

## Revival and Spiritual Awakening in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Black Cat'

Ishraq Bassam Al-Omoush  \*

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, The World Islamic Sciences & Education University, Amman, Jordan.

Received: 6/12/2021

Revised: 19/2/2021

Accepted: 23/2/2022

Published: 30/5/2023

\* Corresponding author:  
[omoushraq@gmail.com](mailto:omoushraq@gmail.com)

Citation: Al-Omoush, I. B. (2023).  
Revival and Spiritual Awakening in  
Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Tell-Tale  
Heart' and 'The Black Cat'. *Dirasat:  
Human and Social Sciences*, 50(3),  
272–279.  
<https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v50i3.85>

### Abstract

**Objectives:** Edgar Allan Poe (1809- 1849) is credited with the creation of the detective story. However, his tales have not been extensively researched, especially in areas such as religiosity and spirituality. This paper aims to delve into these deeply-embedded areas and explore the neglected themes within Poe's works. The objective is to uncover the religious experiences that some of Poe's protagonists undergo.

**Methods:** Employing an intrinsic approach, this study demonstrates that the protagonists in Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" experience spiritual growth and awakening after losing their proper orientation and going astray. These characters do not appear to be true believers, as they do not believe in the existence of God. However, after facing a crisis resulting from committing a crime, God suddenly becomes apparent to them.

**Results:** Therefore, the present study focuses on analyzing the gothic setting, inner conflict, symbols, and narrative techniques in Poe's two stories. It aims to highlight the significance of the psychological turmoil experienced by the two protagonists, which ultimately leads to their spiritual awakening.

**Conclusions:** Under the weight of guilt and remorse, the two protagonists begin to perceive existence in a new light, as revealed through their monologues. They express a need for spiritual revival.

**Keywords:** Awakening, crisis, evil, guilt, revival, spirituality.

### الإحياء والصحو الروحية في قصتي "القلب الواشي" و"القطة السوداء" لإدغار آلن بو

إشراق بسام العموش \*

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها ، كلية الآداب والعلوم ، جامعة العلوم الإسلامية العالمية ، عمان ، الأردن.

#### ملخص

**الأهداف:** يعد إدغار آلن بو المبتكر الرئيسي للقصص البوليسية، ومع ذلك لم تبحث أعماله بشكل كامل خصوصاً في قضايا دينية وروحية، وعليه فإن هذه الدراسة تبحث بمواضيع وقضايا عميقة الجذور لم تبحث نوعاً ما في قصصه الأدبية. تستعرض هذه الدراسة التجربة الدينية التي تجتازها بعض الشخصيات الرئيسية في أعمال إدغار آلن بو.

**المنهجية:** وتطبيق النهج الجوهرية، يبين البحث أن كلا الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين في قصة "القلب الواشي" و"القطة السوداء" قد مروا بتجربة صحو دينية روحية بعد حالة من التضييل وفقدان التوجه السليم. إن هذه الشخصيتين لا يبدوان مؤمنين حقيقيين على الإطلاق، فبالنسبة لهم الله غير موجود، ولكن بعد أزمة ناجمة عن ارتكاب جريمة في كلا القصتين، يظهر الله فجأة النتائج: توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل القصتين من خلال تحليل الزمان والمكان، الصراع الداخلي، الرموز وغيرها من العناصر القصصية، بالإضافة إلى تقديم شرحاً وافياً لحالة الإضطراب الروحي والتي ستولد حالة من النضوج واليقظة الروحية للشخصيتين الرئيسيتين في كلا القصتين.

**الخلاصة:** الضائقة نظراً للشعور بالذنب والندم، نجد أن الشخصية الرئيسية في القصتين يناشد الله ويعيش تجربة ساعياً لإيجاد روحه، و من خلال المونولوج الداخلي، تتحدث الشخصية الرئيسية عن الجريمة التي ارتكبت ويعبر عن احتياجه لإحياء روحه. الكلمات الدالة: الصحو، الشر، الذنب، أزمة، الإحياء، الروحية..



