



RESEARCH PAPER

Apocalyptic Foreboding in Eliot's Poetry: A Study in Dark Romanticism

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ABSTRACT

T.S. Eliot's poetical writings disclose a strong inclination towards Dark Romanticism, a sub-genre that emerged from the traditional romantic ideals of Romanticism. He acknowledges human imperfections and sees nature as oppressive, echoed in his poetry filled with 'dark themes,' 'bleak images,' and a sense of 'isolation and despair.' Eliot critiques society's values and reflects its 'immorality,' 'darkness,' and 'ugliness,' akin to Dark Romantics. His verses explore the darker aspects of spiritual truth, the human soul, and the natural world, portraying a world shrouded in 'darkness,' 'despair,' and 'looming doom.' This paper examines how Gothic and Dark Romantic elements in his poetical works mirror the anxieties of a society on the brink of self-destruction, arguing that Eliot's use of themes like 'decay' and 'desolation' effectively foreshadow the anxieties of modern society and its potential for self-ruin.

Keywords: Dark Romanticism, Gothicism, Grotesque, Imagery, Isolation, Self-destruction, Supernatural, Symbolism

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), a distinguished poet, playwright, and literary critic, is a significant figure of 20th Century modernist literature. Despite his fame, he remained notoriously private and dodged the idea of a biography or the publication of his personal letters (Gordon, 1998, p. 79). However, an extensive body of literature exists about his life and works, with the key focus on his literary journey. Eliot's poetry is renowned for its multilayered complexity, inviting readers to explore its intricate depths. To appreciate Eliot's work more fully, this paper takes a fresh perspective by examining it through the lens of Dark Romanticism, a literary approach that delves into the macabre, the mysterious, and the darker facades of human nature. This perspective provides a unique viewpoint for uncovering hidden layers of symbolism and meaning within Eliot's poetry which might not be readily apparent through orthodox interpretations.

Eliot's works are marked by themes of disillusionment, alienation, and existential angst, all of which resonate with the apprehensions of Dark Romanticism. This literary movement delves into the darker corners of the human psyche, exploring despair, isolation, and the capacity for self-destruction. By assuming this perspective, fresh insights can be gained into Eliot's poetry and its profound commentary on the human condition, shedding new light on one of the 20th Century's most enigmatic and renowned poets. This research paper explores a number of Eliot's poems through the lens of Dark Romanticism, examining thematic and stylistic elements that align with this literary movement. Eliot, a prominent figure in modernist poetry, used his art to forebode the apocalyptic nature of contemporary society. The study delves into specific poems from his body of work, highlighting their dark

settings, gothic themes, and ominous atmospheres, which are characteristics of Dark Romantic literature.

'Portrait of a Lady' (1917) shades a vivid picture of the shallowness and emptiness of the upper class. The poem's atmosphere is unsettling and emotionally imbalanced, portrayed through words like "smoke," "fog," and "cold afternoon." It scrutinizes the lady's romanticism, eventually revealing the callousness of the speaker. 'Preludes' (1917) delves into urban alienation and the search for meaning in the modern world. The poem, set in a grim and lonely urban landscape, employs literary allusions and haunting imagery to convey fragmentation and disjointedness in contemporary society. Its ominous and gothic atmosphere aligns with Dark Romantic themes of decay and despair. 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' (1917) is one of Eliot's most thought provoking poems, featuring a stream of consciousness narrative. It explores time, memory, and the mind in a world that is familiar yet nightmarish. The tone is bleak and hopeless, inducing a sense of horror through gothic language and imagery, reflecting the decay of contemporary life. 'Morning at the Window' (1917) observes urban life and social inequality in the aftershock of World War I. Eliot presents a scene of poverty and despair, with people stuck in a monotonous and hopeless routine. The imagery is stark, evoking a sense of decay and degradation, in alignment with Dark Romantic themes of social decay and foreboding. 'Whispers of Immortality' (1920) examines life and death, accentuating death's supremacy. The poem begins by referencing other writers' views on death, employing gothic imagery to convey a sense of horror and foreboding. It aligns with Dark Romantic themes of mortality, spirituality, and the unavailability of death. 'Sweeney among the Nightingales' (1920) follows the character Sweeney, a spiritually sterile modern man. The poem explores themes of degradation and cultural alienation, set in an ominous atmosphere filled with spiritual decay and foreboding. 'Gerontion' (1920) introduces readers to a disillusioned figure in a post-World War I society, reconnoitering themes of death, moral decay, and the self-destructive nature of humanity. The post-war bleak setting echoes the Dark Romantic style with an atmosphere of despair and pessimism. 'The Waste Land' (1922), Eliot's magnum opus, abounds with literary and cultural allusions, celebrating the death of contemporary culture through dark images, symbols, and themes. The poem explores the self-destructive nature of modern society, its loss of morality, and an impending catastrophe. 'The Hollow Men' (1925) investigates into the disillusionment and meaninglessness of life, bestowing a post-war world where individuals are empty and defeated. It aligns with Dark Romantic themes of death, moral decay, and the self-destructive nature of humanity. 'Journey of the Magi' (1927) narrates the biblical Magi's journey to witness the birth of Jesus, depicting a spiritual transformation fraught with darkness and suffering. The ill-disposed and gothic setting echoes Dark Romantic motifs of the struggle of the individual soul and the journey from evil to the divine.

