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FROM THE BLACK CAULDRON TO THE WHITE PAGE: THE WITCH AS A NARRATOR OF POE'S "THE TELL-TALE HEART"

Kara Kazandan Beyaz Sayfaya: Poe'nun "Gammaz Yürek" Öyküsünde Anlatıcı Olarak Cadı

Ibrahim AL-KHAFFAF*

ABSTRACT: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" is a famous short story of crime fiction first published in 1843. The tale starts with an unnamed and unreliable narrator addressing an unknown person, often regarded as the reader, about the details of a crime that the narrator had committed in the past. The narrator repeatedly emphasizes that she is nervous yet she desperately attempts to rid herself of the accusation that she is insane. Thus, the narrator narrates many details of the crime in the hope of demonstrating her sane, intelligently crafted actions, and she also attempts to detail each step of thought before, during, and after the relevant crime. The narrator says that her motive was neither from hate nor a need for money but rather a suspenseful fear of the victim's pale blue eye. In the narration we are told about many things that took place during the crime, and how the narrator was ultimately caught by the police, and how she consequently confessed the crime. Many details such as the relationship between the narrator and the victim (who happened to be an old man), the clear motivation behind the crime, the gender of the narrator, and many other related issues are not sufficiently explained in the story. Nevertheless, critics have provided various ideas and interpretations as to what remained ambiguously unstated in the story. This paper aims to analyse the story with quite a different standpoint, that is to say, this paper signalizes the possibility that the narrator could be a young female servant who is secretly involved in some witchcraft practices. This hypothesis is established by highlighting relevant ritual elements in the tale which suggest that the narrative includes more than a mere portrayal of a perfect crime. Additionally, before launching into the examination of the story, this paper reviews some critics' significant suppositions as well as interpretations of some inexplicit notions of the story. In doing so, this prospective study will not only produce a coherent result that corresponds with Poe's general paradigm of story-telling, but it will also be somewhat strengthened by some findings drawn from the most significant, relevant studies. Hence, this

* Student, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, Postgraduate Education Institute, Bilim Tarihi, Istanbul, ebrahim.alkhaffaf@stu.fsm.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-1757-3115

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paper will create a new spiritual reading that will fill in the resultant gaps in the studies that engaged this short story. And this will be achieved by linking—for the first time—this story with witchcraft.

Keywords: Poe, Witchcraft, Rationality, Irrationality, Truth

ÖZ: Edgar Allan Poe'nun ilk kez 1843'te yayımlanan "Gammaz Yürek" adlı eseri ünlü bir polisiye öyküdür. Hikâye, isimsiz ve güvenilmez bir anlatıcının, genellikle okuyucu olarak kabul edilen bilinmeyen bir kişiye, anlatıcının geçmişte işlediği bir suçun ayrıntıları hakkında hitap etmesiyle başlar. Anlatıcı kendisine isnat edilen deli yakıştırmasından duyduğu kızgınlığı defalarca vurgularken bir yandan da çaresizce akli dengesinin yerinde olduğunu kanıtlamaya çalışır. Bu sebeple, cinayetin öncesinde, esnasında ve sonrasında ne düşündüğünü ve nasıl hissettiğini cürmün bütün ayrıntılarına yer vererek itiraf eder ve kurbanını akıllıca tasarlayarak öldürdüğünü dile getirir. Anlatıcı suçunu tetikleyen sebebin kurbana karşı duyduğu bir kin ya da maddi bir ihtiyaç olmadığını; yalnızca maktulün soluk mavi renkteki bir gözünün kendisinde yarattığı ikircikli bir korkudan kaynaklandığını ifade eder. Hikâyede suç işlenirken meydana gelen birçok olaya, sonrasında failin polis tarafından nasıl yakalandığına ve suçunu neden itiraf ettiğine değinilir. Anlatıcı ile (yaşlı bir adam olan) kurban arasındaki ilişki, suçun arkasındaki açık motivasyon, anlatıcının cinsiyeti ve diğer burayı çıkaralım birçok detay hikâyede yeterince açıklanmamıştır. Bununla birlikte, eleştirmenler, hikâyede muğlak kalan noktalara dair bazı fikirler ortaya atıp çeşitli yorumlarda bulunmuşlardır. Bu makale, hikâyeye oldukça farklı bir perspektiften bakmayı amaçlamaktadır, yani bu makale, anlatıcının, bazı büyücülük uygulamalarına gizlice karışan genç bir kadın hizmetçi olabileceği ihtimaline işaret eder. Bu hipotez, anlatının mükemmel bir suç tasvirinden daha fazlasını içerdiğini öne süren masaldaki ilgili ritüel unsurların altı çizilerek kurulacaktır. Ek olarak, öykünün incelenmesine başlamadan önce bu makale, bazı eleştirmenlerin önemli varsayımlarının yanı sıra öyküyle ilgili açık olmayan bazı kavramların yorumlarını da gözden geçirecektir. Böylelikle, bu çalışma Poe'nun öykücülüğünün genel paradigmasıyla tutarlı bir sonuç üretmekle kalmayacak, aynı zamanda gelecekteki ilgili ve önemli diğer çalışmaların bulgularıyla güçlenecektir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada bahse konu olan öykü ile ilgili yapılan çalışmalardan kalan bir boşluğu ruhani yeni bir okumayla ilk defa cadılık ile ilişkilendirerek dolduracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Poe, Cadılık, Akılcılık, İrrasyonalite, Hakikat