© 2023 DSR Publishers/ The University of Jordan.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC) license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Literary Background: Poe As an Author

Edgar Allan Poe (1809- 1849) might not be the greatest author in the history of American literature, but his reputation as a major figure in literature is basically based on his subtle and profound short stories, poetry and critical theory. He was seen as the major inventor of detective fiction. Cambiaire (1970) states, "In the modern detective story the most important character is the 'intellectual sleuth.' "Cambiaire goes on to say that "detective fiction is indebted to Poe for the first introduction of such a character." (45) In a great number of his short stories, Poe tackles themes such as murder and death, and creates an atmosphere of mystery and macabre, and as Kennedy and Poe (1987) maintains, "his most recurring themes deal with questions of death, including its physical signs, the effects of decomposition, concerns of premature burial, the reanimation of the dead, and mourning" (3).

In order to create such a unique style, both in poetry and fiction, Poe uses various devices and techniques as well as an original imagination. Poe's writing style is somehow unique due to the mysterious and dark modes which he creates in his gothic tales, and themes of fear and horror in addition to the supernatural elements are all used to bring fear. Speaking of Poe's writing style saying, Daniel Hoffman (1972) maintains that

Many readers are put off from Poe by the décor of his writings- the settings of his tales and poems, the often grotesque style of his prose. His excrescent Gothic conventions which are often on the verge, if not over the verge, of self-parody, seem willfully remote from any possible reality (xiii)

In his tales of horror and mystery, Poe creates a distinctive style which captures the reader's imagination and enriches modern detective fiction. Furthermore, it is believed that Poe's writing changed the direction of literature in modern times since many writers like the French Symbolists who were greatly influenced by Poe's poetry and short stories during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Koster (2002) adds that many of Poe's works "are generally considered part of the dark romanticism genre, a literary reaction to transcendentalism which Poe strongly disliked" (336).

As for Poe's religious background, there was a mixture of thoughts that explain his views about God and religion. A number of scholars created fabrications about Poe's life and views, and although he was often seen as an irredeemable atheist, Poe became a Christian before he died. Harry Poe (2012) traces Poe's spiritual development and the time when he came to believe in God. Poe maintains, "It's a story of Poe's spiritual experience and how he came to believe in the God who created the universe, and how he came to go forward at a revival meeting five weeks before he died." (42) E. A. Poe's views about religion are not to be confused with the spiritual turmoil of his fictional characters; they help in awakening the readers about his the religious impacts his fiction might leave.

In fact, the reader would question the sense of morality Poe's characters embody and whether they have faith in God, and in order to find an answer, we need to consider what formalist critics suggest while analyzing the structure of a literary text. A work of art should be interpreted for its own inherent value through examining its form and reducing its biographical and historical context. To them, a work of art should be analyzed without any consideration to its author's views and background. Thus, Poe's views should not be confused with those of his characters, and contrary to popular opinion, one feels that there is a strong sense of morality and spirituality in Poe's tales. For instance, in his *Theory of Literature*, Wellek (1959) maintains that intrinsic approach is concerned with analyzing and interpreting the work of art itself. He says, "The natural and sensible starting-point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of works of art themselves." (139) Wellek also adds "only the works themselves justify all our interest in the life of an author, in his social environment and the whole process of literature." (ibid) Thus, we should not confuse the views of Poe no matter what they are with those of his fictional characters. Using an intrinsic approach, this paper will be giving more importance to the form of Poe's stories regardless of his beliefs. It aims at analyzing the setting, symbols and the interior monologue in Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," in an attempt to show how these elements expose the theme of spiritual awakening. Additionally, it is concerned with the words spoken by each narrator which reveal their suffering and the spiritual dilemma they are faced with. The words spoken by each narrator and the structure of the stories expose a crisis of spiritual loss in which both commit a crime in cold blood. Afterwards, the stories events will change the direction for each character; they

will reach a state of awakening after losing a proper orientation, and even though the protagonists do not feel guilty about the crime committed, they will go through an experience of spiritual awakening in which he will get closer to God, confess their sins, and eventually, justice will prevail.

