
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Narrating the Wound: Trauma and Memory in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' and Poe's 'The Raven'

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ABSTRACT

Demystifying the puzzle of the ancient Mariner's real story and identity has been the aim of many critics. Direct analysis of the poem would always propound a crossing of boundaries between the real and the uncanny without providing a clear interpretation of the actual context of the mariner's tale. The mariner's dilemma occurs when he shoots an albatross without any distinct reason, thus resulting in the death of all the crew members who turn into eccentric creatures. Accentuating his sense of guilt, the mariner stops a guest from entering a wedding and starts narrating his story. Whereas the guest never questions the reliability of the fictitious elements of the mariner's account, the readers do. Similarly, Edgar Allan Poe's speaker posits questions to an unwelcomed guest, a raven, who visits him at night and gets infuriated at the consistent answer he receives from him: 'Nevermore'. The readers are aware that the speaker is suffering from a psychological disorder since he insists the raven would reply to his distorted inquiries. This paper reads the mariner's as well as the Raven's speaker's quandaries in association with trauma theory highlighting their traumatic experiences and underscoring the unreliability of their narration by diagnosing them as patients of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Reference will be made to the importance of the albatross and the raven as fundamental motifs that project the characters' psychological predicaments resulting in the implausible tales they both recount.

KEYWORDS

Romanticism; Trauma; PTSD; Coleridge; Poe

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1. Introduction

Although the word trauma was used only to refer to physical injuries and their concomitant associations, using the theory in its pure psychological signification would set the framework for analyzing the characters of the ancient mariner in Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and Edgar Allan Poe's speaker in 'The Raven'. Both characters appear to be suffering from a sense of guilt resulting from being physically unharmed in a catastrophic event. Such unbearable feelings of contrition and despondency lead the two characters to resort to fleeing reality and indulge in exercises of the unconscious. Both characters could be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder patients (PTSD) as they attempt relentlessly to cope with psychologically challenging and stifling situations. Perceiving themselves as helpless beings witnessing disastrous incidents while remaining safe – unlike the rest of their companions – created a 'survivor's guilt' pushing them towards a conflict between their trauma and their unharmed status. This paper is an attempt to analyze the two poems from a psychological perspective highlighting the predicaments of the two speakers. I will focus on trauma theory and explain how it became an important theory in literary studies with special reference to PTSD, explicating how the two poems could be analyzed apropos the said theoretical framework.

2. Trauma Theory: An Overview

Originally Greek, the word 'trauma' means 'wound': an injury inflicted on the body rather than on the mind. Although the term 'trauma' has its origin in medicine, it gained momentum in literary studies in the 1990s with Cathy Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1995), Dominick La Capra's *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994)

and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996). Writings by Ronald Granofsky, Kai Erickson, and others helped the term creep more into the humanities. Ostensibly, the function of trauma in literary productions is mainly to define the 'unspeakable void' or the 'silent gaps' and to bear witness to voices not fully known or knowable.

In his *Studies in Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud discusses an early idea concerning the underlying forces of trauma and repression. He holds that "an overpowering event, unacceptable to consciousness, can be forgotten and yet return in the form of somatic symptoms or compulsive, repetitive behaviours" (Berger, 1997, p. 570). His initial theory became more challenging when he deduced that neurotic ramifications were the outcome of repressive drives of traumatic events. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, additionally, Freud focuses on World War I veterans who suffered from repeated nightmares and other disturbing behaviours reflecting their horrifying war experiences: "The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by the past as revenant some daemonic power" (1995, p.292). Here, Freud shifts his focus from the traumatic event itself to what he later theorized as the 'death drive'. Finally, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud looks at trauma as a context that accounts for the historical development of entire civilizations. What is of immense worth in his work is "his elaboration of the concept of 'latency' of how the memory of a traumatic event can be lost over time but then regain in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar event" (Berger, 1997, p.570). Apparently, Freud's theories emphasize the historical event and neglect the representations and the aftermath of these events.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Caruth defines literary trauma as "a story of a wound that cries out; that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our every action and our language" (1996, p.4). Like Freud, Caruth sees trauma as a form of 'haunting': "to be traumatized", she explains, "is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, 1996 b, pp.4-5). Similarly, Ronald Granofsky defines 'trauma' as that concept which "defies reason and a sense of order, cripples our ability to maintain a stable sense of reality, challenges our categories of understanding and consequently, the model of the world by which we unconsciously operate" (8). Trauma is a crippling feeling that disturbs the mind as it possesses the subject by insistent returns and repetitions. In his article "Trauma, Absence, Loss", Dominick La Capra introduces the difference between 'absence' and 'loss' and assumes that trauma develops if absences entail losses, not vice versa. "When loss is converted into absence", La Capra deduces, "one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia" (1999, p.698). He adds: "one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which others have ruined, polluted or contaminated and thus made 'us' lose. Therefore, to regain it, one must somehow get rid of or eliminate those others – or perhaps that sinful other in oneself" (La Capra, 1999, p.707). A traumatic experience entails a loss of self into a deep well of guilt and blame.

