

# Inauguration of Guilt in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*

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**Abstract:** This study explores the multifaceted emergence of guilt in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, analyzing how environmental, psychological, and structural elements converge to shape its portrayal. The milieu-based inauguration of guilt is traced to Poe's personal experiences—familial loss, emotional instability, alcoholism, and professional hardship—alongside his literary influences from Romantic and Gothic traditions. Character-based guilt is examined through the contrast between the old man's passive presence and the narrator's obsessive, erratic behavior, revealing how guilt manifests both symbolically and viscerally. Plot-based guilt is revealed through Poe's tightly constructed narrative, where pacing, repetition, and causality mirror the narrator's psychological descent. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that guilt in Poe's story is not merely thematic but a dynamic force born of personal history, character tension, and narrative design.

**Keywords:** Edgar Allan Poe, Gothic literature, Guilt, Narrative structure, Obsessive behavior, Psychological descent, Romantic and Gothic traditions, Symbolic manifestation, *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

## 1. Introduction

This study examines how guilt is created in Edgar Allan Poe's short story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Although many studies have analyzed Poe's psychological themes and writing style, few have connected the story's guilt theme to Poe's life, the story's setting, characters, and plot. On the other hand, while scholarly research has examined Edgar Allan Poe's psychological themes and narrative techniques in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, there remains a significant gap in studies that situate the story within the broader cultural, historical, and personal milieu of Poe's life [10], [17], [23]. For instance, Sarma analyzes the story through Roland Barthes's theory of the "writerly text," emphasizing narrative ambiguity and reader interpretation, yet does not contextualize these literary choices within Poe's lived experiences or the intellectual climate of his time [27].

Moreover, stylistic analyses such as the corpus-based study published in the *Journal of Applied Linguistics* focus on linguistic features that reflect the narrator's psychological state but overlook how Poe's personal and societal environment may have influenced these stylistic decisions [35]. Across these studies, there is a lack of structured, phase-based analysis that connects Poe's teenage years, early adulthood, and late adulthood to the evolving cultural and literary trends of 19<sup>th</sup>

century America [13], [14], [21].

This study addresses that gap by offering a systematic exploration of Poe's shifting milieu and examining how these life stages influenced his creative decisions and thematic preoccupations in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Through this integrated biographical and cultural approach, the research aims to provide a more historically grounded and multidimensional interpretation of Poe's work.

Additionally, existing studies on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* have explored the themes of guilt and madness [29], [30]. However, there is a significant gap in studies focusing specifically on how characterization influences the character's motivation to drive the story's violence and themes of guilt and madness [26], [28]. However, this gap highlights the need for a detailed examination of how the narrator's psychological traits and internal conflicts shape his actions and emotional responses, providing deeper insights into the connection between characterization and motivation in the context of guilt.

Remarkably, despite the previous study on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, there are not few studies that have looked at the specific mechanisms through which guilt is inaugurated and developed within the narrative [1], [16]. In a research study on *Plot Analysis of Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart* by Evitya et al, plot is a series of action compiled, planned, and delivered by the author of the story in their work. Meanwhile, in Wang's *Analysis of Unreliable Narration in Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart*, much research focuses on analyzing the unnamed narrator in the short story and exploring the influence of unnamed narrator on the short story's plot development to help readers better understand the short story [26]. Although both studies focus on plot, narration, and narrative structure, there is limited investigation on how the establishment of guilt influences the structure and pacing of the story [28].

Filling the gaps in research about Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* provides a broader context for examining the theme of guilt and enhances our understanding of both literature and the psychological aspects of people's lives.

This study assumes that the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe manifests the inauguration of guilt.

This assumption is supported by the following theories: Biographical Criticism by Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve [17], New Criticism by John Crowe Ransom [32], and Sigmund

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## Freud's Theory of Defense Mechanisms [19], [20].

