

## The Influence of Hugh Blair on Poe's Gothicism:

### The Style of Terror and Horror in Poe's Early Woman-Centered Tales

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On April 30, 1835, defending the sensationalism of his recent tale "Berenice" in a letter to Thomas W. White, the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* where "Berenice" was published, Edgar Allan Poe articulated his composition method as consisting of "the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical" (O I:84). Further investigation of Poe's early Gothic tales reveals that such self-articulated principles are implemented not merely at the explicit level of theme and motif but also at the implicit yet essential dimension of style. Especially in "Berenice," "Morella," and "Ligeia," Poe's stylistic techniques construct an effective sense of both Gothic terror/the Poesque "strange and mystical" and Gothic horror/the Poesque "horrible." The techniques lend a suspense to Poesque terror and a distinctness to Poesque horror. Poe was familiar with Hugh Blair's treatise *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*; therefore, it serves as a useful resource for understanding these woman-centered Gothic tales. Applying Blair's rhetorical theory to the stylistic dimensions of Poe's works sheds light on the development and evolution of Poe's Gothic writing style.

## **Hugh Blair and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres***

Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, an influential and widely circulated rhetorical work in the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, offered a belletristic theory that conjoined rhetoric with the practices of language of diverse disciplines to contribute to both creation and criticism.<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was published in two volumes in 1783. Between its initial publication and the first decade of the twentieth century, Blair's *Rhetoric* appeared in 283 versions including complete, abridged, and translated editions, which considerably surpassed the 43 versions of George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, the 80 versions of Henry Home, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, and the 75 versions of Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, the principal rhetorics contemporary with or subsequent to Blair.<sup>2</sup> The adoption of Blair's *Rhetoric* as a textbook in the school curriculum perpetuated its publication and popularized it in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Blair's work was first put into use at Yale in 1785 and then at Harvard in 1788. In the following years, from 1800 to 1835, the use of Blair's *Rhetoric* was extended to "Columbia, Pennsylvania, Brown, North Carolina, Middlebury, Williams, Amherst, Hamilton, Wesleyan, and Union."<sup>4</sup> There was "no nineteenth-century rhetoric used in American colleges [that] approaches the total versions of Blair's *Lectures*."<sup>5</sup> Scholars have noted that "The immense popularity of Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was unrivaled by any language text for a full half-century."<sup>6</sup>

The influence of Blair's *Rhetoric* on Poe has been suggested by Margaret Alterton, Donald Barlow Stauffer, Robert D. Jacobs, J. Lasley Dameron, and Brett Zimmerman. Alterton mentions that Poe's idea of the length of writing and its effect may derive from Kames and Blair: "doubtless Poe was aware of their comments."<sup>7</sup> Stauffer states that Poe's ratiocinative style can be attributed to "his reading and his study of Blair's *Rhetoric*."<sup>8</sup> Jacobs associates Poe's viewpoints regarding simplicity and figures of speech in composition with Blair's. Both Poe and Blair, according to Jacobs, value simplicity, a style that is opposed to affectation, and both hold similar opinions about the proper use of figures. Especially relevant to Poe's criticisms are Blair's rules concerning metaphor, including his cautions about degrading metaphors, mixing metaphorical and non-metaphorical language, and employing multiple metaphors.<sup>9</sup> Dameron likewise suggests the probability of Poe's knowledge of Blair's *Rhetoric*, indicating that "Poe was very likely much aware of Blair's critical principles and standards as he developed his own literary standards and theories" and relating Blair's conceptions of simplicity and perspicuity to Poe's critical criterion.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Zimmerman assumes that "Poe did indeed receive training in rhetoric, either formally or otherwise" and that Blair was one of the major rhetoricians who shaped Poe's creation and criticism.<sup>11</sup>

Poe mentions Blair in his 1842 "Exordium." Poe compares, in this article, such German critics as Johann Winckelmann, Novalis, Friedrich Schelling, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,

Augustus William Schlegel, and Frederick von Schlegel with the English critics and says that “their magnificent *critiques raisonnées* differ from those of Kiames [sic], of Johnson, and of Blair, in principle not at all, (for the principles of these artists will not fail until Nature herself expires,) but solely in their more careful elaboration, their greater thoroughness, their more profound analysis and application of the principles themselves” (L 2:42). Poe clearly was sufficiently aware of Blair’s *Rhetoric* and principles so as to compare and comment on the differences between the German and the English critiques. Although Poe had a higher evaluation of the German ones, his assertion that there is no difference “at all” between the German and the English critiques in principle encourages the recognition of the importance of Blair’s rhetorical theory, an “unrivaled” language treatise in Poe’s time.

