CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the fundamental aspects of the research, providing an overview of the study's background, problems, and objectives. It introduces a discussion of the relationship among narrative time, trauma, and the Anniversary Effect in "A Christmas Carol". Furthermore, this chapter explains the research focus by identifying the problem, scope, and limitations of the study, as well as the research questions, objectives, and significance. These sections establish the foundation of the research and clarify the direction of the analysis conducted in this study.

1.1 Research Background

Literature is one form of artistic expression that represents human experiences, emotions, and social realities. Through literary works, authors convey ideas, values, and psychological conditions that reflect the complexity of everyday life. As a medium of representation, literature not only entertains readers but also provides insight into various human experiences, including social conflicts, personal struggles, and psychological trauma.

Among literary genres, the novel offers a particularly comprehensive representation of human life because it emphasizes individual experiences and realistic portrayals of everyday life. According to Ian Watt (1957), the novel differs from earlier narrative forms by focusing on the particular experiences of

individuals rather than universal ideals. This characteristic, which Watt refers to as formal realism, enables the novel to portray ordinary events, personal emotions, and psychological development in a way that resembles real life. Consequently, novels become an effective medium for representing how individuals respond to the challenges and experiences they encounter throughout their lives.

Literature also represents psychological experiences, including trauma and memory. According to Dickson (2020), in Dickens's nightmare: dreams, memory and trauma, Dickens frequently represents dreams and supernatural experiences as narrative spaces in which traumatic memories, grief, and loss are repeatedly revisited, linking the past, the present, and the future (p.7).

Literary works can reveal the emotional, cognitive, and psychological states their characters experience. Therefore, literature provides insight into a wide range of human experiences, including grief, trauma, memory, guilt, and psychological recovery. Narrative not only tells the story but also reveals the character's feelings and ultimately serves as a form of healing. According to Holland (1968), literature is not merely a static artistic object, but rather a dynamic psychological process in which emotions and subconscious experiences are transformed into meaningful interpretations (p. 12).

Thus, literary narratives provide a space to express, confront, and understand hidden psychological conflicts. This demonstrates that literature functions not only as a reflection of human experience but also as a means of exploring psychological states and processes of emotional transformation. "A

Christmas Carol" tells a story of time travel and a character's change of heart, reflecting a person's psychological state through dreams that feel real. This frees the character from the trauma and regret that had been consuming his soul.

"A Christmas Carol" raises fundamental issues in society at the time, including child laborers earning wages far below the minimum wage, poverty, and cruel working conditions. These timeless, relevant problems help explain why the story remains relevant today. Ebenezer Scrooge, the bourgeois main character, was a capitalist businessman who was extremely stingy and exploited the working class, reflecting the capitalism that emerged during the Victorian era. Bob Cratchit was a proletarian who earned his wage solely through his labor. In essence, this novel teaches that humans are social beings, not tools for the benefit of others.

Ebenezer Scrooge, the main character, is a miserly man who hates Christmas. He considers Christmas celebrations a waste of money and time. He refuses to share warmth with others, whether family or neighbors. Not only on Christmas Day, but this trauma also affects his view of his surroundings, where he thinks that donating to the lower classes is not his responsibility, which he himself has experienced. Scrooge's view of Christmas celebrations reflects past trauma that repeats itself year after year. On Christmas Eve, he traveled through time, beginning with the arrival of Jacob Marley's ghost (his colleague), then the three ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. This journey triggered a trauma that remained with him every year when Christmas came, causing him to isolate himself from the Christmas festivities. However, this event

profoundly affected Scrooge's personality; within a few hours, he changed drastically and did something he had never done in his life: he gave to charity and was hospitable.

Ebenezer Scrooge is known as a cynical and indifferent figure, especially around Christmas. This is due to painful experiences that have left a lasting impression on him. On Christmas Eve, he lost two loved ones at different times. First, his sister Fan passed away, most likely due to her weak constitution since birth. Second, his beloved Belle left him due to differences in their views and Scrooge's lack of attention in their relationship. These events caused Scrooge to hate Christmas, a time that should have been full of joy but had become a day that made him unhappy, leaving a deep mark on him. This moment of joy has turned into a recurring temporal marker, which psychologically triggers the pain and trauma of loss every year. This phenomenon of recurring reactions tied to a specific date will be examined through the lens of the Anniversary Effect theory.

Moody (2020), in the article "Implausible and Inappropriate? A Defense of Dickens's A Christmas Carol," argues that the supernatural elements in A Christmas Carol function as deliberate narrative strategies that encourage moral reflection and support Scrooge's transformation. According to Moody, Dickens employs narrative implausibility to invite readers to reflect on moral values while facilitating an ethical transformation parallel to Scrooge's personal change (p. 405).