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association defined this phenomenon under the title 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD) "which included the symptoms of what had previously been called Shell-Shock, Combat-Stress, Delayed Stress Syndrome, and Traumatic Neurosis that referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes" (Caruth, 1996 b, p.3). Thus, the word trauma does not refer to the traumatic event per se, but to the aftermath, the post-traumatic stage with the symptoms known as PTSD. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, third edition (DSM III) – published in 1980 – defines the stressor for PTSD as a "psychologically distressing event outside the range of usual human experience" (1980, p.236) that is accompanied by "intense fear, terror, and helplessness" (1980, p.238) and results in "significant distress in most people" (1980, p.248). Traumatized individuals are usually symptomized as being "hypervigilant, anxious, and agitated, without any recognizable baseline state of calm or comfort" (Herman, 1992a, p.380).

In her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1996), Caruth explains that PTSD "describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (p.57). She adds that "PTSD reflects the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind, physically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control" (p.57). Trauma is, therefore, "not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (p.57). Hence, the traumatic experience relates to the paradoxical connection between annihilation and survival, situating the incomprehensibility of the event to the fact that the person remained 'unharmful'. That is why the survivor "seeks not absolution [from others], but fairness, compassion, and the willingness to share the guilty knowledge of what happens to people in extremity" (Herman, 1992b, p.69). Such feelings of loss and helplessness lead to traumatic memory, which occurs "automatically in situations which are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation. These circumstances trigger the traumatic memory" (Van der Kolk, 1996, p.163) or re-experiencing the traumatic event. As it relates to survival, memory is nothing but a specific way of perceiving reality that does not necessarily have to accurately represent the traumatic event per se. Peter Levine maintains:

In this sense, it is the process by which the organism creates a gestalt (functional unit) of the experience. This gestalt can be a faithful representation of an actual event, or it can just as easily be a rendering consisting of unrelated data from several different events, in other words, a mosaic (1997, p.145).

Whereas one objective of psychoanalytic therapy is to turn traumatic memory into narrative memory and integrate it into the patient's his/story, Caruth pertains that trauma victims find it too difficult to narrativize their reactions to the traumatic experience: "Trauma (...) issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge. In its shock impact, trauma is anti-narrative" (Luckhurst, 2008, p.79). Traumatic memory is, albeit too accurate as seen by the traumatized, could never be discerned as a faithful representation or reincarnation of the actual events. The mind becomes too confused to differentiate between what really happened, what it remembers, and what it wanted to happen and ends up creating a scenario of events that might have never occurred in the first place.

3. Romantic Memory and Traumatic Memory

During the 17th and the 18th centuries, the word trauma was not coined as a reference to mental illnesses resulting from a loss or a catastrophe. The word 'insanity' was used to denote that meaning instead but not to a comprehensive scale – the term 'mental illness' was not even prevalent as the term 'insanity'. In his book *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault explains:

For classicism, madness in its ultimate form is a man in his immediate relation to his animality, without other references, without any recourse. [...] at this extreme point, madness was less than ever linked to medicine, nor could it be linked to the domain of correction. Unchained animality could be mastered only by discipline and brutalizing. (1988, p.75)

In contexts of insanity, the prevailing view was that "in losing his reason, the essence of his humanity, the madman had lost his claims to be treated as a human being" (Schull, 1989, p.86). It was only during the Romantic period that the status of the 'madman' shifted from 'animality' to 'humanity'. After this shift, the lunatic "remained, in essence, a man; a man lacking in self-restraint and order, but a man for all that" (Schull, 1989, p.87). Since the mentally-ill started to be recognized in human – not bestial terms – his/her voice was represented in literary fiction. In giving individuals with mental disorders a voice (even if only an imaginary one), trauma narratives became a vehicle for representing psychological and emotional wounds.