### **Terror v. Horror**

Terror and horror are the essential elements constituting and defining Gothicism. The father of Gothic fiction, Horace Walpole, in his first preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, clearly states that terror is the writer’s “principal engine” which “prevents the story from ever languishing.”<sup>12</sup> Ann Radcliffe, another eighteenth-century Gothic novelist, incorporates terror into her creations and further distinguishes terror from horror, declaring: “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.” Terror is strictly defined as the gloomy, the magnificent, and the obscure that excite the imagination to reach

the sublime. Horror, on the other hand, is an immediate and distinct presence that creates a forceful yet transient impression.<sup>13</sup> Terror is associated with a psychological sense of suspense triggered by uncertainty, obscurity, and distance while horror is achieved by a physical sense of instantaneity, distinctness, and corporality.

Poe acknowledged, in his letter to White, that he consciously made use of the elements of terror and horror in composing his Gothic tales. Poe's principle of "the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical," relates more to the obscurity and the suspense in Gothic terror. His affirmation of "the fearful coloured into the horrible," which concerns the fright caused by a sudden possible danger and the emotions of dread and repugnance, on the other hand, is associated with Gothic horror. In the following stylistic analysis of Poe's woman-centered Gothic tales, the periodic sentence, the cataphoric expression, and the parenthesis, owing to their delaying the revelation of the key objects, are investigated as the devices that engender a sense of suspense requisite for the effect of Gothic terror. (A periodic sentence delays the main subject and verb to the end thereby generating tension and suspense.<sup>14</sup> A cataphoric expression involves the use of a non-specific term that will be clarified in time.<sup>15</sup> And a parenthesis interjects and impedes the progression of a sentence.<sup>16</sup>) The simile/metaphor, the superlative, and adverbial intensifiers, which concretize and strengthen dreadful events in the texts, are identified as the devices that function to evoke a sense of Gothic horror.

## **Stylistic Terror in Poe's Gothic Tales**

The Gothic element of terror pertains to the suspenseful effect of delay and obscurity. Blair underscores the merit of perspicuity and precision in style and "Clearness and Precision" in sentence structure. He enumerates a number of occasions that can arouse ambiguity, such as "a wrong choice of words, or a wrong collocation of them" or a verbal element "interposed in the middle of a Sentence." However, at the same time, Blair also approves of the exploitation of periodic structure and admits the "advantage to suspend the meaning for a little, and then bring it out full at the close." Blair says, in addition to this, "All subjects do not equally require Precision."<sup>17</sup> What Blair values then is the semantic perplexity caused by grammatical or stylistic flaws. Poe in "The Philosophy of Composition" states that he intends to arouse his reader's curiosity by delaying the presence of the bird in his composing "The Raven" (L 2:68). In other words, suspense is the element directly associated with the aesthetic of terror. In Poe, the suspense that enhances "the strange and mystical" is frequently wrought through the application of periodic structure, cataphoric expression, and parentheses, delaying the key linguistic unit that determines meaning.

Poe's "Berenice" serves as an example of his early practice of creating terror through style. The monomaniacal protagonist-narrator Egæus is morbidly obsessed with his wife's teeth while she suffers from a fatal disease. The disease transforms Berenice's physique and mind, a change that aggravates Egæus's disorder and eventually urges him to go to the grave

somnambulistically, open her coffin and pull out her teeth. In the very last paragraph of “Berenice,” the suspense climaxes as Egæus fails to recall his brutality and is ultimately confronted with it by a servant. Poe uses both periodic and cataphoric devices here. (I use bold for the periodic and underlining for the cataphoric for the following passage.) Poe writes:

He [the servant] directed my attention to some object against the wall. I looked at it for some minutes: it was a spade. With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped the box that lay upon it. But I could not force it open; and, in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, **with a rattling sound, there rolled out** some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor. (M 2:218-19)