Likewise, Lorente Abad (2024–2025), in "The Ghostly Double: The

Spectral Encounters in A Christmas Carol and the Psychodynamics of Identity," examines the novella from a psychoanalytic perspective and argues that the Ghosts symbolize fragmented aspects of Scrooge's identity, shaped by memory, guilt, repression, and unresolved trauma. The study concludes that the spectral encounters function as psychological projections that compel Scrooge to confront his repressed memories and ultimately achieve psychological integration (pp. 45–46).

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the supernatural and psychological dimensions of "A Christmas Carol", they do not specifically examine how Dickens' manipulation of narrative time through anachronism represents traumatic memory. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between anachronism and Horowitz's Anniversary Effect to explain how Dickens employs narrative time to reactivate Scrooge's traumatic memories and facilitate his psychological transformation.

According to Genette (1980), narratology studies the structure of storytelling, distinct from the sequence of events. This concept focuses on how narratives control the story's time through anachronism, a discrepancy between the sequence of events and their presentation in the text. This phenomenon appears in two forms: analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flashforward). Narratology explains that this influence of time is a form of meaning in the text that must be analyzed as a structure showing how the author chooses to reveal information, create an intense situation, explain the context, or forcibly recall memories. This theory is highly relevant to analyzing how past trauma is

represented in the characters' minds (p. 11).

According to Horowitz (2011), the Anniversary Effect is a condition sufferers do not recognize, triggered by a temporal marker associated with a past loss or attack. This condition can increase symptoms of anxiety, difficulty sleeping, and flashbacks of the event. This condition is common in trauma recovery, and it is characterized by increased stress, intrusive memories, and excessive reactions when approaching certain times of the year due to a significant loss in the past. Horowitz states that this is part of the subconscious mind's process of integrating traumatic memories that have not yet been fully integrated, either consciously or unconsciously. This influence must be addressed as a symptom that the mental process (working-through) of trauma is ongoing to resolve and heal any remaining trauma (pp. 140–141).

Christmas Eve serves as a temporal marker in this novel, forcing Scrooge to travel through time, as reflected in the spirits of the past, present, and future. This journey through time shakes Scrooge's psyche, forcing him to remember everything that caused him deep trauma. In Scrooge's case, the trigger for the Anniversary Effect was losing loved ones on Christmas Day, which left a deep impression on him throughout his life. It was this trauma that caused him to become cold and indifferent towards others, especially on Christmas Day, which should be a day for sharing love with others.

The psychological changes in Ebenezer Scrooge are shown through temporal inconsistencies in the storyline. Flashbacks to his past force Scrooge to confront painful memories he has been suppressing, leaving him with deep

guilt and regret. Meanwhile, a leap forward in time to his death without tears or grief fills him with intense fear and anxiety. These two forms of temporal inconsistency show how temporal experiences help Scrooge recognize his mistakes and begin a process of profound inner change.

To analyze the role of time in Scrooge's trauma, a narratological framework is needed. This theory explains how Dickens arranged the story's timeline non-sequentially (anachronism), thereby triggering the Anniversary Effect in Scrooge. This effect occurs forcibly, through visits from the ghosts of the past and yet to come. These two concepts, the Anniversary Effect and narrative structure, are closely related. Within the framework of narratology, the use of analepsis (flashbacks) and prolepsis (flash-forwards) serves to activate Scrooge's repressed trauma through time markers embedded in the narrative. This temporal incongruity forces Scrooge to confront and relive unresolved traumatic memories, thereby facilitating psychological and moral transformation.

Although literary criticism often focuses on the sequence of events, such as the arrival of Jacob Marley's ghost and the appearance of three spirits representing the past, present, and future that ultimately reform Scrooge's attitude, it remains challenging to identify an explanation for the spirits' visit on Christmas Eve, especially considering that Scrooge had not received such apparitions for many years. In this case, Scrooge only received such an apparition seven years after the death of his former partner, Jacob Marley. Christmas Day serves as a significant marker of time, triggering a deep

emotional response in Scrooge. In addition, the intensity of his inner conflict as Christmas approaches seems to exceed that of ordinary days.

This study argues that Scrooge's transformation is not only the result of moral enlightenment but also reflects a form of traumatic resolution triggered by temporal markers. Through the lens of the Anniversary Effect, psychological conditions trigger emotional reactions during periods associated with past traumatic experiences. This analysis explores the relationship between Christmas Day as a temporal marker and Scrooge's psychological disorders (manifested in stinginess, apathy, and self-isolation). This interpretation provides a broader understanding of the mechanisms behind Scrooge's moral transformation. To elaborate on this mechanism, this study adopts narratology as its primary theoretical framework, emphasizing how Dickens strategically employs anachronism, the deliberate non-linear arrangement of time manifested through the appearances of the three Spirits, as a central narrative device.

