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THE RHETORIC OF DEAN KOONTZ'S *INTENSITY*

A Thesis

Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by

Krista Michelle Wagner


June 2008

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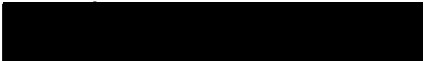


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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the revision of eighteenth century gothic fiction by Dean Koontz's twentieth century horror novel, *Intensity*. In particular, the novel invites Aristotelian rhetorical analysis through the competing appeals staged by its antagonist, Vess, and its protagonist, Chyna. Chapter One first examines conventions of eighteenth century gothic narratives, including the unrealistic storyline, the unreliable narrator, the distant and one-dimensional antagonists who function as mere plot devices, and the heroine's soliloquies. Chapter One analyzes how Koontz revises and manipulates these gothic conventions toward crafting a more convincing and realistic story. Chapter Two examines the unusual appeal of *Intensity's* villain, Vess. Aristotle's rhetorical model is introduced and explained, then expressed through Vess's discussions with Chyna. This section details how Vess is able to seduce and convince his audience, and how he achieves this persuasion primarily through the dynamics of Aristotle's *logos*, or rational appeals, as well as through the attributes of forensic oratory. The chapter concludes with Vess's inability, ultimately, to fully persuade his audience because of his self-centered and

repulsive nature. Chapter Three examines Koontz's heroine Chyna's arguments and her successful employment of Aristotle's triad of ethos, or emotional appeal, logos, or rational appeal, and pathos, or emotional appeal. The chapter also discusses the manifestation of the ceremonial orator through Chyna, and demonstrates how she is able to convince and appeal to her audience, ultimately proving more persuasive than Vess.

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CHAPTER ONE
GOTHIC'S CONVENTIONS AND *INTENSITY'S*
INTERVENTIONS

Dean Koontz's *Intensity* bridges the absurd and the terrifying in his use of four conventions practiced by eighteenth and nineteenth century gothic writers. These four categories include: 1st, a lack of realism; 2nd, narrator unreliability resulting from the heroine as subject to extreme emotional states and heavily afflicted by the uncanny; 3rd, deflated villains who act as mere extensions of the narrative; and 4th, the use of soliloquies that further identify the protagonist's unreliability but also advance the action of the story. Though traditional gothic writers adopted many strategies to entertain their readers, my focus in this chapter will be to expose these four conventions, specifically looking at how they are exploited in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. Following this discussion, I will concentrate on Dean Koontz's *Intensity*, reconsidering the four main elements of traditional gothic writing and analyzing how Koontz streamlines and then reinvents them,

particularly how he develops a realistic plotline through the utility of a reliable narrator and a credible villain.

A Lack of Realism: The Uncanny, Illogical Plotlines and the Supernatural

A lack of realism is the gothic novel's most notable component. As proposed by scholar William Day, traditional gothic fiction's development of the uncanny—its central ingredient—is revealed in three components of the gothic tale: characters, plot, and atmosphere. Through their address of these narrative elements, traditional gothic authors chill their readers, explore characters' psyches, and create literary arenas of fantasy/romance and uncanny horror. As Day submits, the principal force driving this intricate web is Gothic's "announcement of its own discontinuity with the real world; it always [makes] its own artificiality and fictiveness clear" (13). The genre spotlights the surreal and fantastical elements of storytelling. In short, traditional gothic writers are less concerned about implementing an authentic storyline—at least as a hooking device—and more interested in maintaining the inexplicable appeal and the enigmatic quality that comes with a hybrid of romance and horror. The uncanny, then, serves as the foundation of the gothic tale.

In *The Gothic Sublime* English Professor Vijay Mishra discusses the effects of the uncanny on the heroine, that they "are the consequence of the mind's confrontation with an idea too large for expression, too self-consuming to be contained in any adequate form of representation . . . "

(19). The uncanny overshadows Radcliffe's *Udolpho*. The protagonist, Emily, is constantly second-guessing her environment, believing that every sound or movement must be attributed to some sort of evil spirit, although she is continually proved wrong. She is frequently haunted by alluring music, but she is never able to determine its origin; the music remains mysterious and spellbinding. Thus, the gothic audience experiences a repetitive suspense that is never alleviated. The story reaches a climax and then . . . nothing. Narratives diverge in various directions and are ultimately inconclusive. The uncanny dissolves reason and frustrates the character's ability to make valid decisions, thereby leading into deranged and undetermined endings. The dominating bleakness of eighteenth century gothic fiction depends on this kind of sequence of climaxes, without a resolution. Gothic works like *Udolpho* end instead with a mysterious and ambivalent discontinuity that leaves audiences unhinged.

We see a similar pattern in James's *The Turn of the Screw*, where the governess supposedly sees two ghosts on numerous occasions. But because of the protagonist's narrow point of view and her potentially confused state of mind, the storyline formulates an illogical, fascinating and intricate web through its use of the uncanny. The governess's vision of the apparitions complicates her relationship with the children and highlights her conflicted self so that by the novel's end the reader is unsure what to conclude. Has the governess been guilty of killing the boy, Miles, or did he know all along that these ghosts were real, that the governess was in her right mind? The ending, typical of the Gothic, proves troubling because, as literary researcher Fred Botting explains, it "refuses to affirm . . . any stable boundary line between good and evil" (60).

Gothic novels also are commonly marked by elements of the uncanny like "monsters, demons, corpses, evil aristocrats" that are typically supplemented with medieval settings of castles depicted as "decaying, bleak and full of hidden passageways" (Botting 2). James's *Turn of the Screw* as well as Radcliffe's *Udolpho* exploit the uncanny staples identified by gothic specialist Martin Tropp in his analysis

of eighteenth century tradition, with stories that "take place in an ancient abby or castle, liberally supplied with ghosts and gruesome sights, cursed by ancient prophesy, and run by a tormented villain" (15). In *Udolpho*, Emily's aunt marries a man who becomes Emily's cruel dictator and she is forced, at least for a while, to live under his rule in an ancient castle. Similarly, James's governess finds herself tormented by ghosts who seem to be a curse on the attendants of the castle where she abides. These types of uncanny settings distinctly signal the gothic novel's global retreat from realistic storytelling.

Uncanny elements further drive these unrealistic narratives through the implementation of the protagonists' irrational behavior. Radcliffe's Emily models the typical heroine who reacts passively to her environment, and is vulnerable and submissive in the face of the unknown. Like the readers, gothic heroines are helplessly fascinated by the uncanny and "consciously seek out those terrors, wandering the gloomy passages of the labyrinth in the crumbling castle . . . caught between the lure of their secret wishes and the dread of their fulfillment" (Tropp 18). In Radcliffe's novel the reader witnesses Emily driven by a seemingly irrational fear when she goes to the library

she used to frequently visit with her dad, and where after a few moments, "a rustling sound in the remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she saw something move . . . gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural" (95).

Day suggests that this powerlessness operates as a common component of prototypical heroines, who demonstrate an "incapab[ility] of initiating action or of active rebellion" (104). These sensations in turn are what drive gothic plotlines, which are signaled by illogic and implausible developments. In *Udolpho*, for instance, the narrative is propelled by Emily's turbulent and conflicting displays of emotion, whether it be encounters with lover, Valancourt, or her repeated exposure to seductive but obscure melodies. During one meeting with Valancourt "pleasure, surprise and apprehension pressed so suddenly upon her heart it was difficult to tell which predominated—the joy of seeing Valancourt, or the terror of her aunt's displeasure when she should hear of this meeting" (127). This indecisiveness guides each stage of the novel so that both the heroine and readers are unable to determine the actuality of any given situation. Gothic stories, in sum, are ordered by "exciting rather than informing" plotlines

(Botting 4). This predicament also unfolds in James's novel in which terrifying emotions are stirred without explanation. For example, the governess receives a warning from the children's uncle and guardian "that she should never trouble him—but never, never; neither appeal nor complain" (165), an ambiguous message that leaves the protagonist and readers alike baffled. This fluctuation leads us to another inherent feature of the gothic structure which contributes to the problematic nature of the plot: the unreliable narrator.

Narrator Unreliability: Intense Emotions and the Uncanny

While many types of fiction have some form of an unreliable narrator, one of the hooking devices characteristic of traditional gothic writing is the heroine's inclination toward a distorted and exaggerated paranoia within this framework of mystery. Day argues that the gothic novel "reveals the unity of fear and desire [which] is, for the reader, an awakening to possibilities and resources of the self that the protagonist never knows" (63). In his examination of the macabre, gothic authority David Punter indicates that at the heart of this fictional genre lies "the uncertainties of a world in which narrative

is never sure or reliable" (53), and consequently a protagonist who is equally uncertain. Readers are consistently at the mercy of a heroine who, for usually ambiguous reasons, becomes quite suspicious of her surroundings and of particular acquaintances, thus invalidating her reliability. The governess in *The Turn of the Screw* fits the model of the heroine whose accusations toward the children are unfounded and whose disconcertment about them remains groundless. Reason and good judgment are compromised in favor of an intensity of fanciful passions.

According to psychoanalyst Valdine Clemens in *The Return of the Repressed*, "what matters in gothic fiction is not historical reconstruction but the evocation of intense emotional states, especially that of superstitious fear" (16). In this sense, recognition of the heroine's vulnerability to uncanny experiences helps readers to understand the Gothic. While much Gothic certainly illustrates issues of moralism throughout its plotlines, this feature remains underneath the constructs of imagination and excessive passions which act more directly in entertaining and suspending readers, and inevitably creates credibility issues for the audience. Punter argues that a major underlying problem of these texts is caused by

their instability, in that "gothic has always to do with disruptions of scale and perspective" (50). Mishra contributes to this argument, explaining how the heroines relinquish their faculties and that "reason for the moment gives way to chaos as the mind embraces the full terror of the sublime" (38).