The grave digging tool, the spade, is intentionally rendered indistinct in the first place through the use of cataphoric reference, which refers “some object” and “it” to a later more specific object, “a spade,” so that the identity of the object is deferred and a sense of suspense is momentarily generated. The same cataphoric device is also applied in the reference to the victim’s teeth to delay the revelation of the crucial evidence of Egæus’s brutality. The dental instruments in “some instruments of dental surgery” hint but do not disclose Berenice’s teeth, the human organs Egæus extracts in his somnambulist trance, until the supplement of the

more distinct information of “thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances” in the following phrase of the sentence. And in the same sentence, apart from the use of cataphora, a description of the sound is interjected into the midst of the semantic progression, and the main clause is inverted to prolong moderately and to uncover the sensational act committed by the unwitting somnambulist. In the strict sense, the sentence is not a typical periodic sentence, with the main subject and verb of “there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery” appearing midway. But using parenthesis and inversion, as well as delaying the key word “thirty-two” (teeth) to the next clause, shows Poe’s intention of suspending the meaning to enhance the terror of strangeness and mystery.

In “Morella,” a similar suspension is observed in the penultimate paragraph wherein the protagonist is at length requested to name his long-unnamed daughter, giving her an identity. (I here use bold to indicate periodicity.) The paragraph reads:

What fiend spoke from the recesses of my soul, when, **amid those dim aisles, and in the silence of the night**, I whispered **within the ears of the holy man the syllables** – Morella? **What more than fiend convulsed the features of my child, and overspread them with hues of death, as, starting at that scarcely audible sound**, she turned her glassy eyes from the earth to heaven, and, **falling prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault**, responded – “I am here!” (M 2:235)

At the critical moment just before the real identity of his daughter is revealed as his

reincarnated wife, the protagonist does not question, “Morella?”, until the last part of the sentence, following the interposed circumstances and the artificially added reference to the whispering act, thereby forming the tension-filled periodic structure. Similarly, the dramatic yet not altogether inartificial modifications and adjective phrases—“starting at that scarcely audible sound” and “falling prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault”—are arranged to precede the daughter Morella’s ultimate response, “I am here.” Compared with the stylistic techniques of terror in “Berenice,” the stylistic techniques of terror in “Morella” are more syntactically intricate and effective, a fact that, to a certain extent, shows Poe’s improved skill in manipulating style to create terror.

“Ligeia,” the last woman-centered piece among the three stories, exemplifies no less the suspense of Gothic terror. In Poe’s building up the supernatural tension of the return of the dead Ligeia, he inserts a number of parentheses into the sentences to delay disclosing those strange and incredible signs of animation perceived in the portentous bridal chamber. (Here I use bold italics to indicate the parentheses.) Poe writes: “She [Rowena] spoke again, *and now more frequently and pertinaciously*, of the sounds – of the slight sounds” (M 2:324); “She partly arose, and spoke, *in an earnest low whisper*, of sounds which she *then* heard, but which I could not hear – of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive” (M 2:324); “It might have been midnight, *or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time*, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie”

(M 2:326); “At length it became evident that a slight, *a very feeble, and barely noticeable* tinge of color had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids” (M 2:327).

In the first two examples, the key objects, “sounds,” which are assumed to be caused by Ligeia, are slightly interrupted and deferred by the parentheses of the adverbial phrases, “and now more frequently and pertinaciously” and “in an earnest low whisper,” to generate a sense of suspense. In a similar manner, in the latter examples, the key subjects of “a sob” and “[a] tinge of color” related to the revivification of Ligeia are held from immediate revelation through the use of interrupters, “or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time” and “a very feeble, and barely noticeable.” The parentheses of trivial or repeated meanings are constructed mainly to prolong sentences and create suspense.

The strategic use of parentheses is exploited even more deftly in the following sentence about the suspenseful existence of a shadow. (Once more I use bold italics to indicate parentheses.) Poe writes: “I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person; and I saw *that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer*, a shadow – a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect – such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade” (M 2:325). To intensify the suspense in the protagonist’s encounter with the phantom of Ligeia, Poe employs the device of parenthesis with “that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre

thrown from the censer.” What the protagonist sees, “a shadow,” is thus moved markedly to a later portion of the sentence, and, as a consequence, the semantic meaning is suspended, engendering a Poesque sense of the strange and the mystical.