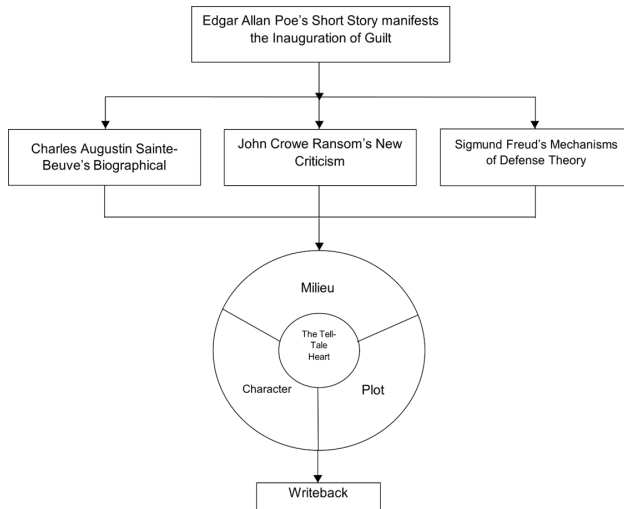


Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve started biographical criticism, which looks at an author's life to explain their work [17]. He believed a writer's feelings and experiences shape the themes and characters in their books. This framework is particularly relevant to the present study, which applies Sainte-Beuve's biographical criticism to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, interpreting the narrator's descent into guilt and madness as a reflection of Poe's own psychological struggles and philosophical despair [9], [13], [14].

Biographical criticism allows us to interpret these narrative choices as more than stylistic flourishes—they are expressions of lived emotional truth. Just as a painter's brushstrokes may reveal tremors of the hand caused by grief, Poe's narrative architecture reveals tremors of the psyche. The fragmented narration, the obsessive repetition, and the symbolic use of confined space all point to a mind unraveling under the weight of guilt—both the narrator's and, arguably, Poe's own.

Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Eichenbaum developed Formalism, a theoretical position that favors form over the thematic concerns within a text or its relationship with the outside world [32]. It looks closely at elements like language, style, and techniques to understand how they create meaning and impact on the audience. Essentially, this study employs one of the branches of Formalism, namely New Criticism [32].

New Criticism is a literary theory that emphasizes a close reading of texts as self-contained works of art [32]. John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and Allen Tate were central proponents of New Criticism theory. Furthermore, according to New Critics, readers should not need to know anything about the author's life or the historical context to understand and appreciate the text [32]. While New Critics acknowledged that these factors might offer some insights, they believed that the true value of a literary work lies within the text itself – in its language, structure, and internal consistency. The author's intention is not the main focus, but knowing their life and

history can still help explain the work (Mambrol). While this theory may not fully account for the historical and social context of the story, it provides a valuable framework for analyzing Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* internal structure and its impact on the reader.

Moreover, Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalysis, a theory that is deeply rooted in his childhood and personal experiences, which shaped his views on personality, religion, and the structure of the mind [19], [20]. Psychoanalysis's central tenet is that everyone harbors unconscious memories, feelings, wants, and thoughts (Lester). One of which is his Defense Mechanism theory. According to psychoanalytic theory, a defensive mechanism is any one of a series of mental processes that help the mind come up with compromise answers to problems that it is unable to address. Compromise usually entails hiding from oneself internal desires or emotions that could undermine one's self-worth or cause anxiety. The process is usually unconscious. Freud's theory of defense mechanisms offers a framework for understanding the protagonist's actions and motivations, which is the unnamed narrator's and the old man's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations [29]. The narrator's initial denial of any wrongdoing, his desperate insistence on proving his sanity, and his attempt to rationalize his actions because of the "vulture eye" exemplify the psychology of the defense mechanism of repression.

Applying Freud's theory of defense mechanisms to literary analysis provides valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of characters and the complexities of human behavior. By understanding the motivations and anxieties driving characters' actions, the study gains a deeper understanding of their motivations, their behaviors, and the psychological complexities within literary works. *The Tell-Tale Heart* serves as a compelling example of how Freud's theory can illuminate the psychological underpinnings of a story, revealing the hidden depths of human experience.

Consequently, this study offers a multidimensional exploration of how Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* reveals the theme of guilt through a synthesis of literary and psychological frameworks. By applying Sainte-Beuve's biographical criticism, it connects Poe's life experiences to his writing. The story's dark setting and broken narration reflect Poe's own struggles and inner world.