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Introduction

> "[T]here is no sense-organ which more closely resembles the sun [truth], in my opinion, than the eye" (Plato, 1993: 508b).

This paper will review the story in light of the present argument claiming that the narrator of the story is not only a female servant to the old man of the house but also an undercover witch. Consequently, the reason for murdering him could be related to the power of his vulture eye to unveil the girl's dark and hidden secrets. Indeed, there are such implications in the story. Even before minutely looking into the story, we know that Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and died in Baltimore, Maryland, both not so far from the well-known site where the famous Salem Witch Trials took place. The memory of this horrible event was still alive in Poe's time.

Furthermore, many scholars such as Kristen Houghton (2016) accept the hypothesis that this specific short story was based on the 1830 murder of Joseph White which also happened in Salem. So, Poe—like his contemporary Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*—might have been inspired by the atrocities that occurred in Salem. "The White murder also left its mark on Edgar Allan Poe, who at the time of the crime was poised to enter the U.S. Military Academy at West Point" (Wagner, 2010: n.p.). It is not sure whether Poe followed the trial as it occurred, but when he published his story in 1843 he probably had read about that case.[1] Other than what was previously mentioned regarding the marks of Salem on Poe's imagination during his writing of "The Tell-Tale Heart" it is also known that Poe himself was a trial reporter in "the 1843 murder-by-reason-of-moral-insanity trial of James Wood" (Bynum, 2009: 72-73).[2] Consequently, these facts pave the way towards connecting this particular story with witchcraft.

It would be constructive to refer to some critics' relevant arguments before starting to analyze the story based on its witchcraft implications. A similar hypothesis was somehow argued regarding some of Poe's characters. For instance, some critics looked at Lady Madeline Usher—in Poe's other story, "The Fall of the House of Usher"—as a vampire. Actually, as Bloom, who personally experienced this exceptionally unique and dreadful traumatic element in Poe's weird stories, asserted: "[e]veryone in Poe is more or less a vampire" (2009: 6). In light of such possibilities, looking at the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" as a witch should be less surprising. As for the narrator's gender, Rajan's feminist reading assumes that that "unmarked narrator can be seen as female" (2009: 40). Rajan interpreted the narrator as a daughter desiring her own father, as well as seeking power (2009: 48)[3] while according to Davis' masculinist reading, the narrator and the victim are "indeed doubles, always already connected by the gaze" (Qtd. in Rajan, 2009: 42). Davis highlighted the two characters' analogous "almost paranoically sensitive hearing and sight, insomnia, and a preoccupation with

[1] According to T. O. Mabbott, in writing this tale, Poe relied "critically on Daniel Webster's prosecutorial speech regarding John Francis Knapp, who was accused (and found guilty) of participating in a conspiracy responsible for the murder of Captain Joseph White" (Qtd. in Kopley, 2009: 175-176).