By examining these poems through the lens of Dark Romanticism, the paper aims to gain a deeper understanding of Eliot's exploration of dark settings, gothic themes, and ominous atmospheres, which contribute to the reflective commentary on the human condition found within his work.

Literature Review

Dark Romanticism, a 19th Century American literary movement, explores the eerie depths of human psychology, overshadowing earlier optimistic romantic ideals. It immerses readers in a world where the supernatural blends with the everyday, revealing psychological horror, and themes of sin, guilt, and obsession. At its essence, Dark Romanticism holds the uncanny, the mysterious, and the unsettling, weaving them into stories of isolation, moral decay, and inner turmoil. In this literary realm, characters battle their hubris, falling prey to obsessions that drive them to madness. Gothic landscapes, replete with eerie ruins and haunted cemeteries, symbolize the ruin of both individuals and society. Duality is a frequent theme, with characters torn between light and darkness, good and evil. The specter of fate, tangled with guilt and redemption, looms over these stories, as

if the characters are ensnared in a self-created purgatorial state. Dark Romanticism, a literary fusion of Gothic and Romantic traditions, unveils a unique style that probes into the darker recesses of human consciousness. It addresses themes like guilt, fear, and madness, immersing readers in a surreal world that exposes hidden facets of the human psyche. This style praises the ordinary while leading readers into an unsettling alternate reality where malevolence is undeniably tangible.

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (2016) project Eliot's intricate relationship with American identity within Modernism and the Gothic tradition. They highlight his paradoxical use of Gothic elements, especially in "The Waste Land," despite his strong affinity for European high culture. This paradox underscores the interplay between Eliot's transatlantic identity and his literary works. Eliot, a major figure in Modernism, intriguingly reverberates with the Gothic and Dark Romanticism. In contemporary literary theory, the Gothic's historical implication and its presence in Modernist texts, as noted by Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace in *Gothic Modernisms*, highlight the connection between Modernism and the Gothic. This connection is evident in the portrayal of fragmented selves, mirroring the shattered individuals of the cataclysmic Great War, showcasing the lasting relevance and adaptability of Gothic themes in Modernist literature (Smith & Wallace, 2001).

Indeed, Eliot's examination of human nature and his perception of Western culture's decline align with the themes in Dark Romanticism, notably the Gothic mode. His concerns about the modern world's sterility resonate with American Dark Romantics, reflecting a sense of desolation and moral decay. This bleak view reflects the hopelessness found in the works of Dark Romantics. The sense of desolation and moral decay that Eliot articulates reflects a bleak view of society and the world at large, a standpoint steeped in hopelessness akin to that found in the works of Dark Romantics.

