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Romanticology

According to the Wall Street Journal, “Donald Trump evoked outrage from across the political spectrum Monday by calling for ‘a total and complete shutdown’ of Muslims.” Even though the public acknowledges his actions as unrealistic and extremely unpopular move, he demonstrates his use of emotion over reason by stubbornly pushing his absurd agenda. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his motives, all can agree his brash comments fueled his campaign. 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 an important element in their stories. In *The Raven* by Edgar Allen Poe and *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 48). 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 himself in the bird. While the narrator reads his book to escape from Lenor thought, he hears “tapping at my chamber door . . . I opened wide the door. Darkness there, and nothing more”(Poe 25). 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, however, this futile attempt of pleasure is just his imagination. In *The Devil and Tom Walker*, “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 color”(Tom Walker). Tom's contradicting statements of the man’s appearance explains his lack of confidence in his observations. Because he lacks conviction in his observations, he inserts his imagination to take the place of truth. The use of imagination by Poe and Irving force readers to look amongst their thoughts that convey Romantic values.

Furthermore, Poe and Walker use imagination to further their Romantic philosophy in *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’ ”(Poe 89). 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 . . . ”(Poe 59). The narrator persists in creating a friendship with the raven despite knowing it is impossible for a bird and a man to become aquatints let alone communicate with 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 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.

Finally, Poe and Irving add elements of nature which advance their Romantic ideology. At the beginning of *The Devil and Tom Walker*, “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.” (Tom Walker ). The narrator describes “thickly wooded swamp” to set an earthy and natural mood. This establishment provokes the reader into realizing nature a critical component of the story. Tom and his wife “lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone and had an air of starvation. A few straggling savin-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. In *The Raven*, as the raven flies into the house, the narrator describes the bird as an “ebony bird . . . The grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore” (Poe 43). Poe chooses to use a raven rather than another bird because to him the raven conveys a dark demeanor that reflects his outlook on life. Poe depicts nature in a dark life to convey that darkness covers the entire naturalistic world. Nature’s use depicts a connected world where one action affects everything around it which conveys a Romantic spirit.

Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving use of imagination, emotion over reason and nature proclaim a Romantic message to the readers through *The Raven* and *The Devil and Tom Walker*. Emotion over reason invokes imaginative thoughts of nature. Together these traits compose Romanic values that have influenced literature and art even today through works such as Bambi because of the use of talking animals. Because of Romanticism ability to elevate the importance of nature, the issue of climate change has never been so critical. Romanticism proves to have the potential to save the world from climate change.

Works Cited

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