### ***1.2. What is 'Awakening'?***

One might need to understand the meaning of spiritual awakening. On one level, the term 'awakening' parallels a kind of rebirth or revival which occurs within the inner self of certain characters, thus it can be defined as "a form of awareness in which the person feels that he or she has found a new way of understanding the world." (Newberg & Waldman, 2016, 26) At a larger level, there are many ways that different cultures have defined this concept. For many people in Muslim and Christian societies, spiritual awakening is an experience of enlightenment which brings human beings into a new relationship with God; it is an experience through which the human soul gets released from suffering and brings them closer to God. And for other cultures, the term awakening is often associated with a sense enlightenment that is considered to be a transformative experience in which people come to acquire new knowledge about the world. "Enlightenment, large or small, is indescribable experience that alters the brain and our awareness of ourselves and the world in a way we find deeply meaningful" (Newberg & Waldman, 2016, 6) More importantly, this experience creates a radical transform in a person's worldview and values. Enlightenment also refers to "a specific experience in which the transformation occurs, as well as a new permanent state that arises from the given experience" (Pyysiäinen, 2003; Wright, 2017). All in all, awakening is a psycho-spiritual journey that leads to a more spiritual security, and as Heidegger (1968) suggests, awakenings illuminate "the boundaries in which all customary views are confined" and "summon us to reach a more open territory" (13).

## **2. Techniques & Elements:**

### ***2.1. Monologue***

The selected stories "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" share some elements and techniques which are of great significance in relation to the theme 'spiritual awakening' and the argument of this research. Amongst these techniques is what is commonly known as interior monologue. In literature, a monologue can take different forms such as dramatic monologue, which is a sub-genre in poetry, and soliloquy in drama. In narrative works, interior monologue is the type which is usually employed. Regardless of some minor differences, the three kinds of monologue have something in common which is the speech delivered by a single speaker. When it comes to interior monologue, it involves a situation where one character gives an extended speech about something that deeply concerns him/her. It can be regarded as a vehicle for vocalizing the inner thoughts and feelings of the speaker, thus, the more the character talks, the more he reveals about his/her inner state, weaknesses, shortcomings, and his dilemma.

In "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat", the action, events, and most importantly, the inner feelings are all told from the perspective of one character who is definitely the protagonist. So using such an important technique (interior monologue) in each story gives the chance to the reader to delve into the inner conflict and the spiritual journey through which the two narrators pass. Gerald Prince (2003) defines interior monologue as "the nonmediated presentation of a character's thoughts and impressions or perceptions." (Prince, 45) In Poe's selected stories, the narrative style is of great significance in the sense that it reflects the mysterious inner struggle which occurs in the narrator's psyche. The two narrators, who are revealed to be guilty, speak through monologue which helps them confess their sin and allows the reader to get a glimpse inside their psyche. For instance, Poe's use of monologue in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' creates a sense of mystery, and it makes the audience involved in the protagonist's inner dilemma. As he talks, the narrator's words indicate that he is having an inner conflict between two forces: the good and the evil. He speaks about a crime that he committed and says that there was no real motivation for killing an old man and that the man has always been kind to him. The addressee to whom the narrator is talking all the time is the silent voice that stands for his conscience; it is the voice which reminds him of his guilt, yet he denies it and plans to kill the old man in order to get rid of the evil 'eye.' Instead of feeling

guilty, the narrator describes the feelings of triumph when he was about to kill the old man, saying:

Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers- of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph ...His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness...and so I knew that I could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing on steadily, steadily. (E. A. Poe, 2)

In fact, the narrator's monologue exposes his spiritual crisis in which one feels that his conscience is almost dead; he is physically alive, but spiritually dead. Thus, this crisis is an indication of loss, and in order for the narrator to find a path to God, he will pass through an experience of suffering in which he will, ultimately, be seeking the power of savior to get redeemed from guilt. Once he starts appealing to God, his conscience will awaken; his soul will be released from its prison.