In 'Portrait of a Lady' and other poems, we encounter dramatic monologues where voices struggle to hold back a powerful mixture of yearning, fear, and reluctance. These voices, according to Jason Harding, seem "trapped in a state of melancholic stillness," unable to find a way out of their own lives (Harding, 2011). Russell Elliott Murphy proposes that T.S. Eliot's time as an undergraduate at Harvard University played a significant role in determining the distinctive insider/outsider sensibility evident in his early poems like 'Preludes,' 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night,' and 'Portrait of a Lady.' These poems carry a peculiar quality, akin to a vague nightmare, wherein life appears to be lived more for the sake of it, rather than out of a sense of despair (Murphy, 2007, p. 357).

Cheol-U (2019), in his literary essay "Masquerades of Time in Eliot's 'Preludes,'" argues that Eliot's poem 'Preludes' is about the "connection amid an urban street and the masks of an individual's soul," made up of different images. As he remarks that "[f]rom night to morning, remains of these images come together to create a bleak city life". Moreover, this poem sets the tone for Eliot's entire body of work and "breaks down the division between the self and others by showing how the past, present, and future all coexist" (Cheol-U, 2019, pp. 90-107).

In 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night,' T.S. Eliot vividly depicts the essence of modernity with all its unsettling and nightmarish facets, as pointed out by V. M. Madge. The poem unfolds as an unidentified speaker takes a midnight stroll, and the moonlight casts an eerie glow on the surroundings. Under this moonlight, the world takes on a menacing and unfamiliar appearance, unsettling the speaker's mind. Unbidden memories rise to the surface, fashioning a sense of inner turmoil (Madge, 2003, pp. 175-184). According to Murray McArthur, among Eliot's early poems, 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' is often seen as the most confusing and enigmatic. Many critics grapple with trying to make sense of its diverse set of images and suspect that it follows a hidden, personal code or message that might even be a mystery to the poet himself (McArthur, 1994, p. 509). He also puts forth an argument regarding Lyndall Gordon's analysis of the poem. Gordon, who has extensively

delved into the poem's origins, contends that it excels in capturing a particular mood and the poet's profound cognizance of the "bleak and somewhat eerie" Parisian streets past midnight (as cited by McArthur, 1994, p. 509).

In the poem 'Morning at the Window,' the portrayal of daily life for the working class induces a sense of hopelessness and a repetitive, unfulfilling routine. The poem suggests that these individuals are trapped in a cycle that lacks meaning and excitement. Additionally, the condition of the surroundings mirrors the state of mind and life of the residents. As said: "If anything, the tone of 'Morning' is one of self-degradation on the speaker's part" (Murphy, 2007, p. 355). According to Murphy, 'Whispers of Immortality' begins by focusing on the obvious theme of death, highlighting how ultimately death conquers all other aspects of life. Moreover, he explores death's dominance and divides the poem into two distinct parts. The first part, spanning the initial four stanzas, uses disturbing and disease-ridden imagery to highlight our mortality (p. 489). Descriptions like "skull beneath the skin" and references to terms like marrow, ague, skeleton, fever, and bone consistently evoke images of death, emphasizing human fragility. This scrutiny of vulnerability drives individuals to ponder the possibility of immortality (p. 491). Murphy emphasizes the animal-like qualities of individuals in the poem 'Sweeney among Nightingales.' These features carry a sense of violence, as the people are depicted moving clumsily, slipping, sprawling, and even causing disruptions, possibly due to their lack of synchronization or intoxication. For instance, Sweeney is described as having an "ape neck," Rachel possesses "murderous paws," and the "silent man in mocha brown" is portrayed as a "silent vertebrate" whose movements resemble those of a mutated insect or worm (p. 391). Murphy contends that in 'Gerontion,' the living dead are depicted as individuals ensnared by their narrow moral and spiritual boundaries. They seem incapable of envisioning an escape from their nightmarish isolation, stumbling through life in a state of spiritual blindness (pp. 239-244). Jason Harding argues, the poem grapples with the contrast between a character lacking of all sensory experiences, as he declares, "lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch," and a city inhabited by wanderers who have been displaced from other places (Harding, 2011).

