



Psychological Trauma of Characters in the Novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S Chudori

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms and impacts of psychological trauma on characters in the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori. Both novels represent traumatic experiences born from different historical backgrounds, namely World War II and the Indonesian political tragedy of 1965. The study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. Data are in the form of dialogue excerpts, narratives, inner monologues, and character actions that show symptoms of psychological trauma. Data collection was carried out through literature studies, while the analysis uses the perspective of Cathy Caruth's literary psychology. The results show that trauma in *Salt To The Sea* is acute due to the threat of war and is characterized by guilt, fear, shame, anxiety, and avoidance behavior experienced by Joana, Florian, Emilia, and Alfred. Meanwhile, trauma in *Pulang* is chronic due to political exile, social stigma, and disconnection from the homeland, which is shown through alienation, identity crises, childhood wounds, and loss of emotional ties in Dimas Suryo, Lintang Utara, Segara Alam, and Bimo Nugroho. This trauma affects the emotional condition, thought patterns, behavior, and social relationships of the characters. The research findings show that psychological trauma in both novels represents the impact of historical experiences that shape the characters' identities and responses to life.

Keywords: psychological trauma, charaters, novel

Trauma Psikologis Tokoh dalam Novel *Salt To The Sea* Karya Ruta Sepetys dan *Pulang* Karya Leila S Chudori

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Kata kunci: trauma psikologi, tokoh, novel

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of violent events, and wars, social conflicts, exiles, and social pressures show that psychological trauma is still a problem in human life. Traumatic experiences not only leave the inner wound behind, but can also affect emotions, mindsets, behaviors, social relationships, and the way an individual understands himself. In literary works, this kind of experience can be represented through characters, inner conflicts, storylines, and authors' narratives. According to Endaswara (in Rahma et al., 2025:272) That literary psychology is used to reveal the psychological aspect of literary works because it relates to mental expression, internal conflicts, and mental processes of characters. This view is relevant to this study because the novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Return home* Leila S. Chudori's work both present characters who experience psychological distress due to historical events, violence, loss, and social alienation. Rahma, Roekhman, and Albaburrahim's research discusses PTSD in the novel and explains the symptoms of trauma such as painful experiences, intrusive symptoms, avoidance, and psychosocial and sociocultural factors.

Trauma in literary works is not always shown directly through the character's statements, but often appears through repeated memories, fear, anxiety, nightmares, guilt, and the inability of the character to let go of past experiences. According to Caruth (in Nurmalawati & Apriyani, 2026:453) that trauma is an experience that cannot be fully understood when a traumatic event occurs, but is re-present through memories and psychological disorders that continue to haunt the individual. This view is in accordance with the condition of the figures in the *Salt To The Sea*, such as Joana who is haunted by guilt, Florin who lives in fear of death, Emilia who harbors shame due to violence, and Alfred who masks his fear through fantasy. In addition to appearing as fear and anxiety, trauma is also related to unfinished memories. According to Caruth's view (in Mukhayanah & Setyawan, 2024) He considers trauma to be an experience

that can reappear through certain forms of memory, such as flashbacks and nightmares. So that Mukhayanah & Setyawan, (2024b) Discovering that the trauma of the characters in the novel can appear through flashbacks and nightmares, so that past experiences are not really finished, but rather continue to live in the character's consciousness. Novels *Salt To The Sea* Ruta Sepetys' work depicts the trauma that emerged from World War II, flights, death threats, violence, family loss, and insecure war situations. According to Davinson (in Rahma et al., 2025:274) that PTSD can arise as a result of traumatic events experienced or witnessed firsthand, trauma when individuals face extreme threats, deep fear, and feelings of helplessness. The explanation is in accordance with the condition of Joana, Florian, Emilia, and Alfred who live in a war situation and continue to be overshadowed by the possibility of death, loss, and violence. In this context, the trauma of war not only becomes the setting of the story, but also shapes the way the characters think, act, and survive.