In Radcliffe's *Udolpho* Emily plays a dutiful daughter to her St. Aubert, instructed to be sensible and of sound judgment yet also to embrace love and be comforted by God's providence. She embodies the eighteenth century model of a heroine who is "well-bred, passive and respectable" (Day 16). Emily, throughout the course of the novel, is driven primarily by passions alternating between superstitious fear and romantic desire. In the first few pages of the story she discovers that someone has carved a sonnet into part of the wainscot of her frequented fishing-house. She reacts nonchalantly at first as "the incident was dismissed from her thoughts" (8) but moments later, upon her return to the fishing-house, she hears someone playing music and, for unknown reasons, this causes her to freeze, given to "a profound silence, afraid to move from the spot . . . till timidity succeeded to surprise and delight" (9). She continues in this pattern, oscillating between fright and

courage, yet Radcliffe offers no explanation for this sudden terror. Emily's submission to seemingly frightful events and her anxious embrace of passions, whether love or fear, are what anchor her throughout each point of the plot and also designate her as a victim of uncanny experiences.

Botting explains that Radcliffe's fiction, like James's, "can neither close satisfactorily nor fully externalize evil" (75). In many passages, Emily succumbs to her environment out of fear as though there is no other alternative. When she comes to the church where her father has been laid to rest, "a sudden fear [comes] over her" (90). In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke suggests that "terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close, and pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection" (46). The thematic issue of the uncanny inevitably results in excessive passions. The protagonist is inclined toward this confused display of emotion as soon as she finds herself in an unfamiliar world or surrounded by enigmatic occurrences. Day refers to this as the

collapse of identity; once the protagonist enters the gothic world, her self-hood becomes uncertain.

The heroine, Day argues, is "caught between desire and fear [and faces] the inability to resolve his state of enthrallment" (25). When readers come into contact with the villain, they are unable to determine if what Emily thinks is true or erroneously construed because passion overwhelms rational thinking. Day underscores this chaotic and sentimental absorption as central to the standard heroines who "suppress desire to convert it into passive acceptance of it [which] allows these characters to extricate themselves from their situations" (25). Burke explains that terror produces "a tension, contraction or violent emotion of the nerves [which] will excite something very like that passion in the mind" (132). In James's story the governess's accountability also becomes questionable. At first she feels compelled to protect the children from every adversity, but the recurring visits from the ghosts shake her confidence and she experiences helplessness in her ability to protect the two children: " 'I don't do it!' I sobbed in despair, 'I don't save or shield them!'" (203). She observes her first encounter with one of the ghosts as "the strangest thing in the world" (197). Later, when this

ghost, Quint, presents himself to her again, she senses "something undefinably astir in the house . . . my candle, under a bold flourish, went out . . ." (213). Then later at a nearer brush with Quint she thinks "it was the dead silence of our long gaze at such close quarters that gave the whole horror, huge as it was, its only note of the unnatural" (214). She also demonstrates an overwhelmingly bizarre affection for children she hardly knows. Her continual glimpses of the ghosts reveal what Botting highlights as "overindulgence in fanciful ideas and imaginative flights" (6). Punter criticizes this absence of logic, faulting the governess for an unsteady point of view, and noting that these ghosts are neither "more nor less real than anything else in the book; they are among the forms in which consciousness apprehends . . . nothing is certain and every emotion may be victim to a process of apparently surreal exaggeration" (238).

Mishra explains that the uncanny does not evolve from a "static or 'restful' contemplation; on the contrary, it has a certain kinetic energy, a vibration, a motion, 'a sense of power' that explains why it is attracted and repelled by the same object" (34). This notion is apparent in the dilemma the governess struggles with. She frequently

feels perplexed toward the two children in her care, at times adoring them but then sometimes suspicious of their innocence. Burke emphasizes this conflict in stating that "the passions therefore which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger, and they are the most powerful of all the passions" (38).

To summarize, Botting makes explicit the fact that Conventional gothic heroines are grounded less in reasoning and more in exaggerated emotion: "imagination and emotional effects exceed reason. Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social proprieties and moral laws". He also emphasizes that "ambivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning [and that there exists] an overabundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason" (Botting 3). In contrast, gothic antagonists function quite differently.

Deflated Villains: Underdeveloped Plot Devices

Antagonists' roles in gothic stories are secondary to protagonists, and their viewpoints are far less transparent than the heroines of the story. Horace Walpole began the gothic trend in 1764 with his villain, Manfred in *Castle of Otranto*, an adventure story full of supernatural and

mysterious elements including a fallen helmet that kills Manfred's son, a medieval castle, an unsettling statue and secret affections. Manfred exhibits the nature of the gothic antihero, the "overreacher seeking power, pleasure, even godhood" (Day 17). At best, James offers the uncle as a villain, though it could be argued, depending on one's interpretation of the governess's objectivity, that the ghosts or even the children could be villainous as well. The uncle is never introduced into the story, only mentioned as an aside while the ghosts, when they do appear to the governess, always stay at a distance. In either case the antagonist remains distant, having no direct contact with the protagonist; indeed, the antagonists act more like mirages. Determining the real villain becomes insignificant within the context of the gothic novels because ultimately the antiheroes serve as mere plot devices. Horror researcher Walter Kendrick explains that gothic narratives aim to thrill readers and villains are mere accessories. Gothic novelists, he maintains, "venture into clue planting; they tend to solve all mysteries as soon as possible and to apologize for the delay" (88). In other words, antagonists function more symbolically to "raise gooseflesh" (90) adding to the surreal sense of spooky elements.

To return briefly to Radcliffe's novel, Montoni is clearly the male antagonist. However, his viewpoint remains unexposed as antagonists are ancillary in early Gothic. Emily's perspective limits the reader's scope of any reality of the situations; the extent to which Montoni acts as a threat seems uncertain in the light of Emily's perception. Mishra states that typical gothic fiction consists of an "evasion of the full psychological complexities of characters as carriers of consciousness. Characters become ciphers, marks on paper, in a narrative of duplication and redundancy." (63). In essence, antagonists serve merely as part of the framework of the storyline. In contrast, the heroines perform in a more influential role which brings us back to one last common feature of gothic narratives: the reliance on soliloquies.

Soliloquies: The Nature of the Heroine

Soliloquies function as another significant staple of gothic fiction. According to Day "the narrative is a story, an artifice that self-consciously recounts a sequence of action, not a portrayal of an actual sequence of action" (46). For example, James's governess's initial encounter with the ghosts establishes the story's introduction to

unsettling and potentially horrifying moments. She witnesses the first ghost at the foot of the lawn where the environment immediately shifts into an ominous domain accompanied by an "intense hush in which the sounds of evening dropped". The reader is told that "The rooks stopped cawing in the golden sky [. . .]" and she feels "a wonder that in a few instants became more intense . . . I was rooted as deeply as I was shaken" (180-1). Her inner dialogue here unveils her impulsiveness, developing her unreliability as a storyteller.

Oftentimes the governess finds herself contemplating a given situation, particularly in the ghost's presence where she struggles with what is true: ". . . the truth that I could arrive at gave no account whatever of the visitor with whom I had been so inexplicably and yet, as it seemed to me, so intimately concerned" (183). Her inner conflict gives a fuller comprehension of her mind, which is subject to bursts of affection toward the children. In her reflection of the ghost's potential threat to them, she deliberates "we were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I—well, I had them" (196). The governess often feels fated to a doomed and final end. While the soliloquies further dramatize the story, they also remind the reader of the

questionable perspective of the narrator and her fragmented self. The genre, then, is epitomized by a fantastical substratum where "everything and everyone else conspire against the protagonist, and victimization and isolation are the central features of both the masculine and feminine self" (Day 19). Soliloquies provide the best vehicle to foreground the protagonist's ungrounded estimations and emphasize the heroine's submersion in whimsical mindsets. Through her soliloquies, James's governess shows moments of apprehension, raptures of anxiety, and possible delusions, but never a clear rationale for her consequent actions and jumbled, fearful thinking.

The lack of realism, evidenced in the four elements I've been discussing, enables earlier gothic tradition to entertain its audience through variants of the uncanny while creating a disjointed plot. The unreliable narrator highlights the inconclusiveness of the story's action by keeping the reader's focus on heroines who predict their future through unfounded emotions and are frantically affected by the uncanny. Traditional antagonists operate primarily to advance the plot, and are merely secondary to these unreliable protagonists. Soliloquies give the reader more exposure to the heroine's unreliable nature and

further encourage the fantastical essence of the gothic story. Having seen how these four categories operate within earlier tradition, I will now turn to Koontz's *Intensity* and examine his unconventional application of them.

Intensity's Intervention of the Gothic

Contemporary horror, like eighteenth century Gothic, remains popular for its ability to both scare and fascinate its audience. Some popular novelists continue to attract the reader through the uncanny, but Koontz rejects this appeal, aiming instead for a more realistic platform to engage and frighten readers. *Intensity* emphasizes the presence of believable experiences within a plot that may be tumultuous and quite frightening. Unlike earlier Gothic, Koontz offers a reliable protagonist with whom readers can relate as well as an antagonist who is unnervingly realistic. In further contrast to traditional ancillary antagonists, Koontz's villain plays a more prominent role, both as a narrator and as a central character to the plot. And while traditional gothic soliloquies manifest the irrationally and untrustworthiness of the heroine, Koontz employs his heroine's inner monologues to further establish

her credibility, while the villain's unspoken dialogue enhances his role as a realistic threat to both Chyna and the readers.

Reality in the Absurd: A Possible Story

Koontz employs early gothic staples successfully. But he complicates the horror story by exploring a realistic plot with convincing characters. Scholar Linda J. Holland-Toll contends that much horror fiction involves such devices as "the many gruesomely mutilated corpses and ominous scratching sounds, the plucky white-night-gowned heroine proceeds up the stairs, and—yes!—opens the door" (663). Whereas early gothic tales rely upon fantastical developments, Koontz creates a convincing world plagued by a realistically powerful and incredibly evil monster who is a man nonetheless.