### **Stylistic Horror in Poe’s Gothic Stories**

In contrast to the sense of terror provoked by distance and obscurity, the sense of horror is generated by a sensation of distinctness and immediacy, as in “Berenice.” The horrifying distortion of Berenice’s physique and identity caused by the fatal disease eventuates in Egæus’s somnambulistic cruelty. To heighten the effect of Gothic horror, Poe applies a cluster of metaphors and similes to render distinct the episode of Berenice’s disease. (Below I offer bold for the figurative, double underlining for superlatives, and underlining for intensifiers.)

Poe writes:

she, roaming carelessly through life, with no thought of **the shadows in her path,** or **the silent flight of the raven-winged hours.** . . . And then – then all is mystery and terror, and a tale which should not be told. Disease – a fatal disease, **fell like the simoon upon her frame;** and, even while I gazed upon her, **the spirit of change swept over** her, **pervading** her mind, her habits, and her character, and, in a manner the most subtle and terrible, **disturbing** even the identity of her person! Alas! **the destroyer came and went!** – and the victim – where is she? I knew her not – or knew her no longer as Berenicë! (M 2:210-11)

The lurking misfortune is metaphorically compared to “the shadows in her path” and “the silent flight of the raven-winged hours”; the ominous images of “shadows” and “raven” anticipate the coming of a deadly disease. Subsequent to this, the simile of “simoon”—a destructive hot wind in the Arabian and African regions—serves as the vivid comparison for the acute disease, speedily spreading over and attacking Berenice. The adoption of the airy, material “simoon” also seems to echo the earlier metaphor of “the silent flight of the raven-winged hours” and is consistently succeeded by a string of such verbal collocations as “swept over,” “pervading,” and “disturbing,” language customarily used to describe winds. The phrase “the destroyer came and went”—referring to the disastrous simoon—likewise suggests the insubstantial and invisible quality of air. In addition to metaphor and simile, the comprehensive pronoun “all” in “all is mystery and terror,” the adverbial intensifier “even,” and the superlative “the most”—words that illustrate the horrific transformation happening in the diseased Berenice—also strengthen the Gothic horror.

Looking at the passage further, we observe that two comparisons are crowded into one single sentence, a feature that disrupts a consistent imagining of horror in the tale. Although the metaphors of “shadows” and “the silent flight of the raven-winged hours” are similar in embodying the notion of darkness, they differ from each other in nature. Shadow pertains to visibility, especially considering Poe’s use of it, “she, roaming carelessly through life, with no thought of the shadows in her path,” while the silent flight is associated with sound. The

focus on sound in the metaphor of the hours' silent flight is reinforced by the sound-focused sentence: "Berenicë! – I call upon her name – Berenicë! – and from the gray ruins of memory a thousand tumultuous recollections are startled at the sound!" (M 2:210). The juxtaposition of the two different metaphors of shadow and the hours' silent flight confounds the imagination regarding the nature of the impending misfortune. Similarly, though linked by the wind-verbs, the figurative comparison of "simoon" is followed by "the spirit of change," an epithet that assumedly refers to the simoon but appears like a new creature that differs from a simoon. Moreover, the remoteness of the foreign simile of "simoon" may prevent the general reader from comprehending and forming the image of a destructive desert wind, which is a rhetorical flaw that Blair cautions to avoid.<sup>18</sup>

The stylistic defects in "Berenice" reduce, to a certain degree, the effectiveness of the construction of Gothic horror insofar as they violate Blair's rule of the consistent use of metaphorical language: the rhetorician had suggested "that we should try to form a picture upon them [metaphors], and consider how the parts would agree, and what sort of figure the whole would present" and not having "two different Metaphors meet on one object" because doing so "makes a most unnatural medley, and confounds the imagination entirely."<sup>19</sup> These defects also contradict Poe's own critique of "inconsistent metaphor" concerning the mismatch of subjects of different natures in the metaphorical phrase "sowing of *fiery* echoes" (P 3:11) in his 1845 review of Elizabeth Barrett Barrett's *A Drama of Exile, and Other*

*Poems*.<sup>20</sup> And the problematic figures in “Berenice” contradict Poe’s comment on the inconsistency of the figurative adoption of “womb,” a subject suggestive of the future, to form a notion of the past (P 5:329) in a review by Poe of William Cullen Bryant’s *Poems*.<sup>21</sup> However, Poe enhanced the consistency of his figurative imagery in the later woman-centered Gothic pieces of “Morella” and “Ligeia.” In these two tales, figures of speech are used more coherently and thoroughly—Poe adheres to his principle that “no word [should be] written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design” (H 13:153).