Peter Howarth contributed to the debate about 'The Waste Land,' suggesting it serves various tenacities. Some see it as a commentary on modern society's spiritual state or a portrayal of post-war devastation, while others view it as an outlet for the poet's personal grievances. Howarth references Harry's argument, asserting that personal suffering and societal collapse in the nightmarish world of the poem are interconnected. The true horror of 'The Waste Land' lies in how its sense of disgust is influenced by the culture it finds repulsive. The poem echoes the entanglement of personal and societal despair, highlighting the interplay between individual experiences and the broader cultural context (Howarth, 2012, p. 70).

Paul Fussell Jr. (1955) discusses Eliot's adept use of symbolism. He notes that Eliot drew inspiration from the French imagists and the symbolist style, skilfully using these techniques to convey his message about the modern society's decay, impending death, and an overall sense of foreboding apocalypse. For example, in the poem, the image of "death's dream kingdom" symbolizes death as a home of slumber or rest. The phrase "shape without form, shade without colour" in 'The Hollow Men' represents the hollowness and lack of significance in the depicted world. "Tattered coat upon a stick" signifies a life devoid of purpose or meaning. The mention of the "valley of dying stars" evokes the concept of a world in its twilight, while "broken stone" embodies the idea of a fragmented and shattered reality. Eliot's use of symbolism empowers him to paint a vivid picture of a society on the brink of collapse, weighed down with a sense of impending doom (Fussell, 1955, p. 198). Moreover, Daniel A. Harris (1980) contends that Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' is a crucial poem in his development, serving as a link between 'The Waste Land' and 'Ash-Wednesday' (pp. 838-856).

Gothic essentials in Dark Romantic writings find a parallel in T.S. Eliot's modernist literature. Eliot's complex identity has been viewed through various literary and social lenses, including Modernist, Gothic, Romantic, anti-Romantic, and counter-Romantic interpretations. However, there is a gap in exploring Eliot's work with Dark Romantic elements. This paper aims to fill that gap, shedding light on the often-overlooked dark and brooding aspects of Eliot's writing. By doing so, it discloses a deeper layer of complexity in his literary production, uncovering unexplored connections between his work and Dark Romantic themes and aesthetics.

Material and Methods

The paper at hand employs a qualitative research design, specifically a literary analysis, to explore the occurrence and significance of Dark Romanticism and Gothic elements in Eliot's poetry. This approach allows for an in-depth inspection of Eliot's poetic works, focusing on the themes, imagery, and stylistic choices that align with these literary traditions. Textual analysis is conducted to identify and categorize the Dark Romanticism and Gothic elements present in Eliot's poetry. This analysis involves close reading of the selected poems, concentrating on themes such as existentialism, alienation, decay, and the supernatural. Key stylistic features, including symbolism, metaphors, and imagery, are scrutinized to unveil the literary elements that align with these traditions. The paper employs a theoretical framework that integrates concepts from literary theory, including Dark Romanticism and Gothic literature theories.

Results and Discussion

Eliot is known as one of the chief poets of the 20th century, and his poetry comprise myriad essentials of Dark Romanticism and Gothicism. As Dark Romanticism is a literary movement, characterized by a fascination with the darker and mysterious aspects of human nature and society as well as an interest in the supernatural and irrational, this style of writing often explores themes of death, guilt, and the human soul. Correspondingly, Gothicism is a literary category that emphasizes on the supernatural and the macabre, and often incorporates elements of horror, mystery, and the occult.

Individuals Gravitating Towards Evil and Self-Destruction

In Dark Romantic and Gothic literature, as well as in Eliot's poetry, there is a frequent theme of individuals gravitating towards evil and self-destruction. This theme is often portrayed using dark imagery, foreboding symbolism, and characterization exploring the darker aspects of human nature. Parallel to Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, often cited as examples of Dark Romantic and Gothic literature, Dark Romantic works often portray characters as being drawn towards their own annihilation, whether it is through their own curiosity, their obsession with the forbidden, or their own moral failings. Moreover, the characters are often plagued by their own fears, desires, and insecurities, which lead them to make choices that eventually lead to their downfall.