[2] In *Ancient Case of Homicidal Insanity*, there is a case about a man convicted for murdering his wife "despite the fact that he felt she was one of the witches and wizards haunting" (1847: 284).

[3] Rajan asserted that the narrator's gender is not clearly identified in the text. Likewise she provided her own interpretation of the narrator's critical phrase "would a madman have been so wise as this?".

death" while the eye of the victim represents the Symbolic Law of the Father (Qtd. in Rajan, 2009: 42). Therefore, based on Davis' reading, the murder of the old man symbolizes the act of oedipal mastery.

Correspondingly, Hoffman took the old man to be a father-figure, with his eye "which a child most likely fears […] the suspicion that he has been seen in a forbidden act" (2009: 26). Arthur Robinson is of the opinion that the victim's "Evil Eye" is actually the "Evil I". In other words, the narrator sees himself in that eye and thus tries to escape it (Qtd. in Bynum, 2009: 74). Another interesting point was tackled by Zimmerman, who refused the typical reading of the tale as a confession; instead, Zimmerman insisted that the narrator has "already confessed to the murder of the old man who was his former living companion. The tale, then, is not so much a confession as a [courtroom] *defense*" (2009: 143, emphasis in the original). To strengthen that argument, Zimmerman examined the narrator's rhetorical mastery which according to him is similar to Melville's Ahab, Shakespeare's evil characters, and the devil of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2009: 149-150). "Poe, like Milton and Melville also, recognizes that bad men could speak well" (2009: 155). In short, providing a conclusive result about Poe's tales is not an easy task; nevertheless, the following hypothesis is worth considering. Before launching into the next analysis, it must be emphasized here that the path to be employed in the coming paragraphs is one which uses such aforementioned individual notions (as well as many others) as stepping stones by which we can arrive at a new unified theory. It is notable that this particular theory is able to answer all the challenging questions regarding this interesting piece of literature. In fact, this can be understood as being a paradox, since the very elemental seeds of this paper's hypothesis are found scattered, so to speak, throughout these studies, yet it is this paper that will produce a new conclusion that will put the record straight regarding the ultimate meaning of this story.

Analyzing the story

"The Tell-Tale Heart" opens with the following confusing statement:

> "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell," (Poe, 2015: 498, emphasis in the original).

So, the whole story is compressed, so to speak, in the very first word of the story, where we have a glimpse pointing towards a truth to know or something hidden to fathom. This truth, most of all, is related to the

narrator's real identity, which we start reflecting upon before we even consider the nature of the crime and its motive. Furthermore, the preternatural ability of hearing, poetically described by the narrator, refers to the possible presence of occultism or at least a kind of untraditional way of supernatural cognition. Hence, we are required to think this, before accusing the narrator of being mad, since the narrator's main goal from the entire narrative is for her to dispel this accusation. Such unique auditory or intuitional powers had been noticed in many intellectuals of untraditional thought, whether they were magicians, alchemists, or even philosophers. A famous example can be seen in John Dee's conversations with angels (Harkness, 1999: 4) as well as Socrates's intuitional whispering daemon (Plato, 2008: 40ab). Similarly, the narrator's frequent neurotic behavior could be linked to a type of daemonic possession. And if it is so, then the narrator's detailed report could be seen as a confession made to some priest, for the sake of setting her soul free.[4]

However, after the narrator promises to demonstrate "how healthily—how calmly" she would tell the story so that she would convince us that she is not mad, she says:

> "[i]t is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever" (Poe, 2015: 498).