As terror fiction specialist, J.A. Cuddon, claims, horror is a complex design of "murder, suicide, torture, fear and madness [and] while Dean uses such scare tactics to capture his audience *his* horror is based on the inhumanity of one human being to another" (14). Cuddon also points out that Koontz avoids the typical motifs used by both traditional and mainstream horror writers,

dismissing "such stock supernatural devices as the cold, dismembered hand reaching out to touch someone, the door that mysteriously slams shut, the creature that scrabbles under the bed" (*Critical Companion* 14). I propose that Koontz disposes of this method in order to present a didactic story whose purpose lies not in glorifying evil, but in guiding the reader along toward an understanding of it. Furthermore, Koontz's heroine adds to the remarkable realistic aspect of his novel, and rather than surrendering to the antagonist, outsmarts and escapes him. Moreover, Koontz's preference for more realistic elements allows *Intensity's* readers to experience even more startling and alluring developments because of their plausibility. In essence, he draws readers into a familiar and formidable embrace.

The common staples of the exotic or remote gothic novelists used "to further separate the gothic world from reality" (Day 31) are inconsequential in Koontz's novel. Unlike Radcliffe's *Udolpho* whose story is set in the mysterious past where "historical time is an illusion" (Day 33), Koontz's work is set in modern times within the context of a possible environment rather than within what Day calls a "timeless reality". Shadows are often seen in

early Gothic, where gloom is used "to cast perceptions of formal order and unified design into obscurity; its uncertainty generate[s] both a sense of mystery and passions and emotions alien to reason" (Botting 32). Koontz, on the other hand, constructs a narrative in which many circumstances occur in daylight, in which character viewpoints are clear and in which the heroine's motivations and feelings are logical. In contrast to original horror stories that do "not represent an order or a plan of reality higher than that of physical reality [but are] the manifestation, not of transcendent order, but of chaos and disruption" (Day 36), Koontz orchestrates a coherent and ordered storyline. He is able to keep some of gothic tradition while renegotiating those ideas.

Holland-Toll explains that Koontz cleverly avoids the traps of typical horror fiction: "[He] accomplishes this balancing act by employing and then deconstructing horror motifs within a more or less formulaic adventure-suspense plot structure" (663). This hybrid plot follows traditional gothic tales: his novel appeals to the reader's fears using tense moments but undercuts them through the use of exciting adventures via the heroine's viewpoint. The suspense scenes in *Intensity* and the characters reactions

to their environment are proven true by actual circumstances rather than erroneously interpreted by the characters. Koontz challenges early Gothic by offering an authentic story. As Burke notes, "the nearer [tragedy] approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all ideas of fiction, the more perfect its power" (47).

So while Koontz does import some elements of the uncanny attributed to early Gothic he furnishes a radical transition through *Intensity* in his projection of characters that impact the readers pragmatically. Basically, Koontz refigures the classic horror story by promising readers to be spooked, not by the uncanny, but by an authentic and possible evil antagonist. Koontz portrays characters that are believable and realistically created in contrast to the imagination and irrationality typical of eighteenth century gothic figures. He also stages events that are possible and rational and therefore, believable. In his discussion of horror novels, Kirk Schneider emphasizes the importance of an authentic narrative, that an "unfathomable" setting "is not likely to generate much horror. If, on the other hand, the setting is credible at its inception and *unexpectedly* becomes otherworldly, the story's shock-value mounts significantly"

(8). In *Intensity* horror takes on a new meaning as Koontz invites readers to experience a truly horrifying and suspenseful world that pulls them into an intimate embrace with both main characters. This directs us to the first narrator, Chyna, and the objectivity of her point of view and how this dependable point of view not only strengthens the realistic theme of the novel but compels the moral ambience of the story.

Narrator Reliability: Discernment and Intense Credibility

In his short essay on story morals, scholar Roger Seamon alludes to a notion quoted by Paul Ricoeur, that a story "must be more than an enumeration of events in serial order; it must make an intelligible whole of the incidents, in such a way that we must always be able to ask what is the point of its story, its 'theme'". Seamon adds to this theory that "the story flows, so to speak, from the theme, rather than the theme following from the story" (230). In simplistic terms, he declares that themes exist in the narrative for didactic purposes. Koontz has written a story that not only makes sense but comes with a clear moral purpose. In simplistic terms, he shows the reader a very

realistic evil man, Edgler Vess, who is completely defeated by the protagonist, Chyna, who stands for justice and goodness. It is through the heroine that the reader is enlightened to see situations as they truly are, and it is through her that they are able to draw ethical conclusions. It is imperative that Koontz gives Chyna a steadfast and morally grounded reputation in order for the reader to trust in her integrity. Chyna contradicts archetypal heroines who continually fall into the trap of helplessness and ludicrous behaviors and who, without fail are "thrust into the underworld through no apparent fault of their own" (Day 16). While older gothic novels are punctuated by "terrified maidens fleeing from rape and imprisonment in medieval castles and monasteries" (Clemens 41), Chyna instead pursues Vess and ultimately discovers that she has the power to manipulate her situation and to turn the tables, so to speak, on the enemy. Koontz offers a protagonist who sees past her unfortunate circumstances and is active in her determination to escape and even overpower the villain. Chyna eschews the typical heroine role because she mentally and emotionally conceives a way out of Vess's prison rather than giving into fanciful

emotions and irrationality or becoming overwhelmed by the villain.

At the beginning of the novel readers learn that Chyna plans to spend a weekend at her best friend Laura Templeton's parents' home. There is nothing eerie about the home or Laura's family. Based on conversations, everyone seems well-rounded. But before dawn something is amiss. The killer, Vess, enters the scene. Though Koontz has his audience, through Chyna, witness the finality of Vess's crimes to Laura's family, he spares the reader from seeing the actual acts that lead up to that point. His purpose in displaying the end results of their death is meant to reflect the type of man Vess is through the objectivity of his heroine: ". . .three separate bullet wounds were visible in [Paul's] chest. There might have been more than three. She didn't care to look for them and had no need to know" (37).

Here Koontz enables the reader to recognize Vess's powers but he moves the plot quickly away from the consequence of the killer's actions and toward Chyna's perspective in order highlight the validity of Chyna's perspective. Koontz's keeping with Chyna's point of view allows the story to retain its horrific effects while

emphasizing that the antagonist is not the only one plotting. It is the unexpected and fascinating synthesis of Chyna's impulsiveness and logic, rather than Vess's twisted antics, that propel events. From her first encounter she uses survival techniques by hiding beneath the bed rather than exploiting herself and becoming another victim. She is able to contain her fear in her hiding place: "The hammering of her compressed heart against her breastbone echoes tympanically within her" (26). She manages to keep her presence from being known to the killer even though the beating of her heart "seemed to fill the claustrophobic confines of her hiding place to such an extent that the intruder was certain to hear" (26). Despite Vess's many evil schemes she must overcome on her way to saving both herself and Ariel, the young teenaged girl he has kidnapped and imprisoned in his basement, she manages to use good judgment, opportune thinking, and quick reflexes to accomplish their escape rather than remaining immobilized by fear. When Vess shackles her to a chair and table she refuses to submit to the situation and devises a plan to free herself, determined to take control away from Vess: "she hooked her fingers around the chime hoop once more,

hesitated, heaved, and the barrel pedestal came off the floor" (308). In this single instance, Koontz establishes Chyna's virtuous strength, her drive to repulse evil.

Seamon expresses that "a thematic statement conveys information about how the critic construes the nature and motivations of the characters, the value of their actions" (233). Seen in this light, Koontz complicates the standard heroine dilemma of victimization and hopelessness.

According to scholar Joan Kotker, Koontz claims that evil actions are inexcusable and that "we are all, finally, responsible for our actions" (7). Chyna acts as the agent who propels Vess to become self-accountable. As Holland-Toll maintains, "whatever other generic motifs Koontz uses, he uses them to resolve the tension between the horror and the elements in favor of a happy ending" (680). Kotker agrees that Koontz's story can be construed as a feminist fairy tale: "in which the role traditionally given to a brave young man who is usually a prince is instead given to a brave young woman who is definitely a commoner . . . " (8).

One of Chyna's uncommon traits -boldness- appears when she becomes Vess's nemesis. She manipulates his own environment to deceive and overcome him by first breaking

free of her handcuffs, next rescuing Ariel, and then out-smarting his trained Dobermans before driving off in his motor-home. So by her brave and proactive measures the audience is able to trust in her credibility because they can both relate to and understand her reactions. Chyna faces actual moments of danger in Koontz's book, unlike the psychological fright found in James's and Radcliffe's novels.

The Antagonist: Sophisticated and Powerful

Koontz employs a villain who could pass for a typical citizen and whose two-story home is "small but solidly built of logs mortared with cement" (177) with a fieldstone porch and inside furnished with simple furnishings and "well dusted and swept. Rather than being burdened with the stench of death, the house was redolent of lemon-oil furniture polish and a subtle pine-scented air freshener" (199). This is a house that could belong to any regular citizen, unlike the conventional fantasy environment of "decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery" (Botting 44).

The reader's and Chyna's sense of terror is in reaction not to a mysterious being but to someone who looks

approachable. Vess is “. . . handsome, with blue eyes that were a beautiful contrast with his dark hair—nothing crazy in his clear eyes—broad clean features, and a nice smile” (222), and can easily blend in with society as he creates commonplace conversations: “‘I’m sure you’re hungry, and as soon as we have a little chat, I’ll make cheese omelets with stacks of toast’” (246). Even when he engages in gruesome details, he speaks matter-of-factly, eerily so: “‘For every question you refuse to answer, I’ll take off a piece—the lobe of an ear, the tip of your pretty nose. Carve you like scrimshaw’” (248). Clearly Koontz has drawn an antagonist who keeps close—both physically and mentally—to the heroine, and thereby heavily manipulates situations. In this extract, Koontz uses dialogue to reveal Vess’s twisted mind, but he works the horror in as more of a suggestion rather than allowing the antagonist to dominate the atmosphere. So why, then, does Koontz need horrific elements at all?