In 'Sweeney among the Nightingales,' Eliot delves into the theme of individuals gravitating towards evil and self-destruction. Sweeney embodies humanity's primal, ferocious nature, descending into madness and violence driven by raw desires and impulses. Lines 3-4 describe Sweeney's "swollen and irregular" stripes, suggesting at his monstrous and lustful nature. The poem portrays destructive behaviors among the characters, including a "raven," "murderous" Rachel, and references to Agamemnon, stressing themes of 'deceit,' 'violence,' and 'self-destruction.'

In 'Preludes,' Eliot depicts individuals trapped in "meaningless routines" of urban life, longing for escape from the "bleakness" and "emptiness" of the city. Symbols like "fingers, pipes," and "evening newspapers" represent urban monotony, while "smoky days,"

“stale smells,” and “sordid images” convey a sense of despair. The speaker depicts people as “isolated and disconnected” through images of “lonely cab-horses,” “furnished rooms,” and “blackened streets,” leading to “destructive habits.” The phrase “the conscience of a blackened street” proposes feeling imprisoned in a decaying environment, intensifying despair and poor choices.

In ‘Gerontion,’ Eliot explores self-destruction through manipulation and deceit. The poem cautions history’s deceptiveness and the dangers of distorted memory. The passage of time can lead to “self-destructive tendencies” marked by “regret” and “condemnation.” The speaker is portrayed as a “living dead,” disconnected from his senses and making choices that isolate him, leaving him “worse than animals.” These choices, symbolized by the loss of his senses, prompt him to question the value of retaining passion and sensory experiences.

In ‘The Waste Land,’ the theme of decay and destruction permeates, depicting a world in “spiritual crisis” and disarray. Characters and speakers search for meaning amid chaos and despair. The poem underlines “decay” in contemporary society, linking it to morally degraded actions. The city is “unreal,” with cracked streets and desolation, evoking abandonment. Even the Thames River is “dead” from the surrounding decay. References to the Fisher King and the Holy Grail reflect the quest for spiritual redemption, but the speaker supposes it futile in a “barren and broken world.”

In ‘The Hollow Men,’ the theme of individuals descending towards “evil and self-destruction” is explored. The poem portrays these “hollow men” as empty, lacking moral guidance and succumbing to destructive inclinations. They are described as “without form, shade, color, force, or motion,” indicating their inability to act or decide for themselves. This lack of agency propels them towards evil and self-destructive behaviors. The poem proposes they are trapped between different impulses, leading to a downward spiral. Humanity, symbolized by these hollow men, faces a quiet, unassuming end due to their choices and actions, reflecting the subtle nature of self-destruction.

Irrational, the Grotesque, and the Supernatural

Irrationality, grotesqueness, and the paranormal are central in Dark-Romanticism and Gothic Literature. Eliot’s work also uses these elements to foreshadow the awaiting apocalypse of modern society, depicted through dream-like imagery and individuals making irrational choices, often indulging in worldly pleasures like lust. These literary devices create an atmosphere of foreboding and back to the commentary on the decay and moral decline of contemporary society.

The poem ‘Preludes’ vividly portrays the city’s daily life as “irrational and grotesque.” It defines the winter evening with imagery like “the smell of steaks in passageways,” “smoky burnt-out ends of days,” and “grimy scraps of leaves on the ground,” presenting a city filled with unsettling sights and smells. The speaker demonstrates people trapped in a senseless routine, engaged in meaningless activities like “fingers stuffing pipes” and evening masquerades in “a thousand furnished rooms,” stressing the urban chaos and irrationality. In ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night,’ the speaker is drawn to bizarre and unsettling sights and sounds in the city at night. The street lamp mutters like a person, the moon appears eerie, and unusual events occur, like a cat devouring a rat and a child with an “automatic” hand. The speaker’s own thoughts are distorted, and memories are described as twisted. The fragmented language and imagery add to the overall sense of irrationality and grotesqueness in the poem, forming an eerie atmosphere. In ‘Morning at Window,’ Eliot combines elements of the grotesque and supernatural. The fog takes on an eerie life, revealing twisted faces that appear ghostly and otherworldly. The poem hints at despair and hopelessness through references to “damp souls” and an “aimless smile.” The imagery of “rattling breakfast plates” and the “trampled street” complements to the overall grotesque

