CHAPTER I
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1.1 Background of The Study

Literature serves as a profound reflection of human life, capturing universal themes and emotions that resonate across cultures and historical periods. It offers a space where readers can explore complex moral, social, and psychological dimensions of the human condition (Tyson, 2006, p. 4). Traditionally, literature has been understood primarily as written texts, encompassing works such as prose fiction, drama, and poetry. However, its definition has evolved to include a broader range of expressive forms, adapting to changes in society, technology, and artistic practices. This expansion highlights the literature's dynamic nature as a cultural artifact that continuously redefines itself while maintaining its core purpose, which is to interpret and communicate the complexities of the human experience.

Among the various literary forms that reflect human experiences, the novel stands out due to its narrative depth and accessibility. According to Waugh (2016), by virtue of their length and narrative structure, novels allow for deeper psychological engagement with characters and events compared to other genres such as poetry or drama. Novels are often considered more approachable than other literary genres, such as poetry or drama, because they typically provide detailed descriptions of settings, characters, and events. This richness

allows readers to engage deeply with the story and encourages diverse interpretations and discussions. Therefore, the novel is an ideal medium to explore complex psychological themes.

One of the famous writers who has effectively harnessed this potential is Sarah Pinborough. Through her novel *Behind Her Eyes*, she has intricately crafted a sophisticated narrative. To appreciate the novel's intricacy, one needs to examine the author's life and his literary influences. Sarah Pinborough is known as a British author born in 1972. She is known to have started with writing horror novels, which later expanded to other genres, showcasing her creative potential. For her literary works, she has won numerous awards over the years, captivating and inspiring readers worldwide with her distinctive writing style and ability to craft complex and engaging characters. One of her more popular works is the 2017 novel *Behind Her Eyes,* which received considerable attention. The novel became a bestseller, selling more than a million copies worldwide, and was made into a series on Netflix, watched by over a million people. It was well acclaimed for its intricate plot, psychological depth, and surprising twist ending that sparks discussion among the readers (New York Times, 2017).

Behind Her Eyes has received positive reviews from critics and readers for its psychological depth and unexpected twists. According to Bellender (2024), "Behind Her Eyes is memorable and leaves a lasting impression for readers who enjoy psychological thrillers that push boundaries." Similarly, The Guardian highlighted how the novel's suspenseful narrative and supernatural twist "keep readers hooked until the very end."

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These reviews strengthen the argument that the novel is both popular and critically engaging, making it an appealing subject for literary and psychological analysis.

These elements of acclaim are intertwined with the psychological insights of narrative invention and the novel's innovative content. *Behind Her Eyes* depicts Louise, a single mother and a secretary, who gets caught in a puzzling scenario after she begins dating her new boss, David. At the same time, she forms an unusual friendship with David's wife, Adele. In general, the mysteries surrounding Adele and Louise start to unravel by revealing their intricate psychological issues. The novel explores issues such as manipulation, control, and the blend of dreams and reality, and provides rich material for analysis. The character development and innovative techniques in *Behind Her Eyes,* like lucid dreaming and astral projection, make it more unique. These elements anchor the novel within the psychological thriller genre.

The suspense begins to build when Adele instructs Louise on how to control her dreams through a diary on lucid dreaming. Louise begins to experience strange, vivid dreams that start influencing her perceptions in waking life. The strange tone increases as Louise starts to question her sanity, especially when she realizes that Adele may not be who she seems. One particularly disturbing moment occurs when Louise catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror, but something about the reflection is "off," hinting at the beginning of her mental unraveling. Meanwhile, Adele displays increasingly erratic

behavior, shifting between vulnerability and control, raising doubts about who is the real victim.

The use of nonlinear timelines, shifting points of view, and dreamlike sequences blurs the boundary between reality and illusion. These narrative elements place the reader in a state of cognitive dissonance, mirroring the characters' psychological instability. The climactic plot twist reveals a consciousness switch through astral projection, completely reframing the entire narrative, leaving readers questioning their previous assumptions about identity, morality, and perception.