This is a question that Holland-Toll, I believe, answers well, suggesting that Koontz’s use of horror is “often to scare the living hell out of the reader—in order to neutralize the horror with a rational explanation, which in turn neatly affirms the place of the human being in his

society" (681). These horrific motifs "keep the reader a bit off balance, but not either so terrified or bored that the novel fails to hold his or her attention" (670). Koontz promotes more of a suspenseful plot to fascinate his readers, and while Vess certainly serves as an evil component of the story, "horror is an adjunct effect and not primary that defines Koontz's fiction" (680). Ultimately his purpose "is to provide texts that do not haunt the reader, texts in which the reader can work toward satisfactory closure" (664-5), and he does this by eventually having Vess destroyed.

While many of the antagonists of earlier gothic fiction remained socially reclusive, their perspectives subordinated entirely to the protagonist's, Koontz exploits a type of evil being who attends closely to his victim and whose motives are atrociously forward. He provides many close-ups inside Vess's way of thinking and this achieves a more cohesive effect in the totality of the plot. By breaking the gothic mold, Koontz dignifies his storytelling by foregrounding a strong and very effective monster. The passages of Vess's dialogue make *Intensity* complete. For instance, in trying to explain one of his philosophies to Chyna he states, "We all evolved from that slimy, legged

fish that first crawled out of the sea" and then further asserts his philosophy: "if you'd just for once acknowledge your reptilian nature, you'd find the freedom and the happiness that you're all so frantic to achieve and never do" (286). Through this and several other excerpts Koontz's audience encounter a solid character whose thoughts and actions progress the story. This brings us back once more to Chyna, whose interior monologues also further the plot.

Soliloquies: The Role of the Heroine

The limited omniscient point of view narrative that Koontz employs operates much like soliloquies by capturing the thoughts or reflections of a single character. To streamline these two terms, I will use soliloquy to include this close third person point of view. Much of the storyline centers on Chyna's inner dialogue. Allowing readers to see inside Chyna's mind moves them more smoothly toward linear and climactic moments. For instance, when Chyna dares to follow Vess, she succumbs to anxiety over her friend's death: "Hidden in Vess' motor home she longs to submit to the pain, break down and cry, wail in self-pity and mourning: victimhood was seductive, a release from

responsibility and caring" (80). Her emotional reaction here proves logical and expected. Through such soliloquies, the reader understands the rationale of the protagonist more clearly unlike with earlier horror novels where this narrative technique typically only further questions the credibility of the narrator who continually breaks down for no valid reason.

Chyna's silent monologues facilitate Koontz's purpose-driven and meaningful plot. Moreover, the reader's intimate connection with her thinking supplies her with an even greater sense of the aesthetic quality of the story and deeper insight into Vess's nature. Chyna submits that "some sociopaths could put on a false persona that was more convincing than the best performances of the finest actors who had ever lived, and this man was probably one of those" (249). Here it's made clear that Chyna assesses Vess through an objective lens, rather than being solely affected by emotions. Even in the face of danger Chyna continues to think judiciously, which advances the tale.

As Vess tells her what his sick plans are for her and Ariel, Chyna escapes in her mind: "She closed her eyes and wondered if she could find Narnia again after all these years [. . .] or there was the Wild Wood beyond the River,

Ratty and Mole and Mr. Badger" (256-7). Readers can sympathize with her withdrawal from the danger of her current position, this desire to be anywhere but within proximity to this evil man: "She was weary of him. Weary of fearing him, even wearing of hating him. With her questions, she was striving to *understand*, as she had striven all her life, and she was tired to death of this search for meaning" (263). Through both excerpts readers are predisposed to her vulnerability and are able to follow the subsequent events through an almost omniscient lens.

In a moment of wrestling with Vess's existence Chyna thinks "It was if she too was had been born and had struggled this far only for the purpose of bringing one moment of sick satisfaction to this soulless predator" (265). Once more, this exposure of a common reaction to his violence draws readers and Chyna into an intimate bond. Her despair and discouragement about her current position are relatable emotions. But more than that they add to a forward-driving and well-planned storyline.

Closure

To conclude, Koontz follows gothic tradition in drawing his readers' attention to evil within the context

of an exciting adventure. But in his forbearance he passes over the utility of the gruesome or exotic and navigates a story with a chillingly realistic villain. His horror interventions are preeminent in that his plot encompasses realistic events through the viewpoint of an authentic heroine.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RHETORICAL EFFECT OF *INTENSITY'S* VILLAIN

As discussed in Chapter One, the realistic nature of *Intensity* is essential in achieving credibility with its readers. Because of Koontz's employment of a believable and frightfully real antagonist, *Intensity* can be analyzed using Aristotle's theory of rhetoric which is "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (*Rhetoric* 181). Unlike earlier gothic villains who are cast into one dimension roles and remain alienated from the heroine and readers, Koontz's Vess is developed more complexly and stays mentally close to his audience while maintaining the facade of an ordinary citizen. As a result, Vess is, at times, persuasive in presenting his personal philosophy, one which justifies his acts of sadistic violence. However, *Intensity* features a proactive and practically fearless heroine, Chyna, who is unlike the passive and terrified maiden of traditional gothic fiction. Chyna thus provides a rhetorical counterpoint to Vess. Both Vess and Chyna, through logos and pathos respectively, demonstrate persuasive arguments to the readers who then must determine whom is more appealing as far as their level

of integrity. And while Chyna's rhetorical appeals, in the end, surpass Vess's, my focus in this chapter will be to explore the nature of his own persuasiveness in support of the philosophy of "intensity".

The significance Koontz places on Vess's perspective accentuates the dual nature of rhetoric's function—the fact that rhetoric can be used not only by those who wish to accomplish good, but also by those whose primary purpose is to do evil. This recalls Aristotle's argument that elements such as power, pleasure, and seduction are all reflective of a speaker's believable appearance. This chapter will examine the authenticity and appeal of the political speaker who aims to align his audience with his point of view. Vess's influence on both Chyna and the readers can be examined mainly through the Aristotelian system of "artistic" proofs, particularly the appeal to logos. However, Vess also demonstrates traits of the political rhetorician, and his persuasiveness can also be explained in terms of Aristotle's "inartistic" proofs. In the end, though, Vess's inability to back up his logic-based arguments with a successful appeal to the "artistic" proof of ethos (the appeal based on one's moral character) subverts his ability to persuade his audience.

I will begin first by examining Aristotle's argument about rhetoric and what he deems essential ingredients of a persuasive orator.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Model: "Artistic" Proofs

Voss is most intriguing when he bases his arguments on the appeal to logos or reason. To appreciate this, however, we must briefly review the place of logos in the Aristotelian system. First and foremost, Aristotle maintains that rhetoric follows a particular order in persuading an audience. First, the speaker must observe how he is to "produc[e] persuasion". Next comes the selection of "the style, or language, to be used". Finally, there is "the proper arrangement of the various parts of speech" (236). It is in the first stage that Aristotle puts forward his rhetorical triad of "artistic" proofs: the appeal to logos, which is "to reason logically;" the appeal to ethos, which involves the ability "to understand human character and goodness in their various forms;" and the appeal to pathos, which is based on the ability "to understand the emotions" (182). Essentially, these core elements can allow a speaker to influence his audience so "as to make us think him

credible". Aristotle's emphasis of the "artistic" proofs allows him to insist that a speaker persuades a listener primarily "by what [he] says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak" (182). It is important then, Aristotle maintains, that the speaker aligns his audience with his point of view through the content of speech. Building on this point, then, Aristotle defines the three types of oratory that utilize the above-mentioned proofs.

Aristotle identifies three main types of rhetorical speech: political, forensic, and ceremonial. Political oratory, which is future-oriented, "urges us either to do or not to do something" (185). In Koontz's *Intensity*, as we will see, Vess largely follows the model of the political and forensic rhetorician in his attempts to convince others to submit to his ideals.

Those who appeal to their audience by the first proof, logos or rational appeal, typically utilize enthymemes, maxims, or examples. Aristotle describes enthymemes as a specific type of syllogism, specifically labeled as an apparent or rhetorical syllogism, in which a speaker will reason through an argument to win over their audience by way of implications rather than the three

part logic of syllogisms. Employing enthymemes, then, enables a speaker to more easily move their audience beyond potential logical flaws in the main argument. Maxims are those general statements about practicalities, and these operate as the "conclusive" components of enthymemes. Examples are adapted in two types of argument: "one consisting in the mention of actual past facts, the other in the invention of the facts by the speaker" (222). Enthymemes are ideally suited to being introduced *first* in an orator's speech, sometimes isolated from maxims or stemming from them for explanatory/reasoning purposes, and then being followed by examples. This kind of argumentative structure and sequence is typical of Vess. Enthymemes make up a vital part of his arguments throughout the novel, as he carefully works around gaps in his logic in his endeavor to manipulate his target. In his speeches, then, Vess employs carefully constructed rational appeals ("artistic" proofs) both in defense of his own past wrong doing and in an attempt to justify future acts in pursuit of "intensity". But beyond this, Vess also attempts to employ "inartistic" proofs that depend on the speaker's appearance and character (which is where he is less successful as a rhetorician).