## **2.2. Symbols of evil**

In "The Black Cat," the narrator is talking to the reader while he is in prison. He says that the reader would be mad if he/she ever believes his story. He speaks about madness and about the fact that he has already been accused of madness. He says:

...Yet, mad am I not- and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and today I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified- have tortured-have destroyed me (E. A. Poe, 26)

The unnamed narrator seems to have committed a murder, and he is telling his story from prison. At the beginning, he explains how his personality and his temperament have changed for the worse, and that one night he took a penknife from his waistcoat, and deliberately cut one of the black cat's eyes. Later, he kills his own wife. The protagonist does not seem to feel guilty and does not confess any sense of guilt; on the contrary, he keeps saying that his murder and evil behavior are truly justifiable. And instead of confessing his guilt, the protagonist blames the black cat for his problem; it is regarded as a symbol of all evil inside him. Speaking about the black cat and his pets, the narrator says,

I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition page (E. A. Poe, 27).

In "The Tell-Tale Heart," the narrator raises questions and tries to answer them. In his answers, he admits his illness, but he denies the fact that he is insane. More importantly, the narrator speaks of his 'sense of hearing' saying that he is now more anxious than before and is able to hear everything. This emphasis on 'hearing' has a vital role throughout the story, and more importantly, it gives a clue that the narrator will be able to recognize something that his 'evil self' was unaware of during a particular stage of his life; the narrator was unable to hear the hidden sound of his conscience properly. He says, TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses – not destroyed- not dulled them." (E.A. Poe, 1) Being unable to 'hear' the inner sound properly and due to the state of loss, the narrator will be going astray and experience a crisis in which he will commit a crime in cold blood without any feelings of regret.

The narrator goes on and asks the listener to listen carefully to his story. Like the narrator in "The Black Cat," he too speaks about a crime that he committed maintaining that there was no real motivation for killing an old man. According to the narrator, the old man has always been kind to him, but the only reason for committing the crime is that one of the old man's eyes 'resembled that of vulture.' He says: "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! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it" (E. A. Poe, 1).

The vulture-like eye which the narrator talks about is identified with his evil self; both are seen as signs of evil since the man's evil eye urges the narrator to commit the horrible crime as he claims. Throughout history, vulture is regarded as a symbol of death and evil *Vultures are unclean*<sup>1</sup>.

In various cultures, vultures are typically symbols of evil, and in the context of Poe's story, the vulture eye which

---

<sup>1</sup> (Leviticus 11:13; Deuteronomy 14:12). <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-vultures.html>

irritates the narrator reflects the evil part of his personality- the evil part that conquers him which he is unable to resist throughout the story (Leviticus 11:13; Deuteronomy 14:12)

In both stories, the crime committed by each character is attributed to other forces/characters than to the actual murderers. In 'The Tell Tale-Heart,' the protagonist believes that the man's vulture-like eye initiates evil within him, and the protagonist in 'The Black Cat' blames the pets, especially the black cat, for what he did; we can think of the black color as a universal symbol of death and evil. Both the vulture eye and the black cat can be said to stand for evil part (the evil self) of the protagonist in each story and to reflect on the inner struggle thereof. In fact, evil exists somewhere within the two protagonists; it is the hidden force that prevents the two murderers to confess the murder they committed at the beginning of the stories. Additionally, this sinful nature is exposed to the reader through monologue, and as previously mentioned, the more they both talk, the more their inner struggle and sinfulness are exposed to the readers.

The sinful nature of both characters lies in the way they delay their confession; it is a kind of procrastination which enhances their inner suffering and prolongs the spiritual crisis they face. The two characters lack any sense of spirituality; one might say that their spirits and inner conscience are almost dead, and that is why they don't seem to have any sense of remorse especially at the beginning of each tale. In 'The Black Cat,' the protagonist says, "I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched." (E. A. Poe, 28) He continues saying, "Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart...it was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself- to offer violence to its own nature- to do wrong for the wrong's sake only" (E. A. Poe 28-29).