Thus, "the idea" that entered her brain, often considered as the idea of the murder, could also refer to a thing that she started thinking about shortly before she made up her mind regarding her criminal project. Based on this reading, the "idea" that "haunted" her "day and night" was the idea that the old man could know and consequently reveal something about her dark practices. And it was this possible threat that produced her decision of killing him before being witch-hunted. That "idea" is "ghostly and persistent, and of obscure purpose" (Pillai, 2009: 108). Therefore, the "vulture eye" reminds

[4] Needless to say, her general rhetoric as well as her recurrent, hysterical laughter during the course of the narration is similar to that of a witch. This can be seen in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, namely, in the three witches' poetic language and sarcastic behavior. Yet, this issue needs an entirely separate study exploring the similarities between this story's narrator and that of the three relevant witches who often laughed fanatically and likewise used speech that concealed deep, hidden meanings.

the narrator of "a carrion-eating bird [which] suggests that death is imminent" (Pillai, 2009: 109). In other words, the old man's eye reminds the narrator of her possible death where her corpse would be left for the vultures. That is why whenever that eye fell upon her, her "blood ran cold". This undoubtedly implies the cold temperature of a corpse.

Having said that, the narrator goes on: "[n]ow this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing" (Poe, 2015: 498). The last phrase, as Pillai suggests, is a thrust at the reader (2009: 110). Then she narrates in considerable depth how she did the deed:

> "And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed" (Poe, 2015, p. 498).

The phrase regarding the time of her nocturnal visits "about midnight" later was fixed into "at midnight" and finally to the specific phrase "just at twelve". That time implies a ritual aspect of the deed. As Pillai comments, the old idea haunts her by day and night, and as a result, she haunts the old man (2009: 111).

She even provides detailed information concerning her ambiguous, long spying on her victim:

> "[a]nd then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible *to do the work*; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye" (Poe, 2015: 498, emphasis is mine).

Another implication about the ritual dimension of her practice can be seen in the number of days that she spent before her crime. For seven nights, "just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept". The number seven is holy in all the Abrahamic religions as well as in most ancient cultures like the Greek Pythagoreans and the Mesopotamians for its connection to the days of the week and the seven planets (Boyer, 2011: 47-48), and therefore, it was used in black magic and witchcraft. So, the old man's eye—according to the later part of the narration—has some mystical power that could reach

the very core of things, in rather an unconditional way.[5] Unlike normal eyes which are often distracted by the outer world, this eye "with a film over it" might be able to see the truth in a very clear manner. Therefore, the narrator accuses it of being an "Evil Eye". In other words, it reminds her of her own dark side ("evil I"), and from the perspective that only the like can recognize the like. So, she resolves to deal with this hazard in her own unique occultist approach.

No matter how, after her long days of dark plotting the waited moment finally arrives:

> "Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea" (Poe, 2015: 498-499, emphasis in the original).

The fact that she utters, "I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity," asserts again the nature of her ritual. Namely, the growing dark energy she receives after seven nights of sneaking in is finally complete. And her power includes her mystical knowledge of what could be going in his mind at that critical time, "he not even to dream of my secret deeds". In this sense, any reference to "watch"—which is repeated in the tale—can be replaced by "witch." So, the watch's hand is a pun of the witch's hand. At any rate, when she:

> "was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out—"Who's there?" I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall" (Poe, 2015: 499).

The last sentence could refer to some ancient superstition that seeing deathwatch beetles is a sign of impending death, yet as a pun it could refer to the death of witches that existed in the narrator's dreadful thoughts, as was stated earlier.

At any rate, the terror did not stop; her next long—yet sensual imagery provoking—description can provide some hints about what is happening in her mind:

[5] "… no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong" (Poe, 2015: 500).

> "Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp"" (Poe, 2015: 499).

Thus, she emphasizes her full knowledge of that sound which she knew, "[m]any a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept". This invites the reader to imagine an atmosphere and time of frenzy witchcraft practices. On the one hand, her description of the old man's exact thoughts further asserts her occult knowledge. This issue is comparable to a famous literary work related to witchcraft. For example, when the first witch told Macbeth about the first apparition, she affirmed to him that, "[h]e knows thy thought," (Shakespeare, IV. I, 79). On the other hand, the narrator's various references to many insects and animals tell us about the dominant presence of these things in her mind. For example, next to the "mouse" and "cricket", she elsewhere referred to "vulture" and "spider", not to forget the beetles of "the Death watches". And this again pushes us to draw an analogy with Shakespeare's play. For instance, the three witches, faced by Macbeth, were throwing cat, hedge-pig, toad, as well as a liver, a nose and lips of human being along with many other things into the cauldron (Shakespeare, IV. I. 1-35). Therefore, the narrator must have been familiar with such sacrificial rites.