Frances Ferguson talks about Romantic memory explored in narratives of that period: "Romantic memory is an individualized form of memory intimately connected to the self and a sense of individual continuity over time" (1996, p.509). It is more linked to the "ability to see oneself in one's own past actions, to be able to recognize one's action most vividly in a redescription" (Ferguson, 1996, p.533). In his article 'The Invention of Trauma in German Romanticism', Fritz Brethaupt discusses Ferguson's concept of the 'Romantic memory' under the heading of trauma. For Brethaupt, the psychological forms of self-remembering and self-narration "establish an institution of the self that can monitor the past, repeat it, and thereby turn the past wounding and weakening into strength" (2005, p.83). He adds that "trauma (that is, repetition) is what enables one to become oneself" (Brethaupt, 2005, p.99). Ferguson's definition of 'Romantic memory' and Brethaupt's 'trauma' resonate with Caruth's when she states that "the experience of trauma repeats itself, exactly and intermittently, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will" (1996b, p.2). The repetition appears to be inherent in the traumatic experience where the individual relives that 'traumatic' memory over and over without having any kind of control over it. Thus, even though the term 'trauma' wasn't used in relation to Romantic literary productions, trauma psychology would offer crucial insights into Romantic literary psychologies of trauma for which mental sciences at the time did not yet have the terminology, the vocabulary, or the conceptual framework.

It feels a shame to be Alive—

When Men so brave—are dead—

One envies the Distinguished Dust—

Permitted—such a Head—

(Emily Dickinson)

4. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Looking at Coleridge's poem through a psychological lens, the symbolism, the narration, and the whole setting of the poem represent PTSD. The poem begins with the mariner blocking a guest from entering a wedding, mesmerizing him, and forcing him to listen to his tale of pain and suffering. An essential reason, apparently, of the mariner's misery relates to his status as the 'only' survivor who had to see the rest of his crew members die one after the other while he remains completely 'unharmd'. As previously explained, "the current diagnostic formulation of PTSD derives primarily from observations of survivors of relatively circumscribed traumatic events" (Herman, 1992a, p.377). The mariner had to undergo a paramount degree of mental stress which outweighed his physical and psychological strength. This stress leads him, during the traumatic event itself, to resort to hallucinations that place him in a state of quasi-delirium. The wedding guest and the readers are invited to play the roles of witnesses or sympathetic/empathetic listeners to the mariner's quandary and thus, share his experience.

From the start of his narration, the mariner's way of telling his story entails his intense feelings of guilt and remorse for killing the albatross, which is a fundamental motif underlying the mariner's predicament. The mariner bears the responsibility for everything that befell the ship and his crew members, and his attempt at coming to terms or even dispensing with these feelings results in imagining fantastical events that are beyond belief. Part one ends in the mariner's confession of shooting the albatross: "With my cross-bow / I shot the ALBATROSS". In Romantic ideology, bird symbolism has always been provocative. Where birds would generally reflect the soul, the albatross, in specific, is famous for following ships, and when it does so, it is usually a "striking sight, and sailors have long considered it a bird of good omen" (Ferber, 1999, p.9). The reasons why the mariner shoots the albatross remain a mystery to the crew members as well as to the readers; the poem "yields only consequences, scenes of wonder and terror that move toward a purging of the crime by a precarious and prolonged process of catharsis" (Hartman, 1995, p.542). However, this maleficent venture could symbolize the substantiality of sins human beings commit every second of their lives, unaware that they might be punished for making these choices. The shooting of the albatross, thus, is symbolic of all sin and opines for lack of respect for life and for a proper reverence towards the natural order.

The mariner's trauma begins when his mind manipulates him to believe that the ensuing shipwreck is the result of his shooting the albatross, whereas his tangible punishment is his apparent survival from that shipwreck: "And I had done a hellish thing, / And it would work 'em woe:/ For all averred, I had killed the bird / That made the breeze to blow". His sense of guilt is exacerbated, and his feelings of contrition aggravated:

Day after day, day after day,
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
 As idle as a painted ship
 Upon a painted ocean.