While Behind Her Eyes has been analyzed through themes like obsessive love and sleep disorders, there has been little in-depth focus on how dissociative identity disorder (DID) is portrayed using specific narrative techniques. Existing studies often neglect the influence of non-linear storytelling, changing narrative perspectives, and bodily symbolism in shaping the reader's understanding of fragmented identity. This represents a notable gap, especially considering how frequently fiction misrepresents DID and limits analysis to surface-level themes.

Therefore, this research seeks to investigate how elements such as multiple narrators, disrupted chronology, and introspective character depictions function not merely as literary style but as devices that mirror psychological dissociation. In doing so, the study emphasizes literature's potential to contribute to a deeper understanding of mental illness beyond the confines of clinical interpretation.

A few readers on Reddit and Goodreads have provided a reasonable explanation that Adele and Louise might be

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manifestations of the same identity. These discussions emphasize the narrative ambiguity within the novel, allowing for complex psychological interpretations of the characters. The portrayal of mental illness, particularly dissociative identity disorder (DID), contributes to the uniqueness of the novel, especially because such conditions are frequently stigmatized and misrepresented. This study aims to analyze the portrayal of dissociative identity disorder (DID) in *Behind Her Eyes*, focusing on how the characters' experiences and behaviors represent dissociative identity disorder (DID, and uses innovative narrative techniques to portray DID.

In order to study how the psychological condition is portrayed within the narrative, it is necessary to approach with a structured framework methodology of the novel. Narrative analysis is a systematic approach that studies ways in which people construct and understand their life experiences using stories (Esin et al., 2013). This approach plays an important role in assembling a narrative that can describe the psychological state of the characters in depth. In this novel, such as multiple perspectives that create mystery and a plot that reflects psychological conditions. This approach allows the depiction of the psychological condition of Adele and Louise, the object of this study's analysis.

This analysis focused on examining how a narrative approach, such as point of view, plot, is employed to portray dissociative identity disorder (DID). These storytelling elements are important for expressing the experience of dissociative identity disorder (DID) from a literary rather than a clinical

perspective.   In addition, the novel's representation of dissociative identity disorder in novels will be analyzed alongside scientific explanations to evaluate its relevance and influence.

This study seeks to connect literature and psychology in a literary setting, thus leading to a better understanding of dissociative identity disorder through literary narrative. Thus, this study not only sparks debate about the relevance of literature in English literature instruction, but it also offers a new perspective on the impact of literary representations on public perception.

As scientific knowledge has advanced, our understanding of dissociative identity disorder (DID) has deepened. This disorder is strongly linked to psychological trauma experienced during childhood (Boysen, 2024). It is often associated with chronic and severe trauma, such as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (Kabene et al., 2022). To manage such traumatic experiences, individuals may dissociate from reality by forming new or different personality states that can take control of their behaviour and consciousness at different times (Boysen, 2024).

Within psychology, there are many aspects to explore, such as dissociative identity disorder (DID), which is also known as multiple personality disorder. This disorder is frequently misunderstood by both professionals and the public. The American Psychiatric Association defined dissociative identity disorder (DID) as a complicated mental health condition marked by the existence of two or more identities, and it is often associated with severe childhood trauma. Researchers have

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noted that each identity may have its name, age, history, and characteristics, leading to different behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. The novel's depiction of dissociative identity disorder (DID) provides a valuable lens through which to understand this complex condition.

Given the widespread misunderstanding of psychological disorders by the public, it is crucial to improve our study and identification of these conditions. By analysing DID in the context of literary psychology, this study aims to utilize existing theories and literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of DID as depicted in the novel *Behind Her Eyes*. This study seeks to contribute to the broader discussion about the representation of mental health in literature, especially in novels.