ambiance, stressing decay and disorder in modern society. In 'Sweeney among the Nightingales,' Eliot employs essentials of irrationality, the grotesque, and the supernatural. The main character Sweeney is depicted as unusual with a "zebra jaw" and the word "vertebrate" is used to describe him, signifying an animal-like quality. This adds to the unsettling tone of the poem. Additionally, the poem includes disturbing imagery, such as references to death, ravens, and classical mythology, including Agamemnon and nightingales. The personification of death and the raven as beings that can drift and fly donate to the poem's dreamlike and surreal atmosphere. In 'Gerontion,' Eliot explores irrationality and grotesqueness through an old man's standpoint in a decayed house. The poem delves into modern society and its vices, signifying that people may interpret events irrationally. Virtues and vices seem intertwined, with grotesque descriptions adding to the unsettling atmosphere. Supernatural elements, like the reference to Christ as a tiger and "backward devils," further the eerie ambiance. The speaker himself questions his own rationality, having lost his human senses. Irrationality prevails in 'The Waste Land,' reflecting a world out of balance and jam-packed with despair. The poem's structure, characterized by stream-of-consciousness, disjointed storytelling, and extensive literary and historical allusions, underscores the breakdown of logic and modern aimlessness. References to the Fisher King myth symbolize spiritual emptiness, while Tiresias represents societal blindness. Stream of consciousness and symbolism further emphasize contemporary society's irrationality. Grotesque scenes and fragmented images convey moral decay and despair. Classical mythological figures like the Fisher King and Tiresias highlight the pursuit for meaning in a spiritually lost world. The prominent themes of 'The Hollow Men,' are irrationality, grotesqueness, and death, conveying despair and human alienation. The poem depicts individuals as "hollow" and "stuffed" men, missing substance and meaning. "Dried voices" and "broken glass" imagery deepens the sense of a barren world. The depiction of individuals as living dead, with only skeletal remains, is grotesque. Their existence is apocalyptic, reduced to mere "whispers." Supernatural elements, like dying stars and the kingdom of death, create a dark and enigmatic atmosphere.

Inner Conflict and Turmoil of the Individuals

The theme of inner conflict and turmoil is fundamental to the works of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Eliot, where characters grapple with fears, obsessions, guilt, and sins, revealing deep emotional and psychological impacts. In Eliot's 'The Waste Land,' this theme is portrayed through vivid, disjointed imagery across five sections. The poem opens with cynicism, portraying April as the "cruellest month." Imagery like "breeding lilacs out of the dead land" symbolizes a world without meaning. The poem delves into discontinuation and disorientation in the "unreal city" shrouded in "brown fog." References to "sighs" and "short and infrequent" breathing reveal internal suffering and resignation. Greek mythology, like the story of Philomela, emphasizes the speaker's sense of violation and trauma. The nightingale's song, represented by "Jug Jug," contrasts the king's brutality and symbolizes the speaker's inner turmoil. In another passage, a woman's inner conflict is evident as she reflects on her relationship with her lover. Her disinterest and relief upon his departure propose conflicting emotions, and automatic actions like smoothing her hair indicate a disconnection from her own thoughts and feelings. In 'The Hollow Men,' individuals are portrayed as "stuffed" and "hollow," lacking substance and purpose. The imagery of "dried voices" and "broken glass" highlights their inner turmoil and emotional emptiness. This depiction reflects a sense of despair and disconnection from the world. In 'Gerontion,' the nostalgic old man wrestles with inner conflict and turmoil. He compares himself to past warriors, seeking spiritual solace symbolized by "rain" during a metaphorical "dry season" of spiritual drought. The phrase "a dull head among windy spaces" designates his confusion and uncertainty. The poem delves into themes of guilt, original sin, and the impossibility of forgiveness, deepening the sense of turmoil and despair. The loss of senses like sight, hearing, and touch complements to the speaker's inner conflict and inability to make sense of his situation. In 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night,' the

speaker grapples with inner turmoil and memories, using imagery like “lunar synthesis” to convey confusion. The phrase “beats like a fatalistic drum” linked with street lamps suggests looming doom and entrapment in despair. Personifying the street lamp, which speaks negatively of a woman, highlights the speaker’s inner conflict. The woman’s torn dress and twisted eye reflect her damaged nature, mirroring the speaker’s distorted awareness in a dreamlike, disorienting atmosphere.

