

The tell tale heart



There is no better form of personalizing a story than using the first person narrative and that is what Poe does in The Tell Tale Heart. He creates a first person narrative that forces the readers into the mind of the criminal and as the events unfold the reader is drawn further into the workings of the criminal brain. The narrator has killed an old man and buried him in the house. While the narrator claims he is sane he admits that his senses are more enhanced than any normal man's giving the reader insight into his psychotic presentations.

Poe writes, [true! —nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? Criminal psychologists would consider the narrator a psychotic criminal who was not in his senses when he murdered the old man. His hallucinations' and delusions are what caused him to take the murderous steps from his own words we learn, " You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me.

You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! " In, " The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator wants to convince the reader that the crime was reasonable and that if studied logically the motive of ordinary human beings could be understood. [Zimmerman, 2008] The narrator, any criminologist would tell us, committed premeditated murder for he states clearly, " I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.

These words suggests that while he never had the opportunity before, he was looking for a way to kill the old man and the first chance he got, he did so. Like most psychotic killers the narrator was obsessed with his victim. He feared the 'evil' eye of the old man not the man himself. We also see how in

control the killer was while committing the crime and the joy he felt while killing the man, “ I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. ”

Studying the text through psychoanalytical interpretation we can state that though the narrator is insane he is not completely insane. His insanity emerges not through the inability to think but rather through the fact that his thoughts are jumbled up in his motive. His obsession with the old man's 'eye' is extreme to the point that he gives the eye a symbolic life. The feeling of dominance of the eye is in the mind of the narrator the sexual power the old man held over him and when he kills the old man he frees himself from the dominance.

The joy he feels is like a sexual release after the impotent feelings he had as the 'eye' [Bourguignon, 1993] controlled him. The story delves into the mind of a psychotic killer and leads the reader to experience how the criminal mind works. The narrator though mad, is not completely mad and even after he kills we see that he is not a seasoned killer indifferent to his acts, rather his guilty conscious, a show of his humanity, does not let him keep silent about his deed and manifests itself in the form of a ticking heart, he thinks belongs to his victim.

Poe has forced readers to realize that even the most heinous crimes, which we cannot in any way forgive, can be committed for reasons even the criminals may not understand. It's the reality of the humanity of the criminal that makes the reader become even more horrified for it means that the man was not insane and people, in most ways normal can do acts that are inhumane.