Novels *Return home* Leila S. Chotori's work depicts a different trauma because it is related to political conflicts, exile, ideological stigma, and the disconnection of the characters with the homeland. The trauma in this novel is not only experienced by the characters who experience political events directly, but also affects the next generation through family memories, historical burdens, and identity crises. By view Norva et al., (2024:55) that the novel *Return home* Contains the trauma of exile and the problems *Postmemory* which deals with alienation, identity, and historical memory. This connection can be seen in the characters of Dimas Suryo who feel that some of them are left behind in Indonesia, North Lintang who experiences identity confusion as an exiled child, and Segara Alam and Bimo Nugroho who face the impact of political stigma in social life.

The study of the psychological trauma of the characters in these two novels can also be strengthened through the latest literary psychology research that discusses the trauma of the characters



in Indonesian novels. By view Prameswari et al. (2025:436) that psychological trauma in literary works can affect the identity, behavior, and social relations of characters. This view is relevant to this study because the figures in the *Salt To The Sea* and *Return home* experiencing behavioral changes after facing a traumatic event. Florian becomes difficult to trust others, Emilia feels that she has lost the integrity of her life, Dimas experiences emotional isolation, while Bimo becomes closed and low due to childhood pressure.

Trauma in literary works can also be present in a latent and symbolic way, that is, it is not always expressed openly, but is seen through emotional emptiness, inner conflicts, destructive tendencies, and the process of self-recovery of the character. Adapula M, Safarina & Junadi, (2026:70) explains that the trauma of the main character can be represented through emotional emptiness, inner conflict, and destructive tendencies, while loss can deepen the character's existential crisis. This explanation is in accordance with the characters of Emilia and Alfred in *Salt To The Sea*, as well as Dimas and Bimo in *Return home*, because their trauma is not always conveyed directly, but rather arises through avoidance, a sense of brokenness, a longing for the past, and an inability to feel whole. Research on the novels *Salt To The Sea* and *Pulang* is important because both novels represent psychological trauma born from major historical events, even though they have different settings. *Salt To The Sea* presents the trauma of war and physical threats, while *Pulang* presents the trauma of political exile, social stigma, and identity crisis. The comparison of these two novels allows researchers to see how psychological trauma works in two different historical contexts, namely World War II and the 1965 Indonesian political tragedy. The research focus is directed at the form and impact of psychological trauma of characters using the perspective of literary psychology Cathy Caruth and supported by recent research on trauma, PTSD, memory, postmemory, and psychological representations of characters in literary works.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. Fraenkel et al. (2012), Razak (2017), Abubakar (2021), states that the qualitative approach is commonly used in various social research fields.

A qualitative approach was chosen to understand the phenomenon in depth through the interpretation of nonnumerical data, so that it is suitable for use in the study of psychological trauma of literary figures. The descriptive method of analysis is used to describe and interpret the form and impact of psychological trauma experienced by the characters in both novels. The source of research data is the novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys with a total of 376 pages of the second printing, published by PT Alex Media Komputindo, and the novel *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori with a total of 420 pages of the 26th edition of PT Gramedia. The data analyzed were in the form of dialogue quotes, narratives, inner monologues, and descriptions of characters' actions that reflect traumatic experiences, repetitive memories, anxiety, guilt, alienation, and self-identity disorders.

Data collection was carried out through text studies and literature studies. The researcher reads both novels in depth and repeatedly to understand the plot, setting, characterization, and traumatic experiences of the characters, then identify, note, and group relevant quotes based on the form, cause, and impact of the trauma. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the reduction stage, the data that best suits the focus of the research is selected, while at the data presentation stage, it is classified based on the figure, form of trauma, causes, and its impact on emotions, behavior, and social relationships. Next, take a temporary conclusion of the research results.