This temporal disruption functions not merely as a stylistic technique but as a structural mechanism that governs the unfolding of Scrooge's transformation. Within this narratological framework, the psychological notion of the Anniversary Effect is incorporated as a complementary perspective to elucidate the protagonist's emotional and cognitive dimensions of change. Hence, anachronism serves as the principal narrative strategy through which Dickens orchestrates both the temporal structure and the psychological rehabilitation of his character.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

Based on the background of this study, several issues concerning the narrative construction of “A Christmas Carol” are identified. Previous studies have examined the novella from various perspectives, including religious values, social criticism, narrative aesthetics, disability representation, and psychoanalytic criticism. While these studies have contributed to our understanding of Dickens’s work, limited attention has been paid to how the manipulation of narrative time through anachronism functions as a literary strategy for representing traumatic memory. Therefore, this study identifies the need to examine the relationship between narrative time and trauma by integrating Genette’s narratology with Horowitz’s Anniversary Effect.

The primary issue this study identifies is Dickens’s manipulation of narrative time. Rather than presenting Scrooge’s life chronologically, Dickens reconstructs the narrative through analepsis and prolepsis, allowing the protagonist's past, present, and future to intersect within a single Christmas Eve. This anachronistic structure gradually reveals the emotional experiences that shape Scrooge’s cynicism, isolation, and rejection of Christmas. Consequently, the novella raises questions regarding how anachronism functions not merely as a stylistic device but as a narrative strategy that reveals the protagonist's unresolved traumatic experiences.

Furthermore, Christmas Eve serves not only as the story’s temporal setting but also as a recurring narrative marker that connects different stages of Scrooge’s life. Through repeated movements across temporal dimensions,

Dickens reconstructs memories that have remained unresolved for many years. This narrative pattern suggests that manipulating narrative time actively reactivates emotionally significant memories, corresponding to Horowitz's concept of the Anniversary Effect. However, the relationship between narrative anachronism and the psychological reactivation of traumatic memory has received limited scholarly attention. This gap provides the foundation for examining how Dickens employs narrative time to represent trauma and facilitate Scrooge's psychological transformation.

1.3 Limitations of the Problems

This study focuses solely on the novel "A Christmas Carol" and does not involve adaptations in film or other media. The primary data were obtained from the novel's text. This study is limited to the concepts of the Anniversary Effect and anachronism, and only in the form of fictional characters. In other words, this study will not conduct a clinical psychological analysis of readers or real-world subjects. The data is limited to the character Ebenezer Scrooge, supported by secondary characters (the Ghosts, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, Jacob Marley, and Belle), who refer to their relationship with the time markers that trigger Ebenezer Scrooge's trauma.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are formulated to examine the relationship between narrative time, the Anniversary Effect, and Scrooge's trauma recovery process. The research questions are presented as follows:

1. How does the structure of narrative anachronism (analepsis and prolepsis)

function to establish Christmas Eve as a temporal marker in "A Christmas Carol"?

2. How does the narrative structure of time through the three Christmas spirits in the novel become a therapeutic process for Ebenezer Scrooge's repressed trauma?
3. How does the Anniversary Effect reflect in Scrooge due to the temporal marker (Christmas Eve)?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the research questions, this study aims to achieve several objectives related to the analysis of narrative time and its psychological implications in "A Christmas Carol". The objectives of this study are presented as follows:

1. To analyze how the structure of narrative anachronism (analepsis and prolepsis) functions to establish Christmas Eve as a temporal marker in "A Christmas Carol".
2. To analyze and explain how the narrative structure of the novel, particularly the visit of the Three Ghosts of Christmas, functions as a therapeutic mechanism for overcoming Scrooge's repressed trauma.
3. To identify and describe the manifestations of the Anniversary Effect, triggered by a temporal marker (Christmas Eve), through flashbacks and Ebenezer Scrooge's emotional reaction in the novel "A Christmas Carol".

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study explains the contribution and importance of

the research in theoretical significance and practical significance:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to literary psychology by applying the rarely used Anniversary Effect framework in literary analysis to understand the mechanisms of character change. Therefore, this study provides new knowledge that Ebenezer Scrooge's moral transformation stems from the process of healing psychological trauma caused by a temporal marker (Christmas Eve), while also criticizing traditional literary interpretations that are too limited to moral or structural aspects alone.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The results of this study can serve as a basis for literary researchers who wish to use psychological theory as an analytical tool for studying novels on trauma, memory, and time. In addition, this study provides insight into Scrooge's character as not only a symbol of capitalism but also a human being struggling to overcome past emotional trauma.