"Inartistic" Proofs

Appearance is one of the key elements of "inartistic" proofs. Vess manifests some of the "inartistic" proofs by attempting to bring his listeners into agreement with his proposals by making "his own character look right" and by putting his hearers "in just the right frame of mind" (213). In this respect, he follows the Aristotelian model of the political orator. Aristotle's political speaker must be able to "entertain the right feelings toward his hearers" (213) with the goal of having his audience's feelings correspond to his own. If, for instance, the politician feels angry toward a particular matter, he must then bring his listeners into agreement with his emotion toward that matter. The orator must "speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to present his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry" (216).

Forensic oratory, on the other hand, is driven by other modes of "inartistic" proofs and Vess employs some of these appeals as well. There are four particular "inartistic" means by which the forensic speaker can manipulate his audience: reference to universal or written laws, the use of contracts, tortures and oaths.

Of the four, Vess relies primarily on torture, and to a lesser degree on oaths. In the Aristotelian system, torture is a helpful strategy if it supports the speaker. There are many instances in which Vess employs this strategic method. In his interrogation of Chyna, he threatens her unless she submits to his demands: " 'Either you tell me about yourself, everything I want to know, or I'll work on your face with a knife while you sit there' " (Koontz 248). Still later he warns her about his guard dogs that would " 'drag [her] down and kill [her] before [she'd] gone ten steps from the door' " (267). The use of oaths is persuasive insofar as they show a speaker's self-trust. While Vess never swears a formal "oath", his willingness to reveal considerable information about himself to Chyna is somewhat analogous to a "confession" under oath. Repeatedly in the novel Vess reveals his absolute confidence in his own position as he enumerates his upbringing to Chyna with the goal of undercutting all pre-conceived notions of his criminal profile. He even praises her for her apparent acceptance of the validity of his childhood story: " 'Good girl, Chyna. You know the truth when you hear it' " (286).

To sum up, then, in Aristotle's view an effective rhetorician must have a trustworthy character, be able to

align his audience with his opinion, and persuasively articulate his speech. The skills of a successful speaker rely on both "artistic" and "inartistic" appeals to win approval from the audience. Proving whether something is convincing and prevailing over one's opponents involves myriad forms of demonstrations and proofs. I will now turn, then, to examining the extent to which these skills are manifested by Vess as he justifies his philosophy of intensity to Chyna and the reader.

Vess as a Persuasive Antagonist: "Artistic" Proofs
and Vess's Philosophy of Intensity

Vess is most persuasive to Chyna and to the reader when he relies upon the "artistic" appeal to logos, which is the appeal to reason. At his most persuasive, Vess challenges Chyna and the reader to distinguish between seductive, if logically incorrect appeals, and more practical and logically correct appeals. In order to understand Vess's powers of persuasion and the limits to his powers of persuasion, it is useful to return to the distinction Aristotle draws between syllogisms and enthymemes, two methods of deductive reasoning. As suggested earlier, the syllogism appeals to reason by arriving at a necessary conclusion from a universally

manifest as physical sensations.

3. An intense life should focus only upon physical sensations.

Here, the first premise of the syllogism is obviously incorrect—as there is much present in the world that is not immediately available to “sensation”. Yet, Vess deliberately excludes the part of the argument that would cause it to be unpersuasive, although Chyna and the reader both recognize that life involves both good and bad, moral categories which cannot be ignored. In other words, Vess’s theory mimics the formula of an apparent syllogism that states “because B happens *after* A, it happens *because of* A”, the intentional misleading of “representing as causes things which are not causes, on the ground that they happened along with or before the event in question” (Aristotle 234).

Aristotle himself recognizes the popular appeal of enthymemes, which are less logically rigorous than syllogisms; he suggests that speeches “which rely on enthymemes [rather than examples] excite the louder applause” (182). Not only does Vess’s philosophy of intensity require the rejection of moral categories, but he also deliberately considers, if only to ultimately

reject, the form of *logos* most deliberately embraced by Chyna: her advanced study of psychology. For example, Vess claims that the desire for pure sensation and gratification that drive him to rape, torture, and murder his victims, are present in all humanity: " 'I'm just in touch with my reptilian nature, Chyna. It's in all of us. We all evolved from that slimy, legged fish that first crawled out of the sea' " (286).

Here, Vess simultaneously and slyly asserts two kinds of common ground he shares with Chyna: first, their mutual possession of a "reptile consciousness" and second, their mutual interest in the Freudian psychology which acknowledges the presence of a suppressed subconscious. Despite her current role as a victim, Chyna cannot help but be drawn toward the familiar territory of her textbook psychology. However, Vess conveniently rejects the portion of Freudian psychology that does not suit his purposes—the claim that socially well adjusted and psychologically healthy humans learn to control their subconscious desires in order to live civilized lives. Thus, the textbook psychology syllogism might follow these steps:

1. All humanity has an Id (what Vess calls a "reptilian consciousness").

2. The Id (the "reptilian consciousness") is underdeveloped, anti-social and dangerous.
3. A properly developed adult does not act based upon the Id (the "reptilian consciousness", but rather, the Ego (the law-abiding adult consciousness).

Vess's "psychology", in contrast, follows an enthymeme that omits the second step:

1. All humanity had a "reptilian consciousness".
2. All humanity should acknowledge and act upon this shared reptilian consciousness.

Indeed, it is precisely this enthymematic form that the remainder of Vess's "psychologizing" takes: " 'if you'd just for once acknowledge your reptile nature, you'd find the freedom and happiness that you're all so frantic to achieve and never do' " (286). Here, Vess's enthymeme omits psychology's premise that proper acknowledgment of the "reptile" nature requires equal acknowledgment of its dangerous and dehumanizing potential. Vess's warped psychology omits the possibility that "freedom" and "happiness" may be achieved through acknowledgment of, *and hence control over*, the "reptile nature". Vess's

belief distorts Chyna's understanding of textbook psychology and involuntarily she realizes that his disquieting candor negates everything she's learned. Vess's partial rejection of textbook psychology attempts to disable Chyna's employment of a psychological framework to explain, and thus possibly regain control over, the aberration that is Vess himself. Vess cajoles, " 'You were expecting me to equivocate, to whine on about being a victim, [. . .] You didn't expect it to be this straightforward. This honest' " (286). Here, Vess refuses the typical textbook explanation for his behavior—that some childhood trauma stilted or warped his proper development. His enthymematic version of psychology refuses the development model, freezing it at his own "reptilian consciousness", so Chyna cannot use it to explain his behaviors. Along with Chyna—and shockingly, along with Vess—readers acknowledge that evil cannot be easily rationalized.

Vess's apparent use of syllogism (and his actual use of enthymeme) moreover reflects his virtuoso employment of maneuvers ascribed to Cicero's orator in *De Oratore* to "manage" his discoveries in a specific order, particularly "with a discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were

of each argument; next go on to array them in the adornments of style; after that keep them guarded in his memory; and in the end deliver them with effect and charm" (308). Vess's main goal, namely in his communication with Chyna, is to have her appreciate his mindset and rethink all she has learned, although he insults all of humanity. Even so, he presents his personal philosophy to her without shame and without concern for her own feelings. His claim that mankind is nothing more than a fish carries as much conviction as it does partially because he is so confident about his philosophy, upon which he insists as a more "honest" and a more "truthful" account of humanity. Thus, Vess cleverly insists that his enthymemes, rather than *omitting* premises necessary for truth, simply *does away with* premises that, because they have been omitted, are unnecessary, or illusions, or somehow false.

The meaning of truth, then, becomes problematic for the readers as it does for Chyna. Arguably, as does Vess's employment of enthymemes, Koontz's literary technique relies upon the "suspension of disbelief" required by fiction and famously discussed by scholar Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*: ". . .the reader must suspend to some extent his own disbeliefs; he must be receptive, open, ready to receive

the clues" (112). Koontz, then, asks his readers to reconsider their notions of truth by their evaluation of Vess in his disclosure to Chyna. Vess's atypical revelations could intrigue readers.

For example, Vess seizes the attention of his audience by supplanting what Chyna knows—that psychology she had worked hard to master at a university—with a self-made encyclopedia of criminal capabilities and reasons and accounting for them in a confident and experienced manner. He claims that his philosophy of intensity enables him to absorb knowledge through direct, almost osmotic, consumption of experience, and here boasts " 'I *did* absorb from the spider an ineffable quality of spideriness that you'll never be able to understand. I heightened my awareness of the spider as a marvelously engineered little hunter' " (262). Cicero maintains that eloquence depends not only on a broad knowledge of subjects but on style as well, and that he must always be ready to convince his listeners being "a shrewd sort of man, and nowhere an untrained recruit" (312). Cicero states that he must have "learned what it is which leads [him] to the end at which [he] aims" which can more readily be spoken with "enthusiasm and something like the passion of love" (308).

Clearly, Vess's passion for his philosophy of intensity is conveyed through his extreme sensory awareness and his conviction that such gives him special knowledge—a knowledge that Chyna and the reader could also gain, if only they reject those pesky moral categories of "good and evil, right and wrong".

Beyond the acquisition of special knowledge, Vess also exhibits traits of the political orator who "urges us either to do or not to do something" and demonstrates "the expediency[. . .] of a proposed course of action" (185). For example, in response to Chyna's headache, Vess suggests she take an aspirin not for the pain but to savor the bitter taste of the pill because " 'every experience, every sensation, is worthwhile' " (264). Vess, by way of the politician's habit to reason, tries to convince Koontz's readers of the validity of his personal philosophy of "intensity": "Pain is merely a part of life. By embracing it, one can find surprising satisfaction in suffering. More important, getting in touch with his own pain makes it easier for him to take pleasure in the pain of others" (84). Here, the philosophy of intensity recommends to the readers—who are arguably subjected to painful reading experiences as Vess mentally and psychologically torments Chyna—that, by

accepting the philosophy of intensity, their own experience of reading the novel could be heightened to a pleasurable degree.