RESULTS

In the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori, various forms of

psychological trauma are found that arise due to war, political conflict, loss of loved ones, exile, and social pressure. This trauma is reflected through fear, anxiety, sadness, guilt, identity crisis, and traumatic memories that continue to overshadow the character's life and have an impact on their emotional state, behavior, and social relationships. This phenomenon is analyzed using the perspective of literary psychology Cathy Caruth who views literary works as representations of human psychological experiences formed through various conflicts and life experiences of characters.

1. The Form of Psychological Trauma of Characters in the Novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S Chudori

The psychological trauma experienced by the characters in the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori shows how bitter events in the past leave deep inner wounds. Based on data analysis, the form of trauma is not just in the form of momentary fear, but settles into an emotional burden that continues to haunt the minds of the characters. The forms of trauma found are very diverse, ranging from feelings of guilt that continue to chase, anxiety about safety threats, shame due to suffering, to attempts to cover up fear through delusions. Furthermore, this trauma also has an impact on social aspects and their identity, which is shown through feelings of alienation from their homeland, identity confusion crises, mental distress due to environmental discrimination, to inner wounds from bad childhood experiences. These various forms of psychological pressure ultimately affect the emotional state and the way the characters survive, as will be described in more detail in the following data presentation.

Data 1: Joana's Character

"Guilt like a hunter" (Sepetys, 2023:1)

The data above shows that Joana experiences psychological trauma in the form of guilt that continues to haunt her. Guilt is portrayed as

"hunter" because it seems to keep chasing Joana and doesn't give her room to feel calm. This trauma is related to the burden of the past that he has not been able to let go. Joana seems to harbor feelings of guilt for something that happened before, so her inner wounds continue to appear in her mind and affect her emotional state.

Data 2: Florian's Character

"The Soviets will kill me" (Sepetys, 2023:3)

The data shows Florian's psychological trauma in the form of a strong anxiety about death. Florian imagines that he will be killed if caught. This thought shows that he is living under great mental pressure. Not only is he afraid of the events that are taking place, but he also keeps imagining the bad possibilities that will befall him. Florian's trauma manifests in his excessive fear, suspicion, and inability to feel safe in the midst of war.

Data 3: Emilia's Character

"Shame like a hunter" (Sepetys, 2023:5)

The data above shows that Emilia experienced psychological trauma in the form of shame that continues to haunt her. The shame in Emilia is not just an ordinary feeling, but part of the inner wounds that arise from the experience of violence and suffering during the war. He carries a psychological burden that makes him afraid, tetutup, and difficult to express his experiences. Emilia's trauma is seen through her attitude of hiding herself, feeling insecure, and trying to protect secrets related to her body and identity.

Data 4: Alfred's Character

"Fear is like a hunter" (Sepetys, 2023:7)

The above data shows Alfred's psychological trauma in the form of fear that is covered by fantasies and self-delusions. Alfred often built up an image of himself as an important, strong, and meritorious figure. However, behind the image, he actually harbors fear and insecurity. Alfred's trauma seems different from other characters because he doesn't deal with it directly. Instead, he covers his fears with imagination, pseudo-pride,

and self-narratives that do not fully correspond to reality. Thus, Alfred's form of trauma is seen through the instability of his mind and the way he escapes from reality.

Data 1: The Story of Dimas Suryo

"Again, what else do I have to complain about if I'm surrounded by a family that loves me so much? Why do I still feel like there is a piece of me that is still left behind in the homeland?" (Chudori, 2026:87)

The data above shows that Dimas experienced psychological trauma in the form of alienation and loss of self-identity. Even though he has had a life and a loving family abroad, Dimas still feels that there is a part of him that is missing because he cannot return to Indonesia. These feelings suggest that political exile leaves deep inner wounds. The trauma he experienced made Dimas continue to live in longing and emotional inintegrity for his homeland.