Completed shortly after the publication of “Berenice,” the Gothic tale “Morella,” a story once considered as the “best” work by the author himself (O I:115), attests to Poe’s rapid growth in his art. In the tale, the protagonist’s initial encounter with Morella is depicted as if his soul “burned with fires” that were unknown to himself (M 2:229); yet the protagonist clarifies that the fires are “not of Eros.” Although he marries Morella, he attributes his motivation for marriage to an unidentifiable force, saying “fate bound us together at the altar” (M 2:229), declaring again that he “never spoke of passion, nor thought of love” (M 2:229). He undergoes an uneventful period of nuptial life until Morella imparts her mystical knowledge to him, and he is frightened by her access to the forbidden. (I here use bold for figuratives, double underlining for superlatives, and underling for intensifiers.) Poe writes:

And then – then, when, poring over forbidden pages, I felt a forbidden

spirit **enkindling** within me – would Morella place her cold hand upon my own, and **rake up from the ashes of a dead philosophy** some low, singular words, whose strange meaning **burned** themselves in upon my memory. And then, hour after hour, would I linger by her side, and dwell upon the music of her voice – until, at length, its melody was tainted with terror, – and there fell a **shadow** upon my soul – and I grew pale, and shuddered inwardly at those too unearthly tones. And thus, joy suddenly faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous, **as Hinnom became Ge-Henna.** (M 2:230)

The adverbs in “too unearthly tones” and “suddenly faded into horror,” along with the dramatic superlatives in “the most beautiful became the most hideous,” intensify the degree of horror felt by the protagonist. However, the use of the simile “as Hinnom became Ge-Henna,” both alluding to the burning hell in Jewish theology (M 2:236-37) appears somewhat too remote for the reader to apprehend properly. More importantly, the image of fire—metaphorically and consistently—is again exploited in “enkindling,” “rake up from the ashes,” and “burned” to paint a full picture of the incantatory, potentially alchemical powers of Morella. The fire kindled by the spell-like force—of which Poe will later write, “the mystery of my wife’s manner oppressed me as a spell” (M 2:231)—is congruously contrasted with the dark imagery of the “shadow” falling on the narrator’s soul. The fire also accounts

for the unknown attraction of Morella for the protagonist at the outset. The fires that burn in his soul are, in fact, ignited by Morella's spell. Besides this, the alchemical fire that derives from the very imaginative phrase "the ashes of a dead philosophy" will be further developed into the thematic episode of the metempsychosis of Morella. The stylistic details in "Morella," unlike those in the earlier tale, demonstrate not only Poe's consistent arrangement of metaphors to form an unbroken and coherent picture of horror but also his picture of the tale as a whole, in which the metaphors are intimately and meaningfully connected with each other and serve as clues to an interpretation of the story.

"Morella" was soon replaced by another Gothic tale, "Ligeia," published approximately three years later and repeatedly regarded by Poe as "the best story I have written" (O 1:550) and "my *best* tale" (O 1:596). "Ligeia" indeed bears some resemblance to "Morella" since both touch upon the premature death of a mysterious and erudite wife, as well as the theme of metempsychosis. Yet, different from "Morella," "Ligeia"—as Poe himself was aware<sup>22</sup>—manifests a higher level of imagination in the use of simile, and Poe's use of simile rightly corresponds to Blair's categorizing simile and metaphor as the language of imagination, referring to "some of them [figures of speech] suggested by Imagination, when it is awakened and sprightly, such as Metaphors and Comparisons [namely similes]."<sup>23</sup> And figurative imagination is particularly illustrated in the episode of the lethal ruby-red drops falling from an unknown origin into the wine drunk by the protagonist's second wife