In conclusion, Vess's persuasiveness depends on the degree to which Chyna and the reader agree with Vess's central claim that "the sole purpose of existence is to open oneself to sensation and to satisfy all appetites as they arise" (131). Vess's argument, while easily disproved, is riveting nonetheless because of its seeming logic, as reflected in the following two claims he makes to Chyna (and, by extension, to the reader): " 'But there are no negative experiences, Chyna. Only sensations. No values can be attached to pure sensation' " (261) and " 'Bitterness can be as pleasing as sweetness when you learn that every experience, every sensation, is worthwhile' " (264). Vess urges Chyna and the reader to reinterpret his actions and experiences, not as repulsive, as psychologically underdeveloped or morally flawed, but as, merely, "intense".

"Inartistic" Proofs: Vess's Facade

While Vess's employment of the "artistic" appeal to logos demonstrates a sort of evil wittiness, his employment of "inartistic" appeals are reflected quite

differently. For illustrative purposes, I will focus on two particular "inartistic" appeals: Vess's seemingly normal appearance, which initially works to his advantage; and his use of physical and mental torture, which alienate him and his philosophy of intensity from Chyna and the reader. It is Vess's use of this latter tool that disproves both his appearance and his philosophy of intensity.

Vess relies on appearance in approaching and capturing his victims and in his attempts to connect with Chyna. This reliance is a quality that Aristotle emphasizes as an integral part of rhetoric. Aristotle asserts that the importance of impressing one's audience is crucial in political oratory: "it adds much to an orator's influence that his own character should look right and that he should be thought to entertain the right feelings toward his hearers" (213). Despite the fact that he is a serial killer who has kidnapped teenager Ariel and trapped Chyna in his home, Vess manages to seem finely articulated and quasi-normal. For example, Vess's first interchanges with Chyna are characterized by conventions of politeness and hospitality: " 'I'm sure you're hungry, and as soon as we have a little chat, I'll make cheese omelets with stacks of toast' " (246) and " 'Ah, you're wake you sleepyhead

[. . .] I thought it might take a brass band to bring you around' " (281). Vess's comments are nothing extraordinary, much less interesting. However, to Chyna (and to the reader) who already know about his criminal nature, their normalcy itself is disturbing.

Similarly, Vess's physical appearance is approachable, and even charming, as he is described as "[. . .]handsome, with blue eyes that were a beautiful contrast with his dark hair—nothing crazy in his clear eyes—broad clean features, and a nice smile" (222). Vess's visage is one people can trust, he is someone easily believed, and thus his attractive looks and self-confidence sufficiently work together in arresting his listeners. He is unlikely to be caught in criminal behaviors because his "appearance contradicts the charges that might be brought against [him]" and "encouraged by having a particularly good reputation [as a cop], because that will save [him] from being suspected" (Aristotle 205-6). His serious yet casual remark more than convinces Chyna, it suspends her. Once Vess realizes that Chyna has been pursuing him, readers are given a glimpse into his nature through his conversation with Chyna: " 'But I'm not a psychopath,' he said. [. . .] 'perhaps the only clear-thinking person you've ever met' " (248).

In this succinct declaration Vess illustrates one of the principles of the political debater in which "the man who is forming a judgment is making a decision about his own vital interests" (Aristotle 180). In the above dialogue, Vess views himself as an "adventurer, even "clear-thinking" though his philosophy, as discussed in previous sections, is flawed. While he does emulate the Aristotelian speaker who must "look right", Vess's own self-perception fails to "entertain the right feelings towards his hearers". Beyond that, he also demands the attention of his listeners even while delivering disturbing promises. In *The Rhetorical Act*, Karlyn Khors Campbell emphasizes the audience's surrender to confidence in a speaker depends first on their need to be emotionally affected; the "sensory or aesthetic stimuli that enliven good literature are a major means of persuasion" (9). As suggested earlier, Vess privileges "sensory or aesthetic stimuli" without regard to whether that action is right or wrong. While the problems of such privileging may seem problematic, the benefits of such a philosophy, as discussed earlier, may seem tempting: Vess's love for sensory experience is after all not utterly unrelated to the reader's desire for a suspense novel. Arguably, the reader may catch him or herself

enjoying Vess's enjoyment of eating the spider or considering an intensely lived life. At such moments, Koontz invites the audience to consider whether their own interest in the "good read" that is *Intensity* might not share common ground with the philosophy itself, which upholds sensory and aesthetic experience—the rush of suspense, the thrill of the chase—over ethical considerations that might deny such pleasures. To the extent, then, that Vess's self-fashioning deliberately plays upon literary categories such as that of "handsome adventurer," his appearance persuades his victims, Chyna, and his reader that perhaps he is a man worth knowing better—that perhaps he might be a persuasive orator.

However, such possibilities are obliterated through Vess's use of mental and physical torture. As Chyna spends more time with Vess, his superficially normal dialogue and appearance give way to his true intentions, verbalized in threats and promises. As Vess threatens Chyna, his purpose becomes clear and he exhibits his true nature with exigency and precision: " 'For every question you refuse to answer, I'll take off a piece—the lobe of an ear, the tip of your pretty nose. Carve you like scrimshaw' " (248). Here is where Vess really loses his

audience. Despite the fleeting attractions of Vess's philosophy of intensity or his appearance, his intentions are nothing short of hideous and are certainly unappealing.

The use of torture is characteristic of forensic oratory, one "to which great weight is often attached," according to Aristotle, "because it is in a sense compulsory" and can be argued as "the only form of evidence that is infallible" (212). Vess most certainly undertakes such tactics with his victims, though his intentions are not to force the truth out of his victims. His purpose is exclusively self-fulfilling in that he seeks to, and specifically in Ariel's case, ". . . feel the exquisite texture of her screams, know the clean smell of them, and the taste of her terror" (257). In the same way he strives to entertain himself with the likes of Chyna to whom he suggests watches as he drives Ariel to insanity. Aristotle also proposes that torture, in itself, is insufficient to extract truth. Vess challenges Chyna's learned knowledge of psychology: "Well, then, how interesting it would be to see if any of the modern theories of the working of the mind are undone by this little experiment ["breaking" Ariel" while Chyna observes]" (260). This sets a fine example of Aristotle's claim that in order

to convince others one must "use speech and overthrow the opposing arguments, and we attack these as we should attack an actual opponent" (219).

Vess's offensive manner mimics Cicero's orator, at least on the surface, who in their discourse, "weaken and demolish" (308) their opponents as seen in his perfunctory remarks in relation to his victims previous to Ariel: " 'The mind is so much tougher than the body, a greater challenge by far. And when the mind goes, I swear I can hear the *crack*, a harder sound than bone splitting—and oh, how it reverberates' " (258). What allows Vess to so easily manipulate others are the types of victims he chooses; they tend to be those, as Aristotle canvasses, who are "trustful instead of being cautious and watchful [Laura and her family, Ariel, the convenience store workers], since all such people are easy to elude" or sometimes they are victims "who have been wronged already by many people, and yet have not prosecuted [Chyna, by her mother and her string of boyfriends]" (206). This power over others superficially compliments particular acts of pleasure as Aristotle expresses that "some pleasant feeling is associated with most of our appetites" and that "revenge, too, is pleasant; it is pleasant to get anything that is painful to fail to

get" (203). In order to have such power, Aristotle maintains that the speaker must inhabit broad knowledge, the appearance of truth, if not truthfulness itself, and the ability to justify his case. But while Vess certainly echoes many of the traits described by Aristotle and other scholars, he is first and foremost tied up in his personal philosophy which is starkly contrasted against Chyna's and the reader's point of view. Here is where his ability to persuade loses strength.

Conclusion

Vess's sick use of torture diminishes any pleasure the audience has in his reasoning and is what makes the reader a disloyal follower. Vess also fails to follow the craft expounded by Cicero who seeks out the interests of "any men whom on any issue he would fain win over by his word" (313) in that his intents are clearly self-driven. His reason for torturing is solely to derive from the experience a sense of self-pleasure. Neither does Vess illustrate the attributes Aristotle claims are paramount in rhetorical persuasion in which he enforces that "it helps a speaker to convince us, if we believe he has certain qualities himself, namely, goodness, or goodwill toward us, or both together" (196-7).

Vess is unable to exhibit the noble and virtuous attributes praised by Aristotle and instead models those actions indicative of the wrongdoer: "the shameless man because he does not mind what people think of him [. . .] their impulses are keen, but not deep-rooted, and are like sick people's attacks of hunger and thirst"(218). Additionally, Vess represents that nature prescribed by Aristotle and belonging to "hot tempers and hopeful dispositions [which] make them more courageous than older men are; the hot temper prevents fear, and the hopeful disposition creates confidence" (218). Too, in displaying the use of threat, as seen in Aristotle's discussion about forensic rhetoric, Vess's appeals fail to persuade his hearers because, as Aristotle asserts, "evidence under torture is not trustworthy, [. . .] many men [. . .] endure their ordeal nobly [Ariel and Chyna], while cowards and timid men are full of boldness till they see the ordeal of these others" (212). Vess further loses his audience because his wickedly ambitious threats are drastically opposed.

Overall, Vess is provocatively articulate, most notably through his seemingly approachable appearance, but he falls short of the requirements of an effective orator who seeks to please his audience, to incline them

toward agreement with him once he resorts to acts of torture, and is therefore unable to appeal to his listeners. Ultimately, Vess's persuasiveness is flawed because he alienates both Chyna and the reader. Vess is both untrustworthy and unadmirable. Thus, there are limits to rhetoric as he comes across as quite disagreeable. His arguments especially lose their appeal when compared to Chyna's compelling and likable characteristics examined in Chapter Three.