1.2 Research Questions

In connection with the background of the study, several problems can be formulated as follows:

1.2.1 How are the narrative elements present in Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*?

1.2.2 How is dissociative identity disorder (DID) reflected through the narrative elements in *Behind Her Eyes*, particularly in the characters of Adele and Louise?

1.3 Research Purpose

Based on the research questions above, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1.3.1   To analyze the presentations of intrinsic narrative elements such as plot, theme, character, setting, and point of view in Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*.

1.3.2   To examine how dissociative identity disorder (DID) is reflected through the narrative elements as experienced by the characters of Adele and Louise in *Behind Her Eyes*.

1.4 Significance of The Study

In this study, the authors hope that there are benefits that can be useful for all parties, both theoretical and practical benefits. Then the benefits that can be taken are as follows:

1.4.1   Theoretical Benefits

This research is expected to provide new insights into the use of narrative techniques in representing psychological conditions such as dissociative identity disorder (DID). By analyzing the representation of dissociative identity disorder (DID) in *Behind Her Eyes,* this study offers a deeper understanding of how narrative techniques such as point of view and plot structure can be employed to illustrate psychological complexities in literary works.

1.4.2   Practical Benefits

This research is expected to help readers, educators, and researchers enhance their understanding of mental health issues and their portrayal in literature. By dissecting how dissociative identity disorder (DID) is represented through narrative analysis, this study offers

an alternative medium for educating the public about mental health.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of The Study

In connection with the objectives of this research, the scope and limitations can be described as follows:

1.5.1 Scope

This research focuses on analyzing the representation of dissociative identity disorder (DID) using a narrative technique in the novel *Behind Her Eyes* by Sarah Pinborough. Specifically, it examines how the characters of Adele and Louise are portrayed with psychological depth and complexity, emphasizing the representation of dissociative identity disorder (DID) through literary elements such as plot, characterization, settings, and point of view. The characters of Rob and David are also analyzed to the extent that they directly shape the conflict and influence Adele and Louise's psychological well-being. Other minor characters are not discussed in depth unless necessary to clarify the context of the story. This study does not include clinical diagnosis or medical treatment for these disorders.

1.5.2 Limitation

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it only analyzes the depiction of dissociative identity disorder (DID) within the context of the narrative technique in *Behind Her Eyes,* which may not fully represent the scientific understanding of the disorder. Secondly, the

analysis is limited to the portrayal of the two characters, Adele and Louise, and Rob and David as characters relevant to their psychological dynamics, and does not explore other themes or characters that are not significantly related. Third, this study draws on existing literature and theories in psychology and narratology, thus not encompassing new perspectives that may develop after this research was conducted.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1   Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)

Based on the American Psychiatric Association, dissociative identity disorder (DID) is characterized by two or more distinct identities or personality traits within one person which each of which has its unique way of seeing and interacting with the world, including different names, backgrounds, and traits. Dissociative identity disorder (DID) usually develops as a coping mechanism in response to traumatic experiences, especially during childhood, such as physical or sexual abuse. In literature, dissociative identity disorder (DID) frequently symbolizes fractured identity or unresolved inner conflict, especially in psychological thriller narratives.

1.6.2   The novel *Behind Her Eyes*

A psychological thriller novel that was written by Sarah Pinborough and published in 2017. The novel narrates the tale of Louise, a single mother, who gets entangled

in a complex relationship with her new boss, David, and develops an unusual friendship with his enigmatic wife, Adele.

1.6.3   Representation

In this study, literary representation refers to how authors use narrative devices, such as structure and characterization, to represent psychological experiences, particularly dissociative identity disorder.

1.6.4   Narrative Elements

Narrative elements are intrinsic elements in a literary work that shape the entire story, such as characterization, plot, theme, point of view, and setting. In this study, narrative elements are analyzed to see how the psychological experiences of Adele and Louise are represented in the novel *Behind Her Eyes*.

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