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Everybody has one: Stephen King and the Jungian shadow

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Stephen King and the

Jungian Shadow

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Abstract

Everybody Has One:

Stephen King and the Jungian Shadow

by

Thomas B. Frazier

Regardless of his cavalier comments about his concern
for critical acceptance, Stephen King utilizes his fiction
to include his readers in his search for validation for
himself and his works. In four works which are King's most
metafictional--The Shining (1977), Misery (1987), The Dark
Half (1989), and "Secret Window, Secret Garden" (1990)--he
makes his readers witnesses to his conflict with his
artistic shadow. King's admission that he considers himself
Jungian in temperament displays itself in his use of Jungian
archetypes.

Through the trials of the writer protagonists he
creates for his metafiction, King creates reader interest in
the psychological investment writers must make in their art.
In each case, the protagonist must prove to himself if he
can write and that what he writes is worth the effort. Two
of the protagonists, Paul Sheldon of Misery and Thad
Beaumont of The Dark Half, succeed, while two, Jack Torrance
of The Shining and Mort Rainey of "Secret Window, Secret
Garden," do not. Through his ability to create successful
texts involving two types of writers as protagonists, King
validates his ability to tell a story.

Thomas B. Frazier

Chapters I and II are general discussions of King's writing theory and his use of writer protagonists in his pre-metafictionan texts--_'Salem's Lot_ (1975), "The Body" (1982), and _It_ (1986). Chapter III discusses the severity of writer's block as depicted in _The Shining_. Chapter IV examines the reader-writer dynamic as seen in _Misery_. Chapter V presents King's concern with the uncontrolled imagination as he presents in _The Dark Half_. Chapter VI explores plagiarism, the destroyer of any writer, as in "Secret Window, Secret Garden."

Although King has announced that "Secret Window, Secret Garden" is his last work dealing with writers and writing, he has yet to receive the complete validation that he seeks or to provide closure for writer/writing component of his literary career.

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Two special persons deserve more thanks than might be possible: my father Brooks Frazier, who did not live to see this project finished but who always said it would be, and Stephen King, who writes fiction interesting and complex enough to merit the time given to my analysis.

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Chapter I

A War of Words:

Stephen King, His Audience, and His Writing

Sigmund Freud writes that the author "creates a world of phantasy [sic] which he takes very seriously--that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion--while separating it sharply from reality" (437). The source of Freud's "world of phantasy" can also be found, in Carl Jung's estimation, in the "'active imagination' . . . [or that] sequence of fantasies produced by deliberate concentration" (9.49). Jung elaborates upon this theory of the active imagination:

> there are certain collective unconscious
> conditions which act as regulators and stimulators
> of creative fantasy-activity and call forth
> corresponding formations by availing themselves of
> the existing conscious material. They behave
> exactly like the motive forces of dreams, for
> which reason active imagination, as I have called
> this method, to some extent takes the place of
> dreams. (8.204)

Through writing, authors verbalize the dreams lurking in their unconscious by allowing them to come to the surface unencumbered through the author's imagination.

2

For the March 19, 1970, "King's Garbage Truck" column in the University of Maine's Maine Campus, Stephen King writes that "In a lot of my writing I've been worried about the morbid, about Things that Lurk. Maybe [they] . . . are only part of the urge to generalize the internal monster in all of us" (5). Close readers of King find his need to describe those "Things that Lurk" everywhere in his texts. Most of his fictionalized writers, like King himself, attempt to deal with things which find life in those nightmares "that hide just beyond the doorway that separates the conscious from the unconscious" (King, "The Horror Writer" 12). They attempt to come to terms with the release of their Jungian shadows by following the lead of their active imaginations.

When delineating the components of the psyche, Carl Jung describes the shadow as coinciding "with the 'personal' unconscious" and says that it "personifies everything the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet [it] is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly" (9.284-285). King contends that he is definitely "Jungian" (qtd. in Magistrale, Second Generation 4) and that as a Jungian he recognizes his shadow, the perception that a writer writes for personal reasons and wants his work to be accepted as serious endeavors. King's attempted understanding through writing corresponds to Jung's "realization of the shadow" (8.208).

In the foreword to his 1976 <u>Night Shift</u> short story collection, King acknowledges that by dealing with his audience's nightmares, "The horror-story writer is not so different from the Welsh sin-eater, who was supposed to take upon himself the sins of the dear departed" (xviii). Thus, the purpose of the sin-eating horror writer is to deal with his audience's repressed fears that rest in their personal unconsciouses. Too, through the fictional situations he creates, the horror writer deals with his own personal unconscious, allowing his fiction to serve as his own sin-eater. Through his four major writer protagonists--Jack Torrance, Paul Sheldon, Thad Beaumont, and Mort Rainey--King assumes the task of writing away the cares and concerns of an audience as well as his own.

