

Topic: Romanticism - The Raven, Tom Cabin - Imagination, emotion over reason, nature

“Donald Trump evoked outrage from across the political spectrum Monday by calling for ‘a total and complete shutdown’ of Muslims”(http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-calls-for-ban-on-muslim-entry-into-u-s-1449526104) Even though he knows this is an unrealistic and extremely unpopular move, he demonstrates his use of emotion over reason. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his motives, all can agree Trump’s campaign is fueled by his brash comments. He is known to reject political correctness and embrace letting his emotions control him. Similarly, Romantic authors such as Edgar Allen Poe and Washington Irving used emotion over reason as a important element in their stories. In The Raven by Edgar Allen Poe and in The Devil and Tom Walker by Washington Irving , both authors portray Romanticism through their emphasis on imagination, emotion over reason, and nature.

To begin, both Poe and Walker convey Romantic philosophies through their use of imagination. In The Raven, the raven talks by saying “Quote the raven, “Nevermore” (Poe 676). In reality ravens can not talk, thus, the narrator belief that the bird talks comes from his imagination. The narrator portrays his imagination through the bird because he sees him self in the bird. While the narrator reads his book in order to escape from Lenor thought, he hears “tapping at my chamber door . . . I opened wide the door. Darkness there, and nothing more”(Poe 676 - put line number not pg number on all of poe). Hearing nonexistent sounds calms his anxiety because it brings hope that Lenor will come back, however, these attempts are all naive as she is dead. He believes Lenor will bring happiness and closure how ever this futile attempt of pleasure is just his imagination. “Tom lifted up his eyes and beheld a great black man . . . he was dressed in a rude, half Indian garb . . . his face was neither black nor copper colour”(Tom Walker). Tom's contradicting statements of the man’s appearance explains his lack of confidence in his own observations. Because he lacks conviction in his observations, he inserts his own imagination to take the place of truth. The use of imagination by Poe and Irving force readers to look amongst their own thoughts which convey Romantic values.

Furthermore, the theme of emotion over reason plays a crucial role in both The Raven and The Devil and Tom Walker. While speaking to the Raven, the narrator believes the raven “ utters is its only stock and sore . . . Is there blame in Gilead? . . . Quoth the raven, ‘nevermore’ ”(Emerson 677). Even though the Narrator believes the raven can only say the word “nevermore”, he keeps asking the raven in vain hoping that the raven will utter another word.

The narrator has let stubbornness and curiosity to take over logical reasoning leaving him to conduct radical actions. When the Narrator contemplates about his lover Lenore, he remembers “other friends have flown before . . . he(the raven) will leave me . . . ”(). The narrator persist in creating a friendship with the raven despite knowing it is impossible for a bird and a man to become aquatints let alone communicate to each other. The narrator proves he has lost his reason and has resorted to senility to fill the void. When

Tom Walker meets the devil, he conducts a deal with the devil “so they shook hands, and struck a bargain.”(Tom Walker). Tom Walker willing strikes a bargain with the devil despite knowing he will die in the end and go to hell in order to fill his desire of greed and wealth. Tom Walker puts gold and money before of his well being conveying his inability to conduct reasonable actions.

Emotion Over Reason

Nature

“A FEW MILES from Boston, in Massachusetts, there is a deep inlet winding several miles into the interior of the country from Charles Bay, and terminating in a thickly wooded swamp, or morass.” (see doc Tom Walker )

The narrator describes “thickly wooded swamp” in order to set an earthy and natural mood.

This establishment provokes the reader into realizing nature a critical component of the story.

“Then this ebony bird . . . the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore”(Poe 676)

Poe chooses to use a raven rather than another bird because to Poe, the raven conveys a dark demeanor which reflects his outlook of life.

Poe depicts nature in a dark life in order to convey that darkness covers the entire naturalistic world.

“They lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone and had an air of starvation. A few straggling sallow-trees, emblems of sterility, grew near it”(Tom Walker)

Irving sets the house where Tom lives in a patch of dying trees to signify that greedy humans are killing society including the nature around them.

Through an “air of starvation”, Irving demonstrates greed negatively affects all not just people.

## Conclusion

### Restatement of thesis

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Raven.” *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: W.W Norton and Company, Inc, 2013. Print.