Continuing with her rhetorical demonstration of the old man's state of mind shortly before his death, she argues that he felt that death was approaching, and "it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room" (Poe, 2015: 499, emphasis in the original). This clearly expounds the old man's ultra-intuitional ability springing from his eye, which used to threaten unveiling the narrator's hidden side. The idea of losing one eye for the sake of gaining supernatural power can be clearly seen in the story of Odin. Additionally, the idea of losing sight completely to become wiser is explained in the stories of Oedipus as well as the blind Homer. Due to this, this part of the story can be read in such a context. Also, the old man's "pale blue eye" creates a sense of

nature, that is, a primitive lifestyle far from rational thinking which can only see the appearance of things. Therefore, by damaging this eye of truth, so to speak, the problem would be solved. But of course, her aim is to ritually take this power before murdering the old man, anyway:

> "[w]hen I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye. It was open" (Poe, 2015: 499).

Here the purpose of her rituals becomes clearer. Her main intention is obviously to disarm this mystical eye. And that can be attained by drowning it with light, that is to say, to transfer its power and to make it like any other normal eye. In other words, she desires to make the eye distracted by the sense of vision in order to undo its irrational capacity.[6]

All the same, she becomes furious as she gazed upon the eye:

> "I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot. […] there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage" (Poe, 2015: 499-500, emphasis in the original).

If one just replaces the word "watch" with "witch," the idea would be cloudless. Then the phrase would be as follows: "quick sound, such as a witch makes when enveloped in cotton". Namely, she is familiar with the sound that occurs while burning a witch that fits the same description. This could also take place in her wild nightmares. She is seized by anxiety of the sound of his heart, which she fears would be heard by a neighbor. Thus, she realizes that the "old man's hour had come". The next details are very important: "With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done" (Poe, 2015: 500). This strange moment of possession, according to Rajan, has a somewhat dark purpose within it. In other words, the narrator

[6] For example, when Socrates spoke about how he deserted the natural sciences, he mentioned how some people were fooled by the world of appearances while others ruined their eyes by looking at the sun: "I was afraid I might be completely blinded in my soul, by looking at objects with my eyes and trying to lay hold of them with each of my senses. So I thought I should take refuge in theories, and study the truth of matters in them" (Plato, 2009: 99e).

here forces the old man to receive her, so that "he shrieked once—once only" (2009: 59). Needless to say the ritualistic aspect of that terrible act should be added to the last hypothesis.

Having killed the old man, "I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs. I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong" (Poe, 2015: 500, emphasis in the original). The emphasis on this specific number should not be overlooked. The dismemberment included three areas, and likewise she particularly "took up three planks from the flooring" and hid the corpse. This must be a pivotal part of her rituals against the holy trinity. The three witches in *Macbeth* were dancing in a circle and singing:

> "The Weïrd Sisters, hand in hand,
> Posters of the sea and land,
> Thus do go about, about,
> Thrice to thine and thrice to mine" (Shakespeare, I. III, 32-36).

The witches' practices were thrice repeated (Shakespeare, IV. I, 1-5). Also, when the second apparition said: "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!", Macbeth answered: "Had I three ears, I'd hear thee" (IV. I, 88-89). Accordingly, such an analogy is obvious.

She goes on, though: "[t]here was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!" (Poe, 2015: 500). This depiction implies many indications regarding the gender of the narrator. Hypothetically if the murderer was a man he would have carried the corpse and buried it elsewhere, at least in the garden, as seen in most crime stories at the time. But since she was a young girl, that was out of the question for her. So, she hides the corpse right under the floor of the same room. For example, in Poe's "The Black Cat"—the twin of this tale—the male narrator, after having committed his murder, and without doing any act of dismemberment, just deposited the corpse "against the inner wall" (Poe, 2015: 536). So, the significance of the act of dismemberment is twofold. Firstly, it refers to a woman. Secondly, it refers to a ritual. In this sense, it would also be relevant to remember that in the end of "The Black Cat", the narrator's hidden identity was revealed to people by the "solitary eye" cat (Poe, 2015: 538). And that strengthens the narrator's fear of the old man's eye, as argued many times before. Notwithstanding, her ability to cut the body as well as to erase every stain of blood from the scene implies a female character who is

familiar with the kitchen instruments at the time. Above all that, the way she dealt with the blood could also looked at based on her possible ritualistic tendency, not to forget that the reader is not told strictly what she eventually did with the blood.

