Journal 7: Summary and Opinion on "The Tell Tale Heart"

The “Tell Tale Heart” by Edgar Allen Poe is a story about a crazy man who killed an old man because he hated his eye. The killer waited several days to commit his crime, and every night he would slowly open the old man’s door to look at him. The old man was asleep every time, and the killer could not kill him because his eyes were closed. One night, after several days of doing this, the killer made a noise and woke the old man up, and when he saw his eyes open he jumped into the room and killed him. The old man screamed once before the killer finished him off and stuck his body under the floor boards. Later, the police showed up to ask about the noise, and the killer acted as if nothing happened. He asked them to come in and started to chat with them. However, he suddenly began to get nervous and paranoid, and he eventually confessed his crime.

One of the interesting things about this story is that the narrator is the killer himself. He sometimes addresses the reader by saying things like, “Why will you say that I am mad?” or “You should have seen how wisely I proceeded.” The killer is trying to convince his reader that he is not crazy, and that makes him sound even crazier. I also liked the description of the old man’s heart: “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.” I think that the noise was in the crazy killer’s head because it’s impossible to hear someone else’s heart yards away. The ticking he heard made him get angry. One thing I think the author could have done better is providing more background about the old man. The relationship between that old man and the killer is not clear. Was he the landlord, a relative or a neighbor of the killer? Furthermore, I didn’t really understand why the eye of that old man specifically made him go crazy even though he liked everything else about him.