relational matters. Felman (2002) explicates the intricate theoretical layers of re-traumatization that “encapsulates not closure but precisely what in a given legal case refuses to be closed and cannot be closed” (p.8). To clarify, re-traumatization is a relative response according to the legal role in changing the psychic condition of previously traumatic individuals.

In Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” for example, the psyche of the protagonist is interpreted as the “subjective” aspect of trauma, while his relations with other characters or events are accentuated as the “objective” motive of re-traumatization. Such re-traumatization appears when he thinks that the policemen suspect him. He immediately remembers his past crime, and believes that they have discovered the truth: “They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or

die!—and now— again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!— ” (p.9). Consequently, the protagonist’s past traumatic experience makes him recall the crime again. The policemen, therefore, embody the emergence of the protagonist’s re-traumatization as they are authorized to summon him if he is indicted for committing the crime.

The protagonist’s re-traumatization also appears in his behavioral reaction. In this context, there is a common consensus on the judgment of re-traumatization as a definitive motive of behavioral abnormality. Some individuals develop uncanny defects in their behaviors. Surrounding people may judge re-traumatized individuals on the basis of their abnormal control over their behaviors. Moreover, the concept of re-traumatization has a contiguous relationship with the fear of re-traumatized individuals “who have been needlessly and excessively subject to trauma and re-traumatization and live in constant fear” (Moreland-Capua, 2021, p.94). As argued earlier, such fear is re-motivated by legal acts. Some people tend to describe them as maniacs, while some others would accuse them of madness. This is consistent with blatant evidence when they notice a severe swerve in re-traumatized individuals’ behaviors. The investigation of re-traumatization requires the presence of the individual in a clinical setting. Some psychological institutions allocate clinical suites for persons with neurotic behaviors. They provide appropriate healthcare for neurotic persons in order to put them in ideal psychic stability conditions. These factors are a definitive aspect of Feldman’s (2002) appropriation of the concept of re-traumatization in the light of legal action; and re-traumatization becomes subject to “the tool of law [which] was used not only as a tool of proof of unimaginable facts but, above all, as a compelling medium of transmission” (p.133). Here, the law transforms into an effective tool to create the re-traumatization experiences depicted in literary works.

In Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the policemen execute legal action indicting the protagonist. Yet, they later become convinced of his manner as an innocent man. He suffers from over-acuteness of the senses, which makes him gradually tell the policemen about the crime: “I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. 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” (p.9). In this case, the protagonist reaches the extremity of his psychic re-traumatization that creates his monomania psychic condition.

Monomania is a psychic disorder that shapes the ultimate abnormal condition of paranoid and traumatic individuals. Nakamura and Carta (2021) claim that monomania is a condition with severe one-sidedness where the individual suffers from crazy symptoms due to the loss of their psychic equilibrium. Consequently, people with monomania undergo terrifying experiences that negatively influence their sanity and peace of mind. In other words, they cannot cope with new conditions, and they become prone to being misjudged by other people around them. Therefore, they appear abnormal, and they are greatly depressed by certain incidents that leave their apparently negative impact upon their personality and behaviors. They also develop kinaesthetic expressions and whimsical relationships with other people; Nakamura and Carta write: “a craze develops, a monomania or possession, an acute one-sidedness which most seriously imperils the psychic equilibrium” (p.285). Accordingly, the tangible symptoms of monomania appear in the form of an acute one-sidedness that endangers the sanity of individuals who live in severe intimidating circumstances. As a result, they develop monomania in an abrupt way as they interact with a perilous environment.