New Criticism contributes a formalist lens, emphasizing how Poe's use of literary techniques—such as pacing, repetition, and unreliable narration—creates suspense and intensifies thematic complexity. This framework highlights the structural precision of the story, showing how guilt is not only expressed through content but embedded in the very architecture of the narrative. Finally, Sigmund Freud's Defense Mechanism Theory provides a psychological foundation for interpreting the narrator's internal conflict. Mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection are evident in the narrator's obsessive behavior and hallucinations, particularly the imagined heartbeat that symbolizes buried remorse. Freud's theory illuminates how guilt operates beneath the surface of consciousness, driving the narrator toward confession and collapse.

By combining biographical, formalist, and psychoanalytic

views, this study shows how guilt in *The Tell-Tale Heart* shapes character and meaning, offers new insight into gothic fiction, and highlights Poe's lasting relevance to discussions of mental health and psychological struggle [9], [13], [20], [29], [32].

#### A. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how guilt is created and developed in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*. By integrating biographical criticism, new criticism, and Freud's theory of defense mechanisms. The review of related literature highlights the influence of cultural context, character motivations, and narrative structure on the development of guilt. This study investigates the inauguration of guilt within the story, focusing on how this emotion is elaborately crafted into the narrative through the milieu, character, plot, and a writeback.

### 2. Methodology

This study utilizes qualitative research involving collecting and interpreting non-numerical data like text, audio, or video to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences [3]. It aims to gain detailed insights into a topic and generate new ideas, using flexible methods that preserve rich meaning. One of these methods is discourse analysis, which examines how language is used in context and looks beyond the literal meaning of words to understand social issues and their effects on people. This study uses qualitative methods, specifically discourse analysis, to explore the narrator's thoughts, emotions, and motivations, revealing the text's psychological complexity and unreliable narration.

The primary source of data is taken from the Great American Short Stories, copyrighted 2002 by Dover Publications, Inc. in Mineola, New York, edited by Paul Negri of Toledo, USA. This edition has 248 pages and is hard bound. The story is found in pages 13 to 17 [22].

The secondary sources of data are from electronic resources such as articles, blogs, reliable websites or web pages, published and unpublished theses, and dissertations available on the internet [25], [27], [32].

The study follows four phases:

Phase 1. Milieu analysis through the lens of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's *Biographical Criticism*, which foregrounds the author's personal life as central to understanding the thematic core of a literary work [17]. This study examines Edgar Allan Poe's milieu, personal narratives, and the biographical parallels that illuminate the conditions under which guilt is inaugurated in *The Tell-Tale Heart* [9], [13], [14], [21]. Edgar Allan Poe's background, specifically during his teenage years, early adulthood, and late adulthood, ensure the aim to unravel the complex web of power dynamics, perspectives, ideologies, and influences that stimulates the author to explore the theme of guilt in his literary work.

Phase 2. Character Analysis. This analysis focuses on character, characterization, actions, and motivation. Through the lens of Freud's *Defense Mechanisms Theory* can deepen the understanding of the characters motivations, behaviors, and psychological complexities. This approach not only deepens the

characters but also allows readers to engage with their struggles and showcases the conflict between conscious and unconscious motivations [29].

Phase 3. Plot Analysis. To effectively analyze the main plot structure, the textual evidence, and its impact on the literary elements, it applies John Crowe Ransom's *New Criticism* [32] principles by understanding the plot, saying it is not just as a sequence of events but a carefully crafted experience that speaks through its formal qualities [26], [28]. The table on the next page represents the answer to the structures about the lines that in the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution that point towards the literary element.

Phase 4. Creative Write Back. This phase serves as the culminating response to the analysis. After examining the milieu, character, and plot, we create an original written piece that reflects our understanding of how guilt is inaugurated and developed in the short story. The write-back transforms analytical insights into a creative expression, demonstrating how the story's formal elements evoke and shape the theme of guilt [1], [15], [16].

#### A. Conclusion

This study employs Discourse Analysis as a qualitative approach [3], using non-numerical data from primary and secondary sources to address the major and sub-problems, and follows three phases of data gathering: (1) Milieu Analysis through Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's *Biographical Criticism* [17] to explain how specific periods of Edgar Allan Poe's life influenced the narrative [9], [13], [14], (2) Character Analysis using Sigmund Freud's *Defense Mechanism Theory* [19], [20] to reveal the characters' motivations and actions [29], and (3) Plot Analysis through John Crowe Ransom's *New Criticism* to identify textual evidence and literary elements within the plot [26], [28].