Portrayal of Individuals as Isolated and Alienated from Society

Dark Romantic and Gothic Literature often portray individuals as isolated and disconnected from society. They dwell in their own decaying mental landscapes, mirroring the deteriorating atmospheres surrounding them. This is reminiscent of Poe’s ‘The Raven,’ where an individual is alone in a room conversing with a bird that responds only with “nevermore.” Eliot’s characters often experience “isolation” and “alienation” within a bleak and decaying landscape. In ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night,’ the speaker pilots an unknown city, interacting with inanimate objects, akin to Poe’s ‘The Raven.’ The talking streetlamp highlights disconnect from contemporary moral and cultural conditions, urging the speaker to observe a woman symbolizing isolation from society. Her grim description suggests a haunting image, stressing their spiritual emptiness and cultural decay. In ‘Morning at Window,’ the observer is disconnected from society, watching “damp souls” outside from a room. These individuals are ensnared in a monotonous daily life, seemingly insensible to their circumstances. The speaker’s perspective implies that this repetitive existence has a numbing effect. The imagery of “trampled edges” and “damp souls” underscores their entrapment, symbolizing a lack of vitality and awareness. Eliot’s characters are portrayed as isolated and disconnected, stuck in a cycle of spiritual stagnation and decay. In ‘Gerontion,’ an old man reflects on his past with regret, highlighting his isolation and alienation from a morally and spiritually degraded society. Phrases like “decayed house,” “old man” and “windy spaces” highlight his loneliness. The imagery of waiting for rain suggests his quest for spiritual solace may be in vain. The speaker labels being among lonely and isolated individuals, mirroring his own solitude, like the solitary speaker in Poe’s ‘The Raven.’ In ‘The Waste Land,’ Eliot portrays individuals profoundly “alienated” and “isolated” in a disconnected city. The line, “Unreal City [...] each man fixed his eyes before his feet” highlights the unreality with people absorbed in isolation. Many seem spiritually dead, as if “death had undone so many.” The poem describes a lonely woman in a room, enclosed by imagery intensifying her isolation. Recurring barren and dry landscape imagery symbolize emotional and spiritual isolation with phrases like “stony rubbish,” “broken images,” “dead tree,” and “dry stone no water”. Eliot also reveals characters as lonely and disconnected from others, unable to find fulfillment in their relationships. The disjointed and confused conversation between a man and a woman in the second section highlights emotional detachment and miscommunication, contributing to the theme of isolation and alienation.

In ‘The Hollow Men,’ Eliot paints a picture of individuals who are isolated and alienated from society. The “hollow men” lack substance and meaning, as seen in “shape no form”, separating from the world and each other. They may “lean together,” but it’s an empty unity. “Dried voices” and “meaningless” whispers emphasize their isolation, as does “shape without form, shade without color,” showing their lack of identity. They are emotionally detached, resembling the living dead in “crossed direct eyes [...] death’s [...] Kingdom.”

Conclusion

Eliot in his poetry integrates elements of Dark Romanticism and Gothicism through vivid and haunting imagery, as well as thematic values. His poems often evoke a sense of mystery, the paranormal, and the unknown, creating a feeling of unease and dread. Eliot uses dark symbolism to comment on the decay and spiritual emptiness of modern society. He also explores deeper aspects of the human condition, including the search for meaning, the struggle between the individual and society, and the longing for transcendence. His

amalgamation of the Dark Romantic and Gothic elements helps convey a sense of desolation, decay, and despair in his poetry. The use of dark imagery, symbolism, and thematic values align with the characteristics of these literary traditions. The exploration of darker aspects of human nature and society enhances the richness and complexity of his poetry, making it timeless and stimulating. While he may not directly belong to these traditions, he effectively uses their elements to convey apocalyptic foreboding in modern society.

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