Levine explains that normal responses to threat include "hyperarousal, constriction, helplessness, and dissociation" (1997, p.143). At this moment, the mariner appears to be wondering about the aftermath of his survival and beginning to bear the guilt on his shoulder for being the sole survivor. Part two ends with the mariner affirming his sin – of being the lone survivor – by having the albatross hung on his neck: "Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung". Whereas many critics attempted to interpret the symbolism of the albatross in Coleridge's poem as an image of 'God' or a symbol of 'Christ' or even a symbol of the poet's 'creative imagination', I believe the albatross incarnates the mariner's sin and exposes it to the public; it epitomizes an incessant reminder to the traumatized soul that he deserves to be punished perpetually for remaining alive.

Trauma symptoms are "the organism's way of defending itself against the arousal generated by an ever-present perception of threat" (Levine, 1997, p.143), and that is why not a long time passes until the mariner sees a ship passing by having both 'death' and 'life-in-death' on board:

Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
 Is DEATH that woman's mate?
 Her lips were red, her looks were free,
 Her locks were yellow as gold:
 Her skin was as white as leprosy,
 The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The main problem is that the mariner is both inside and outside the traumatic event, and "to occupy a territory while loitering skeptically on the boundary is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from" (Eagleton, 2004, p.101). His belief in the implausible, incomprehensible tale that he recounts stems from his reliance on his 'traumatic' memory, which is known to usually resist integration into narrative memory because it is in some way incredible and, thus, difficult to be represented. Hartman maintains that the poem attempts to make us believe what appears to be unbelievable: "every powerfully imagined scene ... is coercive and puts us into a bind. We resist believing it; we feel compelled to believe it; at least, we feel it speaks to us" (1995, pp.541-2). The mariner describes death and life-in-death and abominably personifies them to showcase the difference between himself (both alive and dead) and the rest of his crew members who died in front of his eyes:

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,

Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

The mariner imagines death and life-in-death playing a game of dice, which results in the deaths of all the crew members save the mariner after the victory of life-in-death. What is stimulating, here, is the mariner's reference to life-in-death as a 'Night-mare' suggesting her inherent connection to the psyche, for, through nightmares, Caruth maintains, that "the survivor is forced continually, to confront [the death in the past] over and over again" (1996b, p.62).

Living with the guilt that he is the sole survivor, his feelings of solitariness and aloofness multiply. David S. Miall explains that "such an overwhelming encounter with death results in a psychic closing-off which is at the same time accompanied by a profound sense of guilt. To have been singled out for survival, by being stronger or luckier than others, is itself to be guilty" (1984, p.646). The mariner finds it very difficult to live with this 'shame' or 'guilt' and thinks it is a lot easier to die for these feelings to die with him. Imploring for death by praying God for it, which is not even granted to him, made him see life as a continuous punishment that he must live with. This repetitive compulsion is part and parcel of trauma as the survivor finds himself compelled not only to relive the traumatic experience but also to retell it. Hartman (1995, p.543) suggests that these repetitions propose an unresolved shock: "a rhythmic or temporal stutter, they leave the storyteller in purgatory, awaiting the next assault, the next instance of hyperarousal."

Being a witness to the mariner's trauma, the wedding guest gets petrified from the mariner; the readers as well get medusaed:

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.
I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—

Many psychologists have discussed the potentially detrimental effects of listening to trauma narratives as the listener identifies with the victim, even if on an imaginary level. The trauma, hence, gets transmitted from speaker to listener, causing the latter to feel anxious and disturbed. Shoshana and Laub (1991, p.57) assert that "the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event." The wedding guest becomes troubled and frightened from the mariner and would not want to listen to the rest of his traumatic tale. The mariner, then, assures the wedding guest that he did not die - unlike the rest of the crew members. If solitude is a punishment, his was so vast that even God himself seems to be absent:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

Whereas the guest gets scared from the uncanny tale, the mariner thinks the guest fears his gothic figure and attitude. Ostensibly, the victim/survivor remains in his unconscious realm of traumatic memory while the wedding guest thinks logically and rationally. The images of death and the dead keep recurring and flashing in the mariner's mind to remind him of his guilt repetitively and unceasingly:

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.
I closed my lids, and kept them close,

And the balls like pulses beat;
 For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
 Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
 And the dead were at my feet.