### 3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the study on the inauguration of guilt in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*. The discussion integrates these findings with the theoretical lenses of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's *Biographical Criticism*, Sigmund Freud's *Defense Mechanisms Theory*, and John Crowe Ransom's *New Criticism* [17], [19], [20], [32].

#### A. Milieu

Through the lens of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's *Biographical Criticism*, which emphasizes the author's life as central to literary meaning [17], this study examines how Edgar Allan Poe's personal experiences inaugurate guilt in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. By tracing his formative years, early adulthood, and later struggles [9], [13], [14], [21], the analysis reveals how emotional and ideological influences are embedded in the story's structure and psychology, presenting guilt as both a personal affliction and an artistic obsession.

Understanding the emotional and psychological landscape of *The Tell-Tale Heart* requires more than a surface reading of its gothic elements—it demands an exploration of the milieu in

which Edgar Allan Poe lived and wrote. This section applies Biographical Criticism to examine how Poe's personal experiences, mental state, and creative evolution shaped the symbolic and emotional architecture of the story. Milieu, in this context, refers not only to the physical setting of the narrative but to the cultural, psychological, and semantic environment that informs its tone, structure, and thematic depth. This analysis is enriched by various perspectives on milieu from Carnevale et al. [6], Bee [2], Canguilhem [7], and Spitzer [30], who collectively conceptualize milieu not just as a physical setting but as a dynamic interplay of cultural, emotional, and semantic forces. Spitzer's historical semantics [30] and Canguilhem's philosophical framing of "the living and its milieu" [7] help position Poe's narrative space as a reflection of internal psychological states.

This study argues that guilt in *The Tell-Tale Heart* is not merely an abstract theme but a lived and narrated experience, deeply embedded in the emotional and spatial fabric of the story. The analysis of milieu, which is understood as the psychological and cultural atmosphere surrounding the narrator, is grounded exclusively in Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's biographical criticism [17], which posits that an author's personal history, emotional landscape, and intellectual context are essential to interpreting their literary work. By applying this framework, the study reveals how Poe's own experiences with loss, alienation, and existential anxiety are reflected in the story's claustrophobic setting, symbolic imagery, and psychological tension.

Table 1  
Milieu analysis

Life Phase	Personal Narratives	Parallels to the Story
Teenage years (13-19 years old) 1822-1828	experience of conditional belonging and emotional detachment	the narrator's ambiguous relationship with the old man—intimate yet emotionally estranged
	emotional impact of Jane Stanard's death in 1824—unresolved mournin internal emotional enclosure	narrator's irrational obsession with the old man's "vulture eye"
	period of rejection and identity concealment	confined setting of the story (a dark, claustrophobic home)
	struggle with self-perception and societal judgment	narrator's psychological fragmentation and moral ambiguity
		narrator's insistence on his sanity (ex. Lines 2-3)
Early Adulthood (20-39 years old) 1829-1848	reconciliation followed by rejection	narrator's obsessive control over the old man masks deeper anxieties about abandonment and moral failure
	emotional descent after the death of Virginia Clemm	guilt manifests through auditory hallucinations and compulsive confession
Late Adulthood (40 yrs. old) 1849	Poe's own descent into psychological torment	narrator's hallucination of the old man's heartbeat
	continued pursuit of literary recognition despite his declining health	dramatized in the narrator's insistence on his sanity

Through the first phase, the study demonstrates that Poe's teenage years—characterized by loss, romantic idealism, and emotional instability—are not just background context but integral to understanding the emotional architecture of *The Tell-Tale Heart* [9], [13], [14]. The narrator's descent into madness, his symbolic fixation on the eye, and the oppressive setting all reflect Poe's internal struggle, shaped by cultural, emotional,

and intellectual forces. By drawing on biographical criticism, Romantic literary influence, and psychological studies [17], [29], this analysis shows how Poe's own life shows through his stories, revealing guilt as both a storytelling tool and something he personally lived with.