Having done that she states:

> "When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. […] There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises. […] The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream" (Poe, 2015: 500-501).

Another pertinent point to be highlighted here is the fact that the narrator spent three hours to complete her crime. As was mentioned earlier, she starts "just at twelve," then she remains in the dark room "[f]or a whole hour," that is, until one o'clock. And exactly at four o'clock the police came. Consequently, this timing is not a coincidence in terms of its relation to her rituals. As for her alibi of the shriek as taking place while she was dreaming, it also implies her state of mind, since only a person who is often haunted by the idea of being caught in the wrong deed and likewise punished would generally do that during their nightmares. Likewise, the fact that "three" men come to the house refers to the way her evil plan is encountered by a holy twist of fate.

Furthermore, after behaving as if there is nothing wrong, and adding insult to injury, she states that she "brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim" (Poe, 2015: 501, emphasis in the original). After trying to act calm and innocent she remarks that: "I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears". She started hearing strange voices, "the sound increased—and what could I do? It was *a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not" (Poe, 2015: 501, emphasis in the original). In this sense, her sudden paranoia expresses a reaction from the punishment in store for her. She was not able to resist the power of truth in front of the representation of the trinity. Thus, she collapsed and confessed her crime: "Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew*!—they were making a mockery of my horror! […] I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer!

I felt that I must scream or die! and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder*!—"Villains!" I shrieked: "dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!"" (Poe, 2015: 501, emphasis in the original). Consequently, at the end she exchanged the thing of which she used to fear with the actual fear "of the penal system" (Rajan, 2009: 59). Knowing that, the narrator's psychological behavior in these final moments is shaped, so to speak, by her much earlier act of ritual dismemberment. As Pillai noticed, when the narrator collapses, she is "rapidly disarticulated into three uncontrollable, twitching fragments". First, the narrator's speech stems from the head (becoming vehement, foaming, raving, swearing, etc.). Second, the narrator's arms are gesticulating violently and swinging the chair. Thirdly, the narrator's legs are arising, furiously and excitedly pacing the floor to and fro with heavy strides. These symptoms are related to the nature of the earlier dismemberment (2009: 122-123). It is interesting that she even tells us three times that the old man is dead, and that emphasizes the ritualistic aspect of her crime.

Conclusion

To sum up, the female narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart"—whose fits were often accompanied by seizures, violent fears and uncontrollable panic attacks, which could be understood in relationship with the discussed dark practices—must have been a young servant to the victim. Yet, the motivation of her crime stems from the possibility that he could reveal her true character to others. The aforementioned analysis succeeded in highlighting many dark, ritualistic behaviors performed by the narrator based on her own report. Moreover, it connected these behaviors with their resemblant counterparts found in literary and historical books.

In this sense, it would be interesting to consider the final scene of the story from its religious dimension. The young witch is sitting in the middle of the room and in front of the three men, the representation of the holy trinity, feeling that they are strongly judging her. And in such a hard judgment session, she confesses under pressure. Her words, "Oh God! what *could* I do?" or "Almighty God!—no, no!" are confirmation that she fails in running away from her evil deed. But just because she is caught red-handed in her fragile emotional state does not necessarily mean that she changes.

Her final, articulated, rude vocabulary as well as her screaming in addressing the three police men implies that her soul remains rebellious until the end.[7]

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[7] Looking at the narrator as a witchy, beautiful, young girl who is about to face her death for her wrong deed even corresponds with Poe's conviction regarding the most sad and beautiful thing for an author to write about: "The death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (Poe, 1903: n.p.).

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