Rather than focusing on recording a linear sequence of events, the victim selects colours, images, sounds, smells, explanations, and reactions to the traumatic event based on how the traumatized saw it and felt it during the traumatic experience (Levine, 1997, p.144). These different images and colours are what constitute 'traumatic memory', which is usually misleading. Feelings of helplessness, loss, absence, guilt, and despondency prevail the entirety of the mariner's soul, reflecting the mental stress of the killer/victim. He is "left without prayer or blessing or community: creatures, spirits, saints, and other advocates cannot speak for him, guide him, or even be the object of address" (Hartman, 1995, p.542). Only when the victim is on the verge of losing hope completely that he senses a feeling of emancipation and salvage:

O happy living things! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,
 And I blessed them unaware:
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I blessed them unaware.
 The self-same moment I could pray;
 And from my neck so free
 The Albatross fell off, and sank
 Like lead into the sea.

Romantic pantheism plays a crucial role towards the end of the poem by providing a solution to the mariner's quandary. Nature has its own agency, which helps the victim come to terms with his trauma and unleash his cries and woes. In this sense, nature imparts a redemptive counterforce to the claimed shipwreck and indicates a possible cure or a pathway to cure mental disturbances and psychological disorders.

As is clear, the mariner's trauma, or rather his lack of understanding of the whole traumatic event, makes it difficult for the reader to decipher between what happened and how he saw it happen. MacDonald (1964, p.546) argues that the Ancient Mariner's testimony can be "interpreted as a mental adventure" for his tale clearly "mingles conscious and subconscious experience." The origin of the mariner's initial traumatization is beyond his recollection and understanding.

5. The Raven

Like Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner', Poe's 'The Raven' plays, both narratively and symbolically, in the arena of PTSD. Apparently, the 'Raven' portrays a picture of a speaker agonizing after the loss of 'Lenore' who listens to a tap on his chamber door and finally welcomes an enigmatic 'raven' who enters from the window of his chamber. In his introduction to "The Raven", Thomas Mabbott highlights that "the subject is of universal appeal, for every mature person has lost someone beloved, and even for the firm believer in immortality death is a separation from the living" (1969, p.351). The poem does not only deal with the predicament of death and absence but also stresses the pain of forgetting: "To forget is to incur the guilt of disloyalty and risk reprisal from the betrayed departed. From this point of view, the [speaker] suffers not only from an inability to stop remembering but also from a fear of forgetting" (Silverman, 1991, p.241). In his "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe confides that the raven is "emblematical of mournful and never-ending remembrance" (2009). However, delving more into the poem indicates a more complex situation as the speaker does not only mourn the death of Lenore and suffers from her loss and absence, but he has definitely lost something in himself as well in the aftermath of the traumatic event. Believing that he deserves to be punished for being alive even though Lenore is dead places the speaker in the category of PTSD.

The poem begins with the speaker sitting alone in his chamber in 'bleak December' when he suddenly hears a tapping on his door:

As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door

Only this and nothing more."

The repetition of the word 'tapping' and the fact that the speaker is trying to assure himself that it is only tapping "and nothing more" echoes the victim's dysphoric and agitated attitude; he either knows that no one will be visiting him at this hour, or he is worried that someone will, or perhaps no one is tapping at all and he is only imagining:

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"

This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—

Merely this and nothing more.

The words 'darkness', 'fearing', 'doubting', 'dreaming', and 'silence' demonstrate the speaker's mental and psychological status, which is clearly unsettled and places more emphasis on the realm of unconsciousness. It becomes apparent, thus, that the speaker is hallucinating since he whispered 'Lenore' even though no one appeared at his doorstep. His trauma, resulting from the death of Lenore and his ostensible loneliness, becomes intensified and his fear surfaces and "the soul within [him] burning" even though nothing happened to save the tapping on the door. The tapping becomes louder, and a raven enters from the window. Interestingly, the speaker begins to engage in a conversation with the raven, who answers him with 'nevermore' no matter what the question is. Clearly, the student knows perfectly well that Lenore will never come back, but this does not hold him from asking the raven questions about her whereabouts in the hope that the bird will assure him that she will be back one day. The speaker's persistence entwined with self-torment places him in a post-traumatic status. Poe explains that it is the "human thirst for self-torture, and (...) superstition [that] propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer, "Nevermore" (Poe, 2009).