Data 2: North Star Figures

"I was born in a foreign land." (Chudori, 2026:137)

The data shows that North Latitude experiences psychological trauma in the form of identity conflicts and a sense of alienation. Lintang realizes that she was born and raised outside Indonesia, which makes her feel different and doesn't completely have a place. This sentence shows Lintang's inner anxiety as an exiled child who is between two cultures. This trauma caused Lintang to experience confusion in determining his identity as part of Indonesia and the country where he was born.

Data 3: Segara Alam

"Has there been historical malpractice in this country?" (Chudori, 2026:291)

The data above shows that Segara Alam experienced psychological trauma in the form of social trauma due to the discrimination and insults she received since childhood. Insults from the environment make Nature grow up with a tough

attitude and always try to protect herself. This experience causes Nature to have strong emotional pressure so that it shapes her personality to be temperamental and irritable. The trauma she experienced arises because she continues to live in an environment that views her family negatively due to her past political background.

Date 4: Bimo Nugroho

"For the first time, I can forget that hell's childhood home" (Chudori, 2026:325)

The data shows that Bimo Nugroho experienced psychological trauma in the form of childhood trauma and emotional wounds due to a poor family environment. The mention of "childhood home of hell" shows that Bimo had a life experience full of stress and suffering since childhood. The trauma left painful memories that continue to imprint on him. The feeling of relief from being able to forget the past shows that the experience greatly affects Bimo's emotional and psychological state.

2. The Impact of Psychological Trauma of Characters in the Novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S chudori

Psychological trauma has a significant influence on an individual's mindset, emotional state, and behavior in dealing with life. Inner pressure that arises due to safety threats and social stigma encourages a person to develop various self-protection mechanisms, which can be seen through excessive vigilance, a tendency to avoid reality, a loss of hope, a decrease in self-confidence, and the emergence of anger. These changes suggest that traumatic experiences can leave deep wounds that affect the way individuals perceive themselves and interact with their surroundings, as seen in the following analyzed data:

Data 1: Joana's Character

"The arrival of the German youth and the young girl made me uneasy. The two didn't say much. The girl's eyes were swollen from trauma and her shoulders were trembling" (Sepetys, 2023:27)

The data shows that Joana's trauma has become more sensitive to her surroundings. He is easily uneasy when meeting new people, especially in an unsafe war situation. Joana not only reads the state of what is visible, but also notices the body language of others, such as dilated eyes and trembling bodies. The impact of Joana's trauma can be seen in her always vigilant attitude, because the war experience makes it difficult for her to feel completely safe.

Data 2: Florian's Character

"I don't have to trust the nurse girl. I won't see him again. He turned his head towards me and I nodded." (Sepetys, 2023:31)

The above data shows that trauma makes Florian a person full of suspicion. Even though there were people who tried to help him, he kept his distance and was not easy to trust. The impact of this trauma arises because Florian lives on the run and carries secrets that can threaten his safety. He felt that celebrating others could harm him. Because of this, Florian tends to shut himself off and only thinks about how to survive.

Data 3: Emilia's Character

"It's safer for you to stay with others," he said. Safer! He didn't realize it. I'm actually dead." (Sepetys, 2023:45)

The data shows the impact of the trauma on Emilia. The phrase "I'm actually dead" suggests that Emilia feels her life has been ruined even though she is still physically surviving. The trauma she experienced made her lose her sense of security, hope, and self-integrity. He no longer sees himself as someone who is truly alive, but as a victim who has lost too much to war and violence.

Data 4: Alfred's Character

"I put the shadow of the letter in my mind, then I crammed my body in the closet, hoping no one would find me. I don't want to go out there." (Sepetys, 2023:8)

The data showed that Alfred's trauma had an impact on avoidant behavior. He did not want to

face a situation of being discouraged because his fear was too great. However, Alfred did not admit the fear honestly, instead he fled into his own shadows and thoughts. The impact of the trauma on Alfred appears to be in his tendency to hide, delay action, and create imaginative worlds as a way to escape reality.