The story's rhythmic pacing and fragmented narration reflect Poe's emotional volatility, while the act of murder—committed not out of hatred but compulsion—echoes the internalized guilt Poe carried from his early failures and strained relationships. Bybee & Quiles note that "guilt, when unresolved, can manifest in compulsive and self-destructive behavior," a pattern clear in both Poe's life and the narrator's descent [5].

In the final phase of Edgar Allan Poe's life, emotional deterioration and existential despair became increasingly pronounced, shaping the psychological and symbolic intensity of *The Tell-Tale Heart*. As noted in Appendix A.2.3, "Poe's health and emotional stability declined significantly" following the death of his wife, Virginia Clemm, in 1847 [9], [21]. This loss triggered a cascade of depression, alcoholism, and financial instability, which deeply affected his personal relationships and creative output. These biographical conditions are mirrored in the narrator's psychological breakdown, where guilt becomes a force that distorts time, perception, and reality.

The analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's life across three distinct phases reveals a consistent and evolving emotional landscape marked by loss, instability, and psychological fragmentation [9], [13], [14], [21]. These biographical narratives are not merely contextual background; they are deeply embedded in the thematic structure, symbolic elements, and narrative voice of *The Tell-Tale Heart*, offering a compelling case for interpreting the story through the lens of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's Biographical Criticism [17].

## B. Character

This analysis examines character, actions, and motivation through Freud's *Defense Mechanisms Theory*, which deepens understanding of the narrator's psychological complexities [19], [20]. The approach highlights the conflict between conscious and unconscious drives, allowing readers to see how denial, repression, and projection shape behavior [29]. For instance, the narrator's insistence on his sanity—"You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing"—is a textbook case of denial. He refuses to recognize his deteriorating state even while describing irrational acts, such as watching the old man sleep for seven nights. This mirrors Poe's tendency to mask instability with intellectual precision and literary control.

The narrative's unreliable nature leaves the reader questioning the true nature of sanity and insanity [27], [28]. Different people have different reasons for doing things, and these reasons often come from their surroundings. What someone feels motivated to do can change depending on where they are, who they are with, and what is happening around them [6], [7], [30]. This paper explores how *The Tell-Tale Heart* uses suspense to scare us. Poe's story is powerful because it taps into our deepest fears and worries [1], [15], [16]. The mystery and suspense make the story exciting and relevant even today. We can all relate to the story's themes of guilt and madness [26],

[29]. The story reminds us that everyone has dark secrets. The Tell-Tale Heart shows how scary our own minds can be. The unnamed narrator in The Tell-Tale Heart is a fascinating study in psychological complexity. His actions are driven by a deep-seated conflict between his conscious intentions and his unconscious desires [19], [20].

Table 2  
Character analysis

Character	Characterization	Actions	Motivation
Unnamed Narrator	Obsessive and Paranoid	Stalking the Old Man	Fear of the eye
	Cunning and Organized	Buries evidence	Desire for control
	Desperate for Validation	Confession	Need to prove sanity
Old Man	Vulnerable and innocent	Reacting fearfully	Intrinsic motivation
	Passive nature	Trusting and sleeps	Extrinsic motivation

He claims sanity, yet his obsessive behavior suggests otherwise [27]. His thorough planning of the murder highlights a calculated mind but also reveals a disturbing level of advance planning [28]. The narrator's detailed account of his actions creates a sense of unsettling intimacy. Readers and researchers are aware of his thoughts, his anxieties, and his justifications [35]. However, this intimate perspective doesn't necessarily make him sympathetic. Instead, it reveals a chillingly rationalized descent into madness. His obsession with the old man's eye is a key to understanding his psychological state[16].

The eye becomes a symbol of something he can't confront directly [18]. His attempts to control his fear only strengthen his paranoia. He projects his own inner turmoil onto the old man. He sees the eye as a threat to his own stability. The murder itself is a desperate attempt to resolve his internal conflict. But the act of violence doesn't bring him peace. It intensifies his psychological torment.