Rowena, the successor to Ligeia. (Below I use bold for figuratives and underlining for intensifiers.) Poe writes:

It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle foot-fall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, **as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room**, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid. . . . Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife. (M 2:325-26)

The adverbial intensifier “distinctly” heightens the supernatural phenomenon of the palpable footfall of the third being—supposedly his late wife Ligeia—and this intensifier is followed by the highly imaginative simile concerning the fatal liquid. The protagonist seems to see some ruby water dripping from an invisible spring in the air of the chamber. Through a random and unseen outlet in the empty space comes out the menacing blood-colored liquid that falls into Rowena’s goblet, and “immediately” after Rowena drinks the fluid, with the adverb intensifying the condition, her disease worsens, and she eventually dies.

The invisible water can be regarded as a representation of horror, as Gaston Bachelard suggests in *Water and Dreams*. He comments on Poe’s frequent imaginative use of water and

associates that use with death.<sup>24</sup> In effect, not merely in this passage but throughout the tale, liquids are intentionally and consistently linked with Ligeia as referents, paradoxically, to both vivacity and death. Alive, the eyes of Ligeia, the lady whom the protagonist firstly and frequently meets around the Rhine (M 2:310), for instance, are likened to “a stream of running water” (M 2:314), and her passion is depicted as such that “she pour[ed] out before me the overflowing of a heart” (M 2:317). As she struggles with illness, her veins “swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion” (M 2:316). The imaginative linking of water with life and death is ultimately consummated when the departed Ligeia is resurrected through the body of Rowena. Her spring-like hair “streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber” (M 2:330). The water parallels evident in this description and the pernicious “invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room” (M 2:325), causing Rowena’s death, suggest that Ligeia is, literally or figuratively, the supernatural being who destroys Rowena with the ruby-red fluid. The turbulent tide of desire for life transforms into the water of death. The stylistic rendering of figurative language not only generates the vivid effect of Gothic horror but also, in turn, enriches the meaning and reading of the tale.

Poe’s rendering of Gothic terror and horror is made possible through a number of stylistic techniques in his woman-centered tales “Berenice,” “Morella,” and “Ligeia.” In terms of terror, the periodic sentence, the cataphoric expression,<sup>25</sup> and the parenthesis, are some of the most obvious devices adopted by Poe to generate the effect of suspense. They

testify to Poe's applying Blair's rhetoric about the merit of suspending the sense in a sentence. Similarly, Poe's coherent use of figurative language in creating horror corresponds to Blair's principle of consistent use of similes and metaphors. By contrasting the three Gothic tales in the context of Blair's rhetorical theory, we can conclude that certain stylistic defects, such as superfluity, inconsistency, and remoteness in the exploitation of metaphor and simile, are more often detected in the earliest tale "Berenice" than in "Morella" and "Ligeia." The latter two tales present more effective Gothic terror and horror and hence demonstrate the author's improved compositional skill.

Poe combines terror with horror in these three Gothic tales. Horror, in Poe's creation and arrangement, often serves as the frightening inception of an unusual event that is followed by a tension-filled process of terror as preparation for the ultimate revelation of a mystery at the ending of the tale. The introduction of horror, then terror, constitutes a vivid start, arousing the reader's curiosity about the subsequent development of the ghastly incident until the final revelation. The long-held yet slowly built effect makes a forceful and lasting impression consistent with Poe's concern about effect in "The Philosophy of Composition" (L 2:60-61, 63) and with his advice, as expressed in his 1842 review of Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* (H 11:51) to reveal the utmost secret at the denouement.

Blair's theory, a rhetorical influence in Poe's time and known to Poe, should be more fully explored for its relevance to Poe's Gothic writing style. And other rhetorical theories of

Poe's time may also prove to have importantly shaped that style.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael G. Moran, introduction to *Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*, ed. Michael G. Moran. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen L. Carr, "The Circulation of Blair's *Lectures*," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 78, 79. For further comments on the rhetorical influence and position of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, see James L. Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett, introduction to *The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately*, rev. ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990). Golden and Corbett write, in part, "Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Richard Whately constituted the great triumvirate of British rhetoricians who came at the end of a long tradition of rhetoric which had its beginning in fifth-century Greece. But these men did not so much terminate a tradition as initiate the period of modern or new rhetoric" (1).