Chyna, though ultimately dissuaded by Vess's nature, is nevertheless affected by his testimonials, which demonstrates Aristotle's claim of rhetoric's power. Furthermore, despite his disturbing nature, she doesn't refrain from her own pursuit of him in order to eventually defeat him. Vess, because of his formidable and immoral character, provokes his audience to the point of repulsion in contrast to Chyna's more approachable and moral nature that causes her listeners to more readily accept her arguments. So, then, through her honorable actions and her selfless nature, Chyna proves to be more persuasive than Vess as I will show in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RHETORICAL EFFECT OF *INTENSITY'S* HEROINE

As previously discussed in Chapter One, Koontz's exclusion of the uncanny, characteristic of gothic fiction, and his incorporation of a credible plot and realistic characters intensifies, rather than diminishes, the terrifying nature of *Intensity*. In Chapter One, I explained that Koontz forgoes the typically unconvincing and helpless protagonist in favor of a protagonist, Chyna, who is believable and aggressive; Koontz likewise rejects the typically esoteric and one-dimensional antagonist of gothic fiction with a convincing and potentially persuasive antagonist in Vess. In general, I have proposed that *Intensity* stages competing persuasive appeals through its antagonist and protagonist. In Chapter Two, I suggested that although Vess certainly presents seemingly logical appeals through his philosophy of intensity, along with one persuasive inartistic appeal, his philosophy is evidently problematic both to the reader and to Chyna, and his employment of torture separates him from his audience.

In this chapter, I will argue that Chyna's ability to persuade is more convincing, acceptable, and superior

to Vess's rhetorical abilities. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, when considering the triad of artistic appeals, to reason (logos), to moral character (ethos), and to emotion (pathos), it is clear that Vess is only inviting to the audience through his employment of reason (logos). In contrast, Chyna succeeds in her employment of all three artistic appeals—logos, ethos, and pathos. Her employment of logos is more attractive than Vess's because she relies on syllogisms which appeal to reason by arriving at a necessary conclusion from a universally true premise. The strength of Vess's arguments, on the other hand, is lessened because he depends on enthymemes, which lead to a tentative conclusion from a probable premise. Additionally, Chyna's employment of ethos and pathos further appeals to her audience as they are reminded of her honorable and brave qualities in her pursuit of Vess in order to save Ariel, the teenager he has kidnapped, and subsequently tortured in his basement.

In this chapter my focus will be on Chyna's character development, her desirable qualities such as her heroic and selfless achievements, and her moral person that make her both a trustworthy narrator and a believable protagonist. I will demonstrate, consecutively, her appeal to logos, her

appeal to ethos, and her appeal to pathos, followed by a brief reference to her function as a ceremonial orator.

Chyna as an Articulate Protagonist: Her Logical Appeal

As revealed in Chapter Two and as mentioned in this chapter's introduction, logical appeals utilize either syllogisms which appeal to reason by arriving at a necessary conclusion from a universally true premise or rely on the use of enthymemes which lead to a tentative conclusion from a probable premise. Because they are compatible with the truth and are fully demonstrated rather than implied, Chyna's assertions become ultimately more acceptable to readers than Vess's philosophy of intensity.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Chyna's academic knowledge as a psychology major is put to the test by Vess, who intentionally distorts the logic recognized by the field of psychology in an effort to substitute his own profane philosophy as more superior. While Vess's enthymematic arguments are finally invalidated, his very criminal nature, not rationalized by an abusive upbringing, challenges Chyna's field. Realizing that she can no longer easily explain the condition of the human being after being

subjected to Vess's conduct and beliefs, Chyna reassesses what she has learned. She is unable to continue defending the field of psychology and is forced to reconsider the extent and inexplicability of evil.

Initially, Chyna tries to block out Vess's elaborate descriptions of his torture of his victims, but soon is only able to meet his gaze. In her mind she makes several attempts to find the "animal consciousness" that she believes must exist but manages only resignation to the fact that he was not a "creature that fell to all fours in the light of the full moon. Worse, he was nothing but a man—living at one extreme end of the spectrum of human cruelty, but nonetheless only a man" (259). Aristotle explains that the effective rhetorician must "be able to reason logically" (182) and Cicero insists that "excellence in speaking cannot be made manifest unless the speaker fully comprehends the matter he is speaking about" (296). Chyna must first recognize, then, that Vess's deviant perspective on psychology subscribes to a continuum of human behavior, one that appears undiscovered by the field of psychology.

Although Chyna ultimately rejects the field of psychology based on her experiences with Vess, her appeal to reason proves more effective than Vess's appeal to reason

because she depends on the use of syllogisms rather than on enthymemes. Realizing the deviant extent of Vess's capabilities, Chyna reasons that she must be sensitive to his frequently shifting moods: "They were at a strange juncture where words might not mean what they meant before, where the most innocent statement might be an incitement to violence" (277). Here, Chyna's application of logical appeal to comprehend an unfamiliar instance, in this case, Vess's conduct, leads her to conceive her own psychological theory. Indeed, her astute observation of Vess's nuances and accurate interpretation of them constitute a major part of her appeal to the reader. Beyond her use of syllogisms, Chyna wins over her audience through her understanding that both Vess's personal philosophy and the field of psychology itself fail to provide answers to human behavior and instead supply deficient explanations for human behavior. Chyna acknowledges that "human cruelty and treachery surpassed all understanding. There were no answers. Only excuses" (292). Perhaps most importantly, Chyna "inspires confidence" by boasting good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. It is this second characteristic, good moral character, that I will turn to now.

Chyna's Ethical Appeal

Chyna possesses the likeable and moral character attributed to speakers who appeal to ethos. The antithesis to the 'damsel in distress' pathology, Chyna behaves assertively toward her predator. Instead of remaining passive or helpless, as is the typical reaction of earlier gothic heroines, she becomes very active in her pursuit of Vess. Aristotle insists that the speaker's character "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses" (182). When Chyna first enters Vess's home, the readers are drawn toward her silent prayer to God, the perpetual chant she uses during times of danger: "Chyna Shepherd, untouched and alive[. . .] to remind herself that He was out there, had received her message, and would take care of her if she was patient" (170). This simple mantra reminds the reader not only of Chyna's beliefs, but also of the value she places on life. When faced with the monster, Vess, she doesn't resort to his evil tactics, but instead chooses to oppose them by focusing on the good in life. In an instance when Vess is rambling on about his intense and heinous experiences, Chyna responds that "the most intense experience of all is showing mercy" (259). Not only is Chyna unimpressed and certainly disgusted with his

confessions of torturing his victims, but she in fact attempts to guide the discussion away from his volatile boasts toward a succinct, but morally founded statement.

Again, when Vess comments that life is mere sensation, that no values can be attached to life's experiences, Chyna reminds the reader of her aversion to Vess and her turmoil in trying to make sense of this man: "She was weary of him [. . .] She would never know why some people committed countless little cruelties—or bigger ones—and the struggle to understand had only exhausted her and left her empty, cold, and gray inside" (263). Here the allure of Chyna's character is reflected in her weariness of Vess as well as the undesired and hopeless feelings he evokes from her—hatred and emptiness. Chyna's turbulent inner struggle is painfully honest, and although sad, favorable to Vess's disturbing behavior.

Chyna's tenacious pursuit of Vess, then her mission to find and save Ariel, inform the reader of her "goodwill" toward others, her selflessness, and her desire to obtain justice for Ariel. Chyna persuades her audience of such goodness when she first learns of Ariel: "Ariel, held prisoner for a year, untouched but soon to be violated, alive but not for long" (127). In this passage, Chyna

recognizes that Ariel's current situation is very comparable to her own, in a position of being "untouched and alive", and feels morally compelled to rescue Ariel. Chyna's display of empathy adds another "appealing" dimension to her character. Chyna's aggressive pursuit of Vess, risking her own personal safety in order to rescue Ariel, obligates Chyna to prove both to herself (and by extension the reader) that this risky decision—while not necessarily rational—is nonetheless moral. Thus, Chyna exhibits the role of a heroine who hereafter upholds the ethical claim above all else.

Aristotle stresses that the more persuasive argument "is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others" (182). When Vess first shackles her, Koontz invites the reader to witness Chyna's martyr quality. She's upset for being "having wound up in bondage—[but] that was not the source of her humiliation; what mortified worse was her failure to fulfill her promise to the girl in the cellar. *I am your guardian. I'll keep you safe*" (241). It is clear that Chyna is selfless and that her heart and mind are absolutely and above all else committed to saving Ariel.

Chyna's heroic behavior undercuts Vess's attempts to persuade his audience. Ultimately, the careful reader remains loyal to Chyna. The reader, while perhaps captivated by Vess's philosophy of intensity, is more impressed by Chyna's actions and thoughts because they reflect those traits that are redeemable, honorable, and good. The reader can respect Chyna's altruistic behavior because she is propelled by truth and "goodness". This prompts us to the last part of Aristotle's triad, pathos, or the appeal to emotions.

Chyna's Appeal to Pathos

Chyna generates a powerful emotional appeal from the reader. The reader's strong empathy for Vess's victims and deep hatred for him result in an inevitable rejection of Vess's appeals to immediate gratification of base urges. Aristotle describes the appeal to pathos as the ability "to understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited" (182). When Chyna first encounters Vess, she finds herself emotionally distraught. Nevertheless, Chyna's emotional struggle demonstrates that her emotional control is superior to Vess's total

submission to every available sensation—no matter how disturbing. By the end of the novel, moreover, Chyna's moral actions, specifically her willingness to rescue Ariel, are captivating for their superior level of emotional appeal.

When Vess and Chyna first come face to face, he subjects her to torture by threatening to carve her face if she refuses to comply with his requests. Chyna mentally escapes from his demented threats into a fairy-tale world which also appeals to, and provides an escape for, the reader. Eventually, though, through her attempts to remain emotionally detached, Chyna realizes the effort is futile: "Neither the languid river nor the Wild Wood materialized, though Chyna strained to see them. Ratty, Mr. Mole, Mr. Badger, and Mr. Toad were gone forever into the hateful death that claims all things" (257). Despite Chyna's inability to escape, readers still sympathize with her and can relate to her desire to retreat from the presence of this sick man.