His guilt manifests as an auditory hallucination – the repeated beating of the old man's heart. This hallucination represents his conscience, his repressed guilt. The narrator's confession underscores his inability to escape his own mind. He's trapped in a cycle of obsession, violence, and self-destruction. His narrative is a descent into psychological chaos. He's both the perpetrator and the victim of his own internal struggles. His story is a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked obsession. The reader is left to struggle with the disturbing nature of his actions and the unsettling ambiguity of his supposed sanity. His character reveals the fragility of the human psyche under pressure.

Generally, The Tell-Tale Heart is a powerful exploration of psychological torment and the devastating effects of an uncontrolled obsession. The vivid imagery and suspenseful pacing create a lasting impression on the reader [15], [16]. The story's impact lies in its ability to expose the dark hidden motives of the human mind. The narrator's downfall serves as a warning tale about the dangers of letting obsession consume one's life. The story's enduring power stems from its exploration of universal themes of guilt, madness, and the human condition.

The inauguration of guilt in character manifests in different ways based on each person's traits and the situations they face, with the old man's passive nature leading to a different manifestation of guilt compared to the narrator's active, obsessive behavior [29].

### C. Plot

This study applies John Crowe Ransom's New Criticism to Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart, viewing the plot not simply as a chain of events but as a deliberate structure that conveys meaning through its formal design [32]. The table maps the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, showing how each stage contributes to the emergence of guilt. This perspective emphasizes that the narrative's strength lies in its construction as much as in its content, ultimately presenting a psychological reading of guilt and madness through the narrator's voice.

Table 3  
Plot analysis

Plot	Textual Evidence	Literary Elements
Exposition	Lines 1-3	Tone (defensive, anxious), and Irony (he denies madness while showing it).
Rising Action	Lines 7-8, 14-17	<i>Foreshadowing</i> (hearing things later), and <i>Tone</i> (insistent, obsessive).
Climax	Lines 80-81	<i>Symbolism</i> (the "vulture eye" = death, fear), <i>imagery</i> (vivid description of the eye), <i>motif</i> (madness), and <i>foreshadowing</i> (the murder).
Falling Action	Lines 82-101	<i>Simile</i> (heartbeat compared to a drum), <i>imagery</i> (sound intensifying), and <i>symbolism</i> (heartbeat = guilt/conscience).
Resolution	Lines 126-149	<i>Repetition</i> (heightens tension)
		<i>Hyperbole</i> (scream or die), <i>repetition</i> (emphasizes madness and guilt), <i>tone</i> (hysterical, frantic).

Kukkonen's Handbook of Narratology explains plot as a "probability design" where the pacing of story events and the accuracy of the fictional world influence readers' expectations [26]. This concept may transform the popular concept of 'plot speed' into a conceptual contribution to the study of time in between the beginning and end of a narrative. Kukkonen investigates plot speed configurations in works like The Three Musketeers and the manuscripts of Dumas and Maquet, arguing for narratological investigations in contexts of literary history and media changes [26].

For example, from the exposition and resolution of the narrative, the narrator's internal conflict with the sound of an old man's heart represents his guilt and detachment. His auditory hallucinations reflect his intense guilt, resulting in a chaotic internal conflict [29], [31]. His defense mechanism, "over acuteness of the senses," indicates his battle to justify his acts while dealing with growing guilt [19], [20].

The story opens with a thorough investigation of guilt and control via the narrator's obvious nervousness and declarations of sanity, signaling a fundamental inner battle between

perceived craziness and self-awareness that pushes the story forward. As the novel progresses, the growing action shows a dark emotional environment in which guilt is deeply integrated into the protagonist's goals, revealing a character filled with contradictions of compassion and malicious behavior as he considers hurting an elderly man [29]. The tension builds to a climax as the character's intense guilt emerges physically, mirroring the conflict within him as he struggles with his conscience. Following this time, the falling action depicts a rising paranoia caused by guilt, with the narrator's attempts at justification increasing his internal battle and distress [31].

Finally, the closure comes through a confessional act that, although providing comfort, makes the narrator confront the final consequences of his acts, exemplifying the complicated duality of guilt that intertwines release and suffering [29]. This complex exploration focuses not only on the narrator's psychological descent, but also on the broader implications of guilt's influence on human behavior and morality, demonstrating that the path to reconciliation is filled with difficulties that necessitate both the recognition and reconciliation of one's darker impulsive behavior [9], [13], [14].