The protagonist in “The Tell-Tale Heart” lives in a similar environment. He leads an intimidating life since he interacts with a person with whom he does not feel at ease. The house of the old man and his vulture’s eye are the causes of the protagonist’s loss of psychic equilibrium. The monomania of the protagonist, therefore, emerges as he lives in the gothic circumstances surrounding him. What is striking is that the other people who notice his abnormal behaviors do not suspect him. They do not discover the crime as they arrive and sit with the protagonist. However, fear and severe acuteness of the senses make the protagonist behave in an abnormal way. At this point, he clearly develops a monomania that leads him to confess to the crime. He screams loudly and admits to committing the crime: “‘Villains!’ I shrieked, ‘dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!’” (p.9). As a response, he is not able to bear his over-acuteness of the senses, and he directly confesses to the crime. In this sense, the accumulation of neurotic trauma, paranoia, and re-traumatization monomania are consecutive psychic phases leading up to his monomania noticed and judged by the policemen. Thus, he becomes overwhelmed by monomania, and he reveals to the policemen the location of the old man’s body.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has studied monomania as a behavioral abnormality caused by paranoia, neurotic trauma, and re-traumatization in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart”. The methodology in the study was limited to psychoanalysis to reveal the latent psychological problems that make the protagonist paranoid and neurotically traumatic. The study applies Freud’s concept of paranoia and neurotic trauma to explore the protagonist’s monomania. One of the study’s major contributions is the scrutiny of the gradual development of the protagonist’s paranoia. He commits a very vicious crime, which relieves him of his unjustified fear of the old man. However, this paranoid fear transforms into a neurotic traumatic form, and he confesses to committing the crime due to his recollection of the old man’s Eagle Eye. Consequently, the application of psychoanalysis to this short story has unraveled the psychic complexities of its protagonist and how he develops paranoia and neurotic trauma, alongside monomania as the final phase of his behavioral abnormality. The explanation of these psychic complexes sheds light on the theoretical

argumentation about them in light of Sigmund's postulation about the close affinity between paranoia and neurotic trauma.

The analysis of this neurotic trauma is another definitive contribution of the study. The study finds that the protagonist's recollection of the murderous crime makes him vehemently resist his severe acuteness of the senses. He begins to suspect the policemen who come to his house. Such suspicion triggers his previous traumatic experience. As a result, the study explores the recalling of this hideous experience as the pinnacle of his re-traumatization. This is because re-traumatization, according to Felman (2002), is associated with legal trials or juristic experience. In the same way, the protagonist feels the imminent approach of his trial as he is abruptly visited by the policemen who have been notified of a horrible scream coming from his house. They do not find any proof of the crime, and they become friendly as they smile and laugh comfortably. However, the protagonist, who suffers from qualms and severe acuteness of the senses, undergoes an experience of re-traumatization. This is because he thinks that he is being deceived by the policemen, and he will be shortly summoned to be tried for committing the crime. Thus, his sudden confession to committing the crime is examined as the result of such a re-traumatization experience.

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Ghada S. Sasa earned a PhD in English Literature and Criticism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2005.

She is currently an associate professor at Yarmouk University, Irbid-Jordan. She is also head of the English Department at Yarmouk University.

Dr. Sasa's research interests include American Literature, American Realism and Naturalism, British Literature, Women Writing, Arab-American Women Writing, narration in literature, among many other areas of interest.

Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu Jweid was born in 1985 in Jerash, Jordan. He got his B.A. degree from Jerash Private University in 2009 majoring in English Literature and Language. He completed his M.A. degree from Yarmouk University on English Literature and Criticism. In 2016, he got his PhD degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia majoring in English Literature.

He worked as a Fixed Term appointed teacher of English at UNRWA schools in Jordan from 2009 to 2015 and 2017-2019. During his work, he found teaching English inspiring. He also got an E.P. (Educational Psychology) diploma during his appointment period which enhanced his working potentials. Currently, he has been an assistant professor of English Literature at Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts (FESA) UNRWA/Jordan since 2019.

Dr. Abu Jweid is interested in different academic fields, especially literature, human development, translation, interpretation and education. He participated in some economic conferences as an interpreter and consecutive translator. He has attended many cultural

international conferences, seminars and workshops on Translation, Literature and Languages. They paved the way for mastering technical terms that facilitate the process of translating or grasping diverse socio-cultural contexts. He also has published several academic papers, an English novella and an Arabic novel.