King's sin-eating function--bringing into focus those real fears which disturb both himself and those who read his fiction--has generated a massive body of literature (27 novels, 5 collections of shorter fiction, 1 book of criticism, 7 movie or television scripts, and scores of uncollected articles, poems and stories) that has attracted the army of page turners he must constantly affect and satisfy. But subject matter alone does not guarantee audience satisfaction. In "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Edgar Allan Poe contends that the first creative hurdle a writer must clear is the "consideration of an effect" (364). Only after an audience has been determined

and a reader reaction has been contemplated can the author provide what is needed to properly seduce and manipulate his reader. Wolfgang Iser, in his The Act of Reading (1978), calls this perceived audience the "implied reader" who "designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text. No matter who or what he may be, the real reader is always offered a role to play" (34-35). King successfully formulates what Iser calls response-inviting structures which create dread in his readers, forcing them to become emotional allies with characters besieged by natural or supernatural elements that King has chosen as the antagonistic forces for his work.

According to Ben Indick, "If a story of fear is to succeed, the characters and situations must be such as to offer ready association for the reader; the dangers must be of a vitally important and basic nature, whether to the ego or to life itself" ("Scary" 9). In the same vein, Tzvetan Todorov, in 1970, wrote that horror or fantastic literature "implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters; that world is defined by the reader's own ambiguous perception of the events narrated" (31). In his 1989 study of best sellers, Paul Batesal stresses that readers in general have always approached fiction with "what they were interested in, what they considered to be important, and what function they wanted the novel to perform" (16). Even more definite is Lennard Davis's 1987

contention that "there are no subjects in novels. The only subject is the reader" (108). Davis elaborates further: "The novel creates the illusion that somehow readers are inside the minds of characters, following their thought processes" (153).

These critics' suggestions concerning the reader's active role in the fictionalizing process display a direct psychological connection between the writer's and the reader's psyches. By understanding the socially acquired, common fears and concerns he shares with his audience, a writer discerns the means of teasing his readers into confronting portions of the writer's personal unconscious which he does not realize that he has set free:

> the contents of the collective unconscious . . .
> have never been in consciousness, and therefore
> have never been individually acquired, but owe
> their existence exclusively to heredity. . .
> [T]he content of the collective unconscious is
> made up essentially of archetypes. (Jung 9.42)

Through his interviews and in his fiction, King clearly demonstrates an understanding of the Jungian theory of archetypes. He uses this understanding to develop active roles for his readers by creating situations which force the audience to assist in eliciting the desired effect of a particular work. For instance, King makes his readers enter the minds of both Annie Wilkes and Paul Sheldon in Misery.

Only after the reader accepts Misery as being as much a psychological biography of writer surrogate Paul Sheldon as it is of Annie Wilkes the surrogate reader has King clearly prompted an active artistic partnership. As Sheldon writes Misery's Return, the reader becomes more active by attempting to determine where King and Sheldon will go next in their fictions. Because of this limitation of their collective unconscious set by genre expectations and the "Stephen King experience," King's readers expect certain elements and techniques in their favorite writer's works and are not satisfied with anything less. Annie Wilkes' violent reaction when Paul Sheldon ceases writing the Misery novels for Fast Cars is King's case in point. The reactions of both Annie Wilkes and King's real audience do not come from artistic deficiencies in the texts in question. Rather, if said texts do not meet their expectations, they are not "Sheldon" or "King" novels. The reader does not accept them under the name emblazoned on the book jacket.

King takes great personal and professional pride in being a horror writer and finds a deep satisfaction in his facility for leaving his audience thoroughly frightened. In Stephen King (1982), Douglas Winter argues that knowing what "the typical reader of horror fiction is willing to believe should render the author's task that much easier" (19). To fully test his audience's willingness to believe, King attacks the "phobic pressure points, . . . the secret door

to the room you believed no one but you knew of" (<u>Danse</u>
<u>Macabre</u> 18). To ensure that he does not leave any hidden
rooms un-entered, King willingly admits that "I'll try to
terrify you first, and if that doesn't work, I'll try to
horrify you, and if I can't make it there, I'll try to gross
you out. I'm not proud" (qtd. in Norden 50).

Suitable operative definitions for "horror" and
"terror" are needed if one is to fully appreciate King's
attempts to frighten his audience and his reasons for making
the attempt. Terry Heller, in <u>The Delights of Terror</u>
(1987), proposes that "Terror is the fear that harm will
come to oneself. Horror is the emotion one feels in
anticipating and witnessing harm coming to others for whom
one cares" (19). But King, himself, goes one step further,
observing that "the horror writer always brings bad news:
you're going to die" (<u>Night Shift</u> xvii), the ultimate fear
embedded in the collective unconscious. King specifically
designs his tales to bring his readers' and his own fears to
the