Data 1: Dimas Suryo Figures

"I'm trying to be reborn as a new human being, but I still feel like there's something left behind in the homeland. Maybe there is a heart of mine left for Mom, for Aji, maybe also for Surtri and her children." (Chudori, 2026:79)

The data above shows that Dimas experienced psychological trauma in the form of deep longing and emotional loss due to the political exile he experienced. Dimas is trying to start a new life abroad, but he feels that part of himself is still left behind in Indonesia with his family and loved ones. This feeling shows that he has not been able to let go of his past trauma completely. Memories of her mother, Aji, Surti, and her children continue to haunt her mind, causing prolonged emotional wounds and sadness.

Data 2: North Star Figures

"What is considered political adultery of the Father then becomes a hereditary sin" (Chudori, 2026:235)

The data shows that North Lintang experienced psychological trauma in the form of inner pressure and identity conflicts due to her family's political stigma. Lintang felt that the political mistakes accused of his father were also inherited to him as an exiled child. This makes Lintang feel burdened by his family's past even though he is not directly involved in the event. This trauma causes anxiety and feelings of not being fully accepted in the social environment or national identity.

Data 3: Segara Alam

"From a young age, Nature learned to defend herself from people's insults." (Chudori, 2026:287)



The data above shows that Segara Alam experienced psychological trauma in the form of social trauma due to the discrimination and insults she received since childhood. Insults from the environment make Nature grow up with a tough attitude and always try to protect herself. This experience causes Nature to have strong emotional pressure so that it shapes her personality to be temperamental and irritable. The trauma she experienced arises because she continues to live in an environment that views her family negatively due to her past political background.

Date 4: Bimo Nugroho

"For the first time, I can forget that childhood home of hell" (Chudori, 2026:325)

The data shows that Bimo Nugroho experienced psychological trauma in the form of low self-esteem and inner pressure due to discriminatory treatment from the surrounding environment. Unlike Alam who resisted, Bimo chose to remain silent and accept the insults directed at him. This attitude shows that Bimo experiences social fear and feels that he does not have the strength to defend himself. The pent-up trauma makes Bimo a passive, introverted, and lacking confidence in dealing with his social environment.

DISCUSSION

The psychological trauma in the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori shows the relationship between past experiences, inner pressure, and changes in the character's attitude in facing their lives. This connection is seen through various psychological symptoms that appear in the characters, both in the form of fear, alienation, guilt, and identity crisis, thus allowing further discussion of the patterns of trauma, its influence on the character's life, and the comparison of their representation in the two novels.

The Form of Psychological Trauma of Characters in the Novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori

The psychological trauma experienced by the characters is caused by various events that threaten their safety, traumatic experiences, the loss of close people, and social and political pressures that last for a long time. As a result of these experiences, the mindset, attitude, and way the characters respond to the environment change as a form of adaptation to the trauma they experience. According to Caruth (in Putri, Adinda & Wibowo, Agung, 2026:807) that trauma is a delayed experience and can re-present through recurring memories, anxiety, fear, and psychological disorders. This view is seen in Joana, Florian, Emilia, and Alfred in *Salt To The Sea* who experience the stress of war, the threat of death, guilt, shame, and fear that continues to haunt them. Their trauma can be understood as acute-threat trauma, that is, trauma that arises in situations of war and immediate danger. This form of trauma is present like a "hunter" who continues to chase the characters through anxiety, guilt, shame, and constant fear. This is in line with Bessel van der Kolk's theory (in Ray, 2015:118) in his book *The Body Keeps the Score*, which states that trauma can settle in the nervous system as an unfinished record of danger. As a result, sufferers experience time distortions because past threats still feel like the reality of the present. This condition can be seen in Florian who is always afraid of death, Joana who is haunted by guilt, Emilia who closes herself off due to shame and violent experiences, and Alfred who flees into fantasy and delusion as a form of self-protection. There is also Freud's view (in Pratiwi, 2023:27) It also explains that trauma can affect personality and behavior through inner pressure, guilt, anxiety, dreams, and recurring memories. In addition, Freud (in Purnomo et al., 2025:104) emphasizing that trauma can come from physical or psychological violence that leaves deep inner wounds, while Caruth (in Devianti et al., 2025:535) mentioning that trauma does not always manifest in person, but can be present through

symbols, repression, guilt, anger, loss, and hidden inner conflicts.