<sup>3</sup> See Carr. "The publication history of the *Lectures* is intimately bound up with its frequent use in schools, for textbooks have distinctive patterns of publication, use, and preservation. A popular textbook may be reprinted far more often than comparable texts not regularly included in school curricula." (77).

<sup>4</sup> William Charvat, *The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835* (New York: Perpetua, 1961), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Carr, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Ferreira-Buckley and S. Michael Halloran, "Editors' Introduction," in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* by Hugh Blair. (1783; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), xv.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Alterton, *Origins of Poe's Critical Theory* (1925; New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 74.

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Barlow Stauffer, "The Language and Style of the Prose" in *A Companion to Poe Studies*, ed. Eric W. Carlson. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 457.

<sup>9</sup> Robert D. Jacobs, *Poe: Journalist & Critic*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 172, 197, 198-99.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lasley Dameron, "Poe, 'Simplicity,' and *Blackwood's Magazine*," *Mississippi Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1998): 233-42 and "Poe and Twain: Cooper Reviewed and Revised" *Mississippi Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2000): 197-207. (See esp. p. 200.)

<sup>11</sup> Brett Zimmerman, *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 252, 331-32.

<sup>12</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. W. S. Lewis. (1764; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Sandner. (1826; Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 47.

<sup>14</sup> For further comments, see Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1990).

"Anticipatory constituents [of the periodic sentences] bring an element of suspense into syntax. A dependent constituent is one which cannot stand on its own, and hence cannot be interpreted in isolation. An anticipatory constituent must therefore be held in the memory until the major constituent of which it is a part has been interpreted" (226).

<sup>15</sup> For further comments, see Katie Wales, "cataphora; cataphoric reference," *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989). "With its delay of more precise information, cataphora lends itself to stylistic exploitation in the interests of suspense." (59).

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<sup>16</sup> Stauffer also sees the use of parenthesis as a means to achieve the effect of suspense in Poe. “It is demonstrably true that Poe qualifies, amplifies, interjects, emphasizes, and exclaims in an abundance of parentheses. He uses short interjections and transitional elements, or he inserts amplifying statements, creating three different kinds of effects. One result is a tone of fussiness or overexactness or timidity of expression through the device of qualifying statements; another is to prolong and intensify the suspense of a passage by interrupting its narrative flow” (464).

<sup>17</sup> Blair, 112, 113, 111, 125, 103.

<sup>18</sup> See Blair’s suggestion on the use of simile. “In the third place, the object from which a Comparison [namely simile] is drawn, should never be an unknown object, or one of which few people can form clear ideas,” adding “They should be taken from those illustrious, noted objects, which most of the readers either have seen, or can strongly conceive” (188).

<sup>19</sup> Blair, 165, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Zimmerman, in his discussion of “metaphora (metaphor),” takes Poe’s critique of Barrett’s use of metaphor as evidence of Blair’s influence on Poe (252).

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs sees Poe’s critique of Bryant’s use of metaphor as a demonstration of Blair’s influence on Poe (198-99).

<sup>22</sup> In his letter to Philip P. Cooke, Poe claims: “The loftiest kind is that of the highest imagination – and, for this reason only, ‘Ligeia’ may be called my *best* tale” (O 1:596).

<sup>23</sup> Blair, 195.

<sup>24</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. Edith R. Farrell. (Dallas: Pegasus, 1983), 46.

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<sup>25</sup> I also found that apart from “Berenice,” Poe uses the cataphoric device for the generation of suspense in several of his Gothic tales, e.g. the demoniac horse in the description of “But a new and fearful object soon riveted the attention of the multitude” in “Metzengerstein” (M 2:28-29), the corpse of Zoilus in “each of us there assembled beheld the pallor of his own countenance” in “Shadow – A Parable” (M 2:190), the *resurrected* Madeline Usher in “Not hear it? – yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long – long – long – many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it – yet I dared not – oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! – I dared not – *I dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? *I now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them – many, many days ago – yet I dared not – *I dared not speak!*” in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (M 2:416), and the second black cat in “One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat – a very large one – fully as large as Pluto” in “The Black Cat” (M 3:854).