### 2.3. Setting

In Poe's gothic fiction, the setting is not merely a sitting room or a house; we should go beyond the physical world in which characters exist and think of the metaphorical significance of the place and time. More importantly, when it comes to gothic elements in fiction, one might think of dark and creaky castles, supernatural creatures, and an atmosphere of mystery and darkness. In Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Black Cat,' the gothic setting is reflected through the sense of horror due to a murder that has been committed in each story. In fact, the gothic setting mirrors the inner psyche of the characters, and its atmosphere of mystery and darkness suggests the darkness of the inner psyche of the narrators in which they undergo a spiritual journey of awakening. Thus, the gothic atmosphere replaces the geographical location of each narrator and provides a replacement which the human imagination requires. Clive Bloom (2010) theorizes that "this void in the collective imagination was critical in the development of the cultural possibility for the rise of the Gothic tradition" (2).

In 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' for instance, the sitting room of the house in which the story takes place symbolizes the narrator's unconsciousness in which a journey of revival and awakening is going to take place soon after the crime itself. Here one might see that the narrator will be going on a quest to have a greater understanding of God and to seek the meaning of life. Actually, the majority of the plot takes place at night. Night suggests darkness and foreshadows death or evil which will take place soon, and more significantly, it stands for the dark side of the two protagonists and the lack of 'light', chaos and confusion in their lives.

### 2.4. Conflict

As for the inner struggle in Poe's stories, the two narrators experience a dilemma or a turmoil in which they become spiritually lost; this loss lies in their inner struggle – a struggle that makes them forget about his murder and conceal the corpses of the dead man or to confess his murder. In 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' the narrator's inner struggle lies in the way he resists his feelings of guilt; he ignores the beats of the dead man's heart. This struggle occurs between two opposing forces: the feeling of guilt that is symbolized and suggested by the beats of the heart is contrasted with his indifference as he keeps laughing. After he took three planks from the flooring of the chamber, he says, "I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned." (E. A. Poe, 5) These words

indicate that the protagonist has no feeling of remorse or regret, and that it is his devilish inner voice that has been speaking so far. But its influence upon his behavior will not last forever; there is something that will urge the narrator to admit his murder after concealing the dead man's body.

Throughout the story, the protagonist tries to convince himself and the reader of his sanity and that what he did in murdering the man is justifiable; he claims that he has every reason to commit this immoral sin; he is sinful and he was unaware of his sinfulness, but as the story progresses, one should pay attention to beating of the heart. The dead man's heart is beating so rapidly and its beats are getting much quicker and faster, and this is the sound which the protagonist hears. Now his sense of hearing that he has already talked about will be awakened; the sound of the dead man's heart parallels and symbolizes the inner sound of his consciousness which he has always denied; it is the sound which remind the protagonist of his guilt and spiritual wounds which should be healed.

To achieve a kind of awakening, the protagonist feels that he is compelled to seek an upper spiritual guidance- a guidance that cannot be obtained unless he surrenders to God. One can easily notice that the protagonist has changed throughout the story. After being extremely indifferent to committing murder, the protagonist has become aware of his guilt; it is the terrible experience of the murder he committed that makes him wiser and aware of his guilt, and this kind of experience results in the protagonist's spiritual awakening which is caused by the beats of the dead man's heart that kept beating so loudly that the guilty murderer could hear it.

### **2.5. The Path to Awakening**

In "The Tell-Tale Heart", there are some clues to the moral or spiritual awakening that the protagonist experiences. The first word of the story "True!" as Meyers (1992) puts it, "serves to gain the reader's attention" (101); in fact, it is "an admission of their guilt, as well as an assurance of reliability." (Benfey, 1993, 30) Then, the narrator speaks about the disease probably (his madness) that has sharpened his senses. He says, "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. How then, am I mad?" (E. A. Poe, 1) Hearing is the first clue that suggests a sense of awakening which is about to occur towards the end of the story. The previous lines imply that the protagonist is capable to hear, and here we should go beyond the literal meaning of 'hearing' and think of something divine and much deeper to be heard. Although the protagonist is somewhat disillusioned by his inner thoughts about heaven and hell, he is still capable of recognizing and hearing the inner voice that stands there in his consciousness- the voice which he has always denied.