Meanwhile, in the novel *Return home*, forms of psychological trauma are more related to political isolation, social stigma, loss of homeland, poor domestic environment, and identity crisis. The trauma experienced by Dimas Suryo, North Lintang Alam, Segara Alam, and Bimo Nugroho can be categorized as chronic-structural trauma because it does not appear as a momentary emotional outburst, but as an inner wound that lasts for a long time and is rooted in socio-political experiences and personal relationships. Other explanations of Herman, (1992:10) in *Trauma and Recovery* explained that trauma due to inter-human violence or political terror can destroy self-control and break the victim's ties to his or her personal identity, family, and community. This can be seen in Dimas who experienced alienation because he could not fully return to Indonesia and felt that part of himself was left behind in the country. The research Imamah & Ahmadi, (2025:137) explains that trauma can come from family relationships, personal relationships, and inner experiences that cause internal conflicts in the characters. North Latitude also experienced identity confusion as an exiled child who was between two cultural spaces, namely where he grew up and his father's homeland which was present through stories, memories, and the burden of family history. The condition suggests that trauma is not only experienced directly by the first generation, but can also be inherited through family memories and social stigma. In addition, research Utami & Anggraini, (2026:8848) explains that psychological trauma can arise as a result of past stress, harsh criticism, failure, and emotional treatment that undermines confidence. Thus, the form of trauma in the two novels shows that trauma can be present as a "hunter" who threatens the safety of life or as a "breaker" of identity anchors that make the character lose a sense of security, root, and self-integrity.

The Impact of Psychological Trauma of Characters in the Novel *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori

The impact of psychological trauma in both novels does not only stop as bad memories, but turns into an inner force that affects the mindset, emotional state, and behavior of the characters in living life. In *Salt To The Sea* Ruta Sepetys, Joana's character continues to be overshadowed by guilt so that her past becomes a moral burden that is difficult to let go. The character of Florian experiences excessive anxiety and fear of death that makes him always alert, has difficulty trusting others, and keeps his distance from the surrounding environment. By view Saragih et al., (2023:20) Explains that trauma in literary works can arise as a result of extreme experiences that attack individuals emotionally and psychologically. Emilia's character shows the impact of trauma through shame, fear, and inability to reveal her experiences of violence, while Alfred's character covers her fear with fantasies, delusions, and pseudo-self-image as an important and powerful figure. These impacts suggest that the trauma of war makes the characters incapable of living in the present reality as their minds continue to be tied to unresolved threats, wounds, and painful experiences.

In *Return home* by Leila S. Chudori, the impact of psychological trauma is seen through personality changes, self-defense mechanisms, and the way the characters deal with social stigma and past wounds. The character of Segara Alam grew up to be a tough and defensive person because since childhood he was used to facing discrimination, insults, and political stigma, while the character of Bimo Nugroho became a passive, introverted, and lacking confidence due to the inner wounds of his childhood home environment. The research from Syahril, Fiqri et al., (2024:2) which explains that individuals who are in situations of conflict, anxiety, and frustration tend to form self-defense mechanisms to protect themselves from psychological distress. This can be seen in Segara Alam who fights pressure through a tough attitude,



while Bimo chooses to withdraw and hide his suffering. The impact of trauma is also seen in the survival strategies of other characters, such as Florian who keeps his distance, Alfred who hides in fantasy, Emilia who closes herself off, and Bimo who avoids conflict. In addition, research from Khoirunnisa et al. (2023:198). Explains that self-defense mechanisms in literary works can emerge through repression, rationalization, formation reactions, denial, and coping strategies such as self-control and avoidance. Thus, the trauma in both novels affects the way the characters view themselves, others, and the world around them.