Later in the novel, when Chyna learns that Vess's murder of her friend, Laura, and her family was only arbitrary, she feels suffocated by a doomed fate: "It was as if she too had been born and struggled this far only for

the purpose of bringing one moment of sick satisfaction to this soulless predator" (265). Cicero states that eloquence demands the demonstration of the knowledge of good and evil, "the emotions of the mind or human conduct" (295). Through her inner turmoil, Chyna arrives at the morbid understanding that Vess has robbed many people of living their full life, a hopelessness that her reader can feel as well. Again, the reader is inclined toward Chyna's viewpoint against Vess's personal philosophy that life is meant to be lived by mere sensation. As Chyna and Vess's previous victims draw sympathy from the reader for their suffering inflicted by Vess, the effects of his personal philosophy—obscene and selfish—repel the reader.

As mentioned above, Aristotle emphasizes that a speaker's ability to convince his audience is helped by his "goodwill toward us" (197). Chyna's goal is to rescue Ariel and her willingness to follow Ariel's captor and endure his torture in order to save Ariel clearly informs the reader of her "goodwill". Cicero submits that an effective rhetor must know the heart of man and that "the speaker will not be able to achieve what he wants by his words, unless he has gained profound insight into the characters of men, and the whole range of human nature" (297). During her pursuit of

Vess, Chyna is overwhelmed by emotions she feels for the stranger, Ariel, and Chyna's inner dialogue appeals to the reader's emotions because they are able to sympathize with her concern for the girl: "frustration, with anger, with fear for the girl whom she had never met, and with despair for her own culpability if that girl died" (127). Chyna's display of compassion affects the readers, who can share these same emotions over a girl they have not yet met. Furthermore, the reader empathizes with Chyna herself and the reader's sense of responsibility for Chyna mirrors Chyna's sense of responsibility for Ariel.

The reader is more aligned with Chyna, with whom they can sympathize and thus, feel more comfortable. Chyna demonstrates a realistic heroine whose credibility and amenable character allows us to examine her attributes through the Aristotelian theory. In particular, her honorable and true nature validates Aristotle's claim that "things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in" (181). An effective rhetorician, according to Aristotle, must have an appealing character for "it helps a speaker to convince us, if we believe that he has certain qualities himself, namely, goodness, or

goodwill toward us, or both together" (197). Aristotle makes clear that what a person says and how he says it determine the level of persuasiveness that interlocutor is capable. Moreover, an effective rhetorician will establish a strong camaraderie with their audience. This relationship embodies a large scope of Koontz's narrative, particularly manifested between Chyna and Koontz's readers.

Contrary to early gothic protagonists who tend to submit to the villains out of fear and helplessness, Koontz's Chyna exhibits traits that are exceptional for a victim. In place of despair, she finds hope, instead of trembling she finds fortitude, and she trades hysteria for a sound mind. Her behavior illustrates the antithesis of the collapse of identity commonly associated with gothic protagonists. Koontz forgoes the traditional gothic heroine's "passivity and acceptance of victimization" (Day 17) and provides instead a protagonist who resists her role as a victim and aggressively pursues her captor.

Once handcuffed to Vess's oak table, Chyna undergoes the heavy burden of doubt. Having bestowed upon herself the role of Ariel's guardian, Chyna becomes fearful that she will be unable to rescue Ariel after all, unable to fulfill the promise she made to Ariel that she'll keep her safe and

"sick with the certainty that she had raised false hopes, that the girl would feel betrayed and more abandoned than ever, and that she would withdraw even further into her private Elsewhere" (242). The alluring eloquence of Chyna's internal monologue here recalls Cicero's recognition that superb eloquence surrenders to "enthusiasm and something like the passion of love" (307).

Furthermore, as Aristotle states, "the use of persuasive speech is to lead to decisions" (219) and demands "the right management of the voice to express the various emotions—of speaking loudly, softly, or between the two [. . .] of the various rhythms that suit various subjects" (236). When Chyna finally breaks free of her shackles, she immediately returns to the cellar to rescue Ariel, who has been catatonic for several months. Challenged by this adversity, she draws upon a gentle tone to convince the girl to follow her out of the cellar: "I want to help you. I need to help you, honey. If I can't leave here with you, there's no point in my leaving at all" (351) all the while, kneeling so that she is face level with her, kissing her hand, and then softly pleading with her, informing her of the urgency of the situation: "I need your help [. . .] I need you" (352).

Compassion is one of the emotions that Cicero insists is pertinent in winning the favor of an audience. A listener is won, he says, "if you are thought to be upholding the interest of your audience, or to be working for good men, or at any rate for such as that audience deems good and useful" (333). Chyna's actions prove trustworthy; she unselfishly and compassionately seeks to save Ariel, and these are noble qualities that the reader can affirm.

Chyna's succinct claim "I need your help [. . .] I need you" proves eloquent as it mimics the three modes of persuasion defended by Aristotle: "The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof" (181). Furthermore, Chyna's arguments replicate those syllogisms that "form a valid logical proof" (236). Those who have all three qualities, Aristotle ventures, "will inspire trust in his audience" (213). The importance of knowledge is clearly relevant to these "proofs" and manifests through Aristotle's ceremonial speaker who "either praises or censures somebody" (185).

In Chyna's employment of appeals to logos, ethos and pathos, she emulates the ceremonial orator by rejecting her psychology training in her attempt to decipher Vess's

atypical and seemingly unexplainable cruelty. Specifically, Chyna's refutation of Vess's philosophy manifests Aristotle's argument that ceremonial oratory must be able to reason "on opposite sides of a question, [. . .] in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him" (180-1).

Conclusion

Chyna fulfills many of the requirements that Aristotle argues are essential for the effective rhetorician. She upholds the value he places on the speaker whose "speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible" (182). She successfully achieves Aristotle's first means of persuasion by "reasoning logically". Though Vess's behavior directly opposes what Chyna's psychology courses have taught her and defies everything she thus far believes about criminal nature, she comes to the startling conclusion that "no case study of sociopathic violence had ever contained a description of a crime sufficiently vivid to make her want to retreat to a corner and sit on the floor and pull her knees against her chest and hug herself" (71). Here Chyna not only refutes what she has held as true, but is willing

to accept this new revelation and draw upon what experience has shown her in favor of what the field of psychology has taught her. This reflects Aristotle's argument that the effective speaker must have at their disposal the means for making rational appeals. While Vess certainly makes several convincing points about his philosophy of "intensity", he nevertheless fails to employ those rational appeals that are fully argued, relying on Fallible Signs or arguments that are incomplete. Chyna, in contrast, employs those syllogisms that are based on Infallible Signs, which cannot be refuted.

Chyna also draws on the second means of persuasion, ethical appeals. Chyna persuades her audience because of her moral nature and her natural tendency "to understand human character and goodness in their various forms" (Aristotle 182). Her submission to Vess's tactics and perseverance through all his torture to eventually rescue Ariel proves admirable. Moreover, her moral nature prevails over Vess's heinous behavior. At best, Vess convinces his audience through the intriguing presentation of his personal philosophy. However, his inability to employ ethical appeals turns away his readers. Chyna's

faithful submission to the good of humanity persuades her audience above and beyond Vess's sympathizers.

Additionally, Chyna depends on those appeals to emotions to find favor with her audience. Through her appeal to the reader, mostly by her inner thoughts and turmoil, and her appeal to win Ariel's trust, Chyna succeeds in effecting the last means of persuasion by employing Aristotle's appeals to pathos. She demonstrates her ability "to understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited" (182). Her perpetual efforts to rescue Ariel as well as her urgent pleas with Ariel to trust in her mimic the effective orator's ability to "understand the emotions". Likewise, her continual struggle to understand Vess, and the various reactions she has to him as a person and also to the things he does to her and others, are understandable feelings which the reader can empathize. Vess clearly fails to employ the appeal to pathos, caring naught for the feelings of anyone other than himself. His selfish ambition and monstrous actions dissuade the reader.

Chyna also models Aristotle's ceremonial speaker who "praises or censures somebody" (185). Chyna reflects this censure of ceremonial oratory in her analysis of Vess: "His

base sins were envy—of beauty, of happiness—and pride, bending the whole world to his view of creation” (266). In contrast, Vess relies heavily on forensic rhetoric, which according to Aristotle, is untrustworthy. His monstrous acts and relentless motives alienate both the reader and Chyna. Chyna, though, through her employment of the ceremonial oratory “which is both desirable for its own sake and also worthy of praise; or that which is good and also pleasant because good” (Aristotle 197), is able to win her audience. Because she fulfills all three parts of Aristotle’s “artistic” appeals and because she rejects the utility of cruelty through forensic torture, Chyna proves the more persuasive rhetorician. Indeed, Chyna’s persuasive abilities are superior to Vess’s. Most importantly, perhaps, she exemplifies Aristotle’s idea of useful rhetoric which claims that “things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites” (180).

General Conclusion

I propose that a further pursuit of this discussion of the rhetorical effect in gothic novels might lead to a more intensive understanding of the dynamics of contemporary

horror writing and rhetoric. I think the contribution of ancient rhetors, such as Aristotle or Cicero to the analysis of gothic fiction, will amplify the range of interesting analysis. The study of both the antagonist's and protagonist's ability to manipulate the audience, and each other, will lead to fascinating discoveries, particularly the revelation of how both good and evil can be equivalently persuasive in a horror novel.

The connection between rhetorical appeal and gothic narratives seems to be frequently overlooked by critics. An application of popular novels, like *Intensity*, to rhetorical discussions can broaden pedagogic approaches and further enhance current methodologies.

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