Being the major motif in the poem, the raven is a symbol of loss and ill omen. According to Ferber (1999, p.167), the raven "prosper[s] when men slaughter one another, and so [it is] associated with battlefields and gallows, and more generally with imminent death." It is difficult to distinguish between real and illusory events in a traumatic context. Thus, deciding on whether the raven's existence is real or a product of the speaker's imagination is not easy. Hartman assumes that "the real is not the real, in the sense of a specific, identifiable thing or cause; however specific it may be, it is also a burning idea or its own 'wake' of desire. The encounter with the real takes place, on the part of both analyst and analysand, within a world of death-feelings, lost objects and drives" (1995, p.539). If the raven does not exist and is a product of the speaker's hallucinatory mental state, then the raven would not only stand for the grief he feels for the loss of Lenore, but it would also epitomize his soul in distress. Wallace Stevens once defined imagination as "a violence from within responding to a violence from without" (Hartman, 1995, p.552); hence, the raven becomes a portentous externalization of the speaker's confused internal state. By facing his traumatized self (which reflects utter despair: 'nevermore'), the speaker has no choice but to surrender. The poem becomes a vehicle for the traumatized self to express his feelings of despair and resignation. The only choice he has, being too fragile to face this loss, is to forget:

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Apparently, his sense of guilt is too confrontational, forbidding him from forgetting his 'Lenore'. He wants to be alleviated from his pain, even if temporarily, but his ordeal is relentless. The pain is inherent in his brain and heart, allowing him no respite from his agony.

The speaker then slips further into madness plunged by his inexorable trauma of loss as he questions if the raven is a devil or a bird: "Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—". Repeating the same question in the next stanza and imploring the raven to leave him in peace reflects the speaker's helplessness in facing his trauma and his failure to resist his disturbed mental state:

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—

“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
 Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
 Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
 Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
 Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

The raven doesn't leave, and the poem ends with the raven's shadow cast on the floor, and the speaker says that his soul will remain on that shadow and will be carried away 'nevermore':

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
 And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted—nevermore!

Surprisingly, the one who says 'nevermore' towards the end of the poem is not the raven but the speaker. This confirms that not only does the raven represent the speaker's soul in distress, but that the speaker ultimately succumbs to his trauma and realizes the futility of his various attempts at reconciling/forgetting/escaping from his loss. The 'Raven' would hence come to represent a person suffering from PTSD who is persistently trying to escape from his pain but eventually realizes his utter fragility at facing his crippling mental state. The raven comes from a lover's projected self-reproach heightened by the image of the bird that reflects nothing but the speaker's grief and awe. The encounter between the speaker and the raven has something dream-like about it and belongs to the fantastic realm than to the recognizable, realistic one. The readers play the role of witnesses to the student's trauma and become the poem's protagonists. Although the poem individualizes the speaker's experience by giving precise details about the traumatic incident (like the beloved's name, for instance), we soon realize that loss is a universal trauma shared by us all. Lenore becomes a signifier for any and all types of loss in our life.

7. Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to read Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' and Poe's 'The Raven' through a psychological lens. As per modern trauma theory, both the mariner and the 'Raven's' speaker are diagnosed as patients of PTSD even though the term itself was not used during the Romantic period. The mariner's guilt—symbolized by the albatross motif—sprouted from being the only survivor of a claimed shipwreck, causing him to resort to hallucinations in order to alleviate the pain of being the only person unharmed. Similarly, the 'Raven's' speaker suffers from the loss of 'Lenore' whose absence caused him overwhelming pain and suffering. Feeling guilty and penitent, hallucinations pervade his entirety resulting in projecting the image of the raven, which symbolizes his perturbed and traumatized self. Delving into the field of trauma studies provided a better insight into the two speakers' dilemmas and partially solved the mystery behind their actions. This discipline proved to be a crucial tool utilized to unravel truths and demystify complications.

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