Based on the results of the analysis, the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori have similarities in describing psychological trauma as an inner wound that arises due to major historical events. In *Salt To The Sea*, the characters' trauma is related to World War II, escape, violence, family loss, and death threats. Joana experiences a guilt that continues to haunt her, Florian lives in fear and suspicion, Emilia harbors shame from violent experiences, while Alfred masks her fear through fantasies and self-delusions. Meanwhile, in *Pulang*, the trauma of the characters is related to the 1965 political tragedy, exile, ideological stigma, social discrimination, and severance from the homeland. Dimas Suryo experienced emotional alienation, North Lintang faced an identity crisis as an exiled child, Segara Alam grew up with a tough attitude due to social insults, while Bimo Nugroho became closed due to childhood wounds. Thus, both novels show that history not only has an impact on social and political life, but also leaves deep wounds in the inner minds of the characters.

The next equation appears in the impact of trauma on the characters' emotions, behaviors, mindsets, and social relationships. The characters in both novels are unable to fully let go of past experiences because trauma continues to present in the form of fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, alienation, and loss of self-integrity. In *Salt To The Sea*, the characters show responses in the form of vigilance, distrust, avoidance, and escape to the imaginative

world. In *Pulang*, the characters show responses in the form of longing for the homeland, identity confusion, defensive attitudes, withdrawal, and inferiority. Although the form of response is different, they show the same pattern, namely trauma changes the way the character understands himself and the surrounding environment. Therefore, trauma in both novels is not only the setting of the story, but also an important element that shapes the character development, inner conflict, and social relations of the characters.

In comparative literature studies, the similarities between the two novels can be understood as a basis for seeing the connection between themes, ideas, and human experiences in two literary works with different cultural backgrounds. In line with opinion (Anggradinata, 2020:77) Comparative literature can be used to examine literary works through a cross-cultural perspective, so that researchers can find the relationships, similarities, and cultural meanings of the works being compared. This opinion is in accordance with the discussion *Salt To The Sea* and *Return home* Because both novels come from different historical contexts, but both present trauma as a universal human experience. Through comparative literature, the similarities between the two novels can be seen in the way they both display the suffering, loss, alienation, and struggle of the characters to survive in the midst of historical pressure.

In addition to having similarities, the two novels also have clear differences in the source and character of the characters' trauma. In *Salt To The Sea*, trauma is more predominantly acute-threatening because the characters are in dangerous war situations and directly threaten physical safety. Joana, Florian, Emilia, and Alfred face situations full of uncertainty, such as escape, violence, possible capture, and death threats. Their trauma appears in an urgent, fast, and immediate state of insecurity. On the other hand, in *Pulang*, the trauma is more predominantly chronic-structural because the inner wounds of the characters are formed over

a long period of time due to political exile, social stigma, and family historical pressure. Dimas Suryo not only lost his homeland physically, but also experienced emotional disconnection. Lintang Utara bears the burden of identity as an exiled child, while Segara Alam and Bimo Nugroho experience the social impact of political stigma and painful childhood experiences.

Another difference can be seen in the way the characters in both novels respond to the trauma experienced. In *Salt To The Sea*, the character's response is more related to trying to survive in the midst of the threat of war. Florian becomes suspicious and finds it difficult to trust others, Emilia closes herself off feeling that her life has been ruined, Joana continues to bear guilt, while Alfred escapes from fear through fantasies about himself as an important figure. The response shows that the trauma of war encourages the character to protect himself from the ongoing danger. Meanwhile, in *Pulang*, the character's response is more related to issues of identity, memory, and long-term social relationships. Dimas is trying to build a new life, but still feels that part of himself is left behind in Indonesia. Lintang questions his identity as part of history that he did not experience directly. Alam chose to be tough to fight stigma, while Bimo chose to remain silent and withdraw. Thus, *Salt To The Sea* emphasizes trauma as a threat to safety, while *Pulang* emphasizes trauma as a burden of history, identity, and social alienation.