A second clue has to do with the way the protagonist describes the vulture-like eye of the man. After he claims that he has a plan, the narrator explains that this man has always been kind to him. One can assume that this mutual kindness between the narrator and the old man was another sign which helps the former to relieve his guilt. He loved the man, but hated his vulture eye as he mentioned earlier in the story. The man's eye is evil, but he is not evil as a person. He says, "with what foresight, 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" (E. A. Poe, 2) so, the narrator treats the man and his eyes separately and this prevents him from killing the man on one of the nights. In other words, there is always a sense of hope since the narrator is not completely evil, and eventually he will surrender to the inner voice of his consciousness.

After murdering the old man, the protagonist's inner conflict grows up; although the old man is dead, his heart is still beating. In fact, the old man's heart beats enhance the state of spiritual awakening which the protagonist experiences; it is the inner journey that leads him to confess his sin, and ultimately gives up. In "Encyclopedia of Social Psychology", Baumeister & Vohs (2007) maintain that "Poe's character falsely believes that some police officers can sense his guilt and anxiety over a crime he has committed, a fear that ultimately gets the best of him and causes him to give himself up unnecessarily." (458) When he hears the man's heart beating so rapidly, the protagonist starts talking to God saying,

...Oh God! What could I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! - no, no! ...But anything was better than

this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now - again! - hark! louder! louder! louder! louder! (E. A. Poe, 6)

In 'The Black Cat,' the guilty protagonist indirectly expresses some sort of longing for spiritual rebirth. There are some clues that demonstrate his feelings of guilt and fear that he always tries to conceal. His first sin appears when he tortures his favorite pet, Pluto, by cutting one of its eyes from the socket. He says,

My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, girtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from a waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity (E. A. Poe 28).

In fact, it is the evil part of his personality that urges him to commit this devilish crime in cold blood, he continues saying, "I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree." (ibid 29) However, killing the cat is unjustifiable, and deep inside the protagonist knows that he has committed a horrible crime. "I hung it with tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;- hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I knew that in doing so I was committing a sin- a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul" (ibid). Afterwards, the narrator expresses a sense of fear, and he describes Pluto as though it is the real antagonist in his life.

The narrator depicts Pluto as a 'brute beast.' This beast reminds the narrator of his guilt; it embodies both his fears and suffering. He says, "a brute beast to work out for me- for me, a man fashioned in the image of the high God (33) he says. "And now was I indeed wretched beyond wretchedness of mere Humanity" (ibid). Later, the black cat that he finds constantly reminds the narrator of his guilt; it stands for the narrator's spirituality which is almost dead. Then, the narrator tries to murder the cat with an ax; it was the cat which resembles Pluto, and ironically, he draws back the ax and splits his wife's head. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting in my wrath the childish dread with had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal, which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded by the interference into a rage more than demonical, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain (E. A. Poe 33)

As mentioned previously, the black cat in "The Black Cat," is a symbol of the evil inside the protagonist; it's a reminder of the guilt he feels every time he observes it since it looks like Pluto, and therefore, in order for the protagonist to feel – at least temporarily- a "blissful sense of relief," (E. A. Poe, 35) he has to get rid of the 'brute beast' as he describes it. Later on, he kills his wife and hides the corpse up into the walls of the home itself, so that it would not be noticed by the police. After hiding the corpse, the narrator says to himself, "Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain" (E. A. Poe, 34) The previous lines reveals the narrator's fears regarding his new cat which is similar to Pluto; they foreshadow what will happen at the end of the story and that the new cat might appear again to remind him of his guilt. Speaking of the narrator's unjustifiable murder, Gargano (1960) says, "Since the narrator's wife shares his love of animals, he likely thinks of her as another pet, seeing as he distrusts and dislikes humans. Additionally, his failure to understand his excessive love of animals foreshadows his inability to explain his motives for his actions" (172- 178).