With this, Poe's narrative invites readers into the complexities of the human mind, demonstrating how a well-crafted "plot" can serve as both an emotional and psychological journey [26], [28]. Overall, Poe's skillful construction of the plot connects deeply with themes of human nature, reinforcing the timeless relevance of the story in connection or as a sample result of the Reedsy, An Author's Guide to Storytelling.

In closing, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* plot application offers an in-depth psychological analysis of the narrator's guilt and insanity [1], [15], [16]. The story progresses from initial tension to the narrator's mental breakdown, emphasizing essential themes such as guilt, moral conflict, and the consequences of one's decisions. Using Kukkonen's concept of "plot speed," the analysis shows how the speed of events affects reader expectations and the psychological depth of the story. Moreover, the narrator's auditory hallucinations represent his overwhelming guilt, leading to desperation and eventual confession [1]. Poe's story is both an emotional journey and a cautionary tale about the unchangeable nature of conscience and the psychological implications of uncontrolled emotions [29]. At last, the narrator in the story turns into madness is a horrifying example of how guilt can affect one's mind, forcing the individual to confess not just to an awful act but also to the unavoidable reality of their own shattered conscience [31].

The inauguration of guilt in the plot is the emergence of guilt embodied by the narrator's psychological breakdown, which leads to his confession as the unbearable burden of his conscience manifests itself through the haunting sound of the heartbeat of the old man, symbolizing the unavoidable reality of guilt [1], [15], [16].

#### D. Creative Writeback

The process of creating the poem writeback began with analyzing *The Tell-Tale Heart* and identifying key insights about its milieu, character, and plot, each tied to the theme of guilt's emergence [17], [19]. The study then transformed that

analysis into a poetic form, choosing symbolic imagery and rhythmic language to express the narrator's psychological unraveling [18]. The emotional tone and metaphors were guided by the story's eerie setting, the suspenseful events, and the inner torment of the character, allowing the poem to serve as a reflective and artistic response to Poe's exploration of guilt.

#### The Heart Unburied

By lantern's slit I watched him sleep,  
The eye half-shut, its vigil deep,  
It burned through me, a vulture's flame,  
And whispered softly, calling my name.  
I smothered cries, I stilled his breath,  
And laid him cold in secret death,  
The floorboards closed, the night grew still,  
Yet in my veins, the pulse would thrill.  
It throbbed within the silent room,  
A hidden drum, a living tomb,  
The watchmen smiled, they heard it not,  
But every beat betrayed my plot.  
"Louder! Louder!" the sound became,  
It engraved my soul, it called my shame,  
Till bursting forth, I begged release—  
Confession born, yet not of peace.  
Guilt does not knock.  
It seeps.  
It stains the corners of thought.  
It pulses beneath the skin.  
It builds a throne in the chest  
and sits.  
The heart beats.  
Not his.  
Mine.  
Mine.  
Mine.

In the poem, as a response to the analysis, it is revealed that guilt emerges as a multidimensional force—biographically constructed, psychologically driven, and artistically rendered—revealing how cultural trauma and unconscious anxieties manifest through narrative form, character behavior, and thematic symbolism.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe manifests the inauguration of guilt, as it focuses on how guilt permeates every dimension of the narrative—from its psychological depth and symbolic elements to its character dynamics and overall structure. The study reveals that understanding the inauguration of guilt in *The Tell-Tale Heart* becomes richer when examined through multiple lenses. Exploring the milieu suggests that comparing Poe's works can deepen insight into how guilt emerges within his broader literary context. Character analysis highlights how isolation, obsession, and the grotesque contribute to the narrator's unraveling, while existentialist perspectives further illuminate the collapse of identity under the weight of guilt. Plot examination shows how the narrator's psychological deterioration and the persistent heartbeat

symbolize guilt's inescapable force and its profound impact on the human conscience. Finally, the creative response demonstrates how artistic interpretation can extend literary analysis, and future studies may expand this by using musical forms to capture the emotional and psychological intensity of guilt. Together, these approaches underscore the complexity of guilt as both a thematic and structural force within Poe's short story.

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