These differences are in line with Damono's views (in Syarifah, 2019:244) That comparative literature is not just about comparing two works to find similarities, but also to understand the peculiarities of each work based on the background, problems, and ways in which the author builds meaning. In that context, *Salt To The Sea* and *Return home* exhibit the peculiarities of different representations of trauma. Sepetys' novel places trauma in a war space full of direct threats, while Chudori puts trauma in a space of politics, exile, and inherited historical memory. Therefore,

a comparison of the two novels shows that trauma in literary works can be present in various forms, depending on the historical, social, and cultural context behind it.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, the novels *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys and *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori both describe the psychological trauma of the characters as inner wounds that arise due to major historical events. In *Salt To The Sea*, trauma is born from the World War II situation, flight, violence, loss, and death threats experienced by the characters. This is evident to Joana through the quote "Guilt like a hunter" which shows the moral burden of the past that continues to haunt her. Florian experiences anxiety for her safety through the quote "The Soviets will kill me", while Emilia brings shame and the hurt of violence through the quote "Shame is like a hunter". Alfred also exhibits hidden fears through fantasies and self-delusions, especially when he chooses to hide and creates a shadow of the letter in his mind. Meanwhile, in *Bali*, trauma arises from the political tragedy of 1965, exile, ideological stigma, social discrimination, disconnection from the homeland, and childhood wounds. Dimas Suryo experiences emotional alienation through the feeling that part of himself is left behind in the country, North Lintang experiences an identity crisis through the realization that he was "born in a foreign land", Segara Alam experiences social trauma due to slander since childhood, while Bimo Nugroho experiences inner wounds through memories of his "childhood home of hell".

The impact of psychological trauma in both novels is clearly seen in the changes in the characters' emotions, mindsets, behaviors, and social relationships. In *Salt To The Sea*, Joana becomes more sensitive and aware of her surroundings because the experience of war makes it difficult to feel safe. Florian becomes suspicious and finds it difficult to trust others because he lives on the run and carries secrets that could endanger him. Emilia experienced a very strong emotional



breakdown, as seen from the statement “I’m actually dead”, which shows that she has lost hope, security, and self-integrity despite being physically surviving. Alfred shows the impact of trauma through avoidance, hiding, and escaping behaviors into the imaginative world as a way of covering up fear. In *Bali*, the impact of trauma appears to be longer because it is related to family history and social pressure. Dimas continues to live in longing for Indonesia, Lintang feels burdened by “hereditary sins” due to his father’s political stigma, Segara Alam forms a harsh and defensive attitude because since childhood he has to protect himself from insults, while Bimo becomes a passive, introverted, and inferior person because he chooses to harbor suffering. Thus, trauma in both novels not only appears as feelings of sadness or fear, but also shapes the way the characters survive and relate to their social environment.

A comparison of the two novels shows that *Salt To The Sea* and *Pulang* have similarities in depicting trauma as past experiences that continue to be present in the character’s life through memories, fear, guilt, shame, alienation, and behavior changes. However, the two have fundamental differences in the source and character of the trauma. The trauma in *Salt To The Sea* is more acute-threatening because the characters face war, flight, violence, and the danger of death directly, so the response that emerges is more related to trying to maintain physical safety and survival. On the other hand, the trauma in *Pulang* is more chronic-structural because the characters face political exile, social stigma, identity crisis, loss of homeland, and long-term family wounds. Through the perspective of Cathy Caruth’s literary psychology, the trauma in both novels can be understood as painful experiences that do not end when the events occur, but continue to recur through memories, emotions, actions, and social relationships. Therefore, both novels show that trauma is not only a personal problem, but also closely related to history, power, family, identity, and the social environment that shapes human life.

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