The guilty narrator feels extremely overjoyed that his crime will not be discovered as the police were prepared to depart; his heart was too strong and filled with glee. "I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness. (E. A. Poe, 35-36) ironically, it was the black cat which reveals the crime to the police; they heard its voice while it was on the corpse. It reappears at the end of the story to remind the narrator of his buried guilt and his sin. It is the inner voice which reminds him of repentance; it is a symbol of both sinfulness and repentance

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation (E. A. Poe, 36).

Now the guilty narrator is begging to be saved by God from the 'Arch-Fiend' or Satan- from his devilish and immoral actions. He realizes that no matter what he did, guilt is inescapable, and now it's only God that will shield and deliver him.

Despite his evil action, the narrator still feels that his repentance will be accepted by God; he knows that he will be sentenced to die, yet his soul will be shielded and delivered by God "the most merciful" (E. A. Poe, 29).

### 3. Conclusion

In "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," spiritual awakening is seen as a transformative experience that brings new awareness for each narrator; it is an experience by which they awake with a new sense of being in this world; it begins with a horrible act or incident that would change their life. In fact, the two protagonists were psychologically and spiritually disconnected and detached from their world or from the people/things they used to enjoy or love. In 'The Tell- Tale Heart,' the protagonist kills the man though he loved him, and the narrator in "The Black Cat" kills his favorite pet and his own wife. He speaks of his hatred towards others. "Evil thoughts became my sole intimates- the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind" (E.A. Poe, 33). It is not only a kind of physical disconnection that the two protagonists suffer; it is more of a spiritual detachment in which they were unable to recognize their inner selves and soul.

In both stories, murdering other characters marks the beginning of such a transformative experience in the lives of the protagonists; it is this experience that helps the reader to delve into the inner conflict of Poe's two characters. They did suffer, but their suffering teaches them to become spiritual and to get closer to God, thus, it will be hard for the reader to ignore the significance of spiritual state of Poe's characters though they did commit a horrible crime. For instance, the narrator in 'The Black Cat,' will be having a desire to find meaning and fulfillment within his soul and spirituality, so spiritual awakening and the meaning of revival can be regarded as prominent themes explored in Poe's fiction.

### References

- Baumeister, R. F. (2007). *Encyclopedia of social psychology* (Vol. 1). Sage.
- Benefey, C., & Silverman, K. (1993). *Poe and the Unreadable: "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart"* (pp. 27-44). Cambridge University Press.
- Bloom, C. (2010). *Gothic histories: The taste for terror, 1764 to the present*. A&C Black.
- Cambiaire, Celestine Pierre. (1970). *Influence of Poe in France*. New York: Haskell House Pub Ltd.
- Gargano, J. W. (1960). "The Black Cat": Perverseness Reconsidered. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 2(2), 172-178.
- Heidegger, M. (1968). *What is called thinking?* New York: Harper Collins
- Hoffman, D. (1972). *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe*. LSU Press.
- Kennedy, J. G., & Poe, D. (1987). *the Life of Writing*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 9(11), 5.
- Koster, D. N. (2002). Influences of Transcendentalism on American Life and Literature. *Literary Movements for Students*. Detroit: Thompson Gale, 1, 336.
- Meyers, J. (1992) *Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy*. Cooper Square Press.
- Newberg, A. B., & Waldman, M. R. (2016). *How Enlightenment Changes Your Brain: The New Science of Transformation*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Poe, E. (1951). *Great Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: The Pocket Library
- Poe, H. (2012). *Evermore: Edgar Allan Poe and the Mystery of the Universe*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press
- Prince, G. (2003). *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Pyysiäinen, I. (2003). Buddhism, Religion, and the Concept of "God". *Numen*, 50(2), 147-171.
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1956). *Theory of literature* (Vol. 15). New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Wright, R. (2017). *Why Buddhism is true: The science and philosophy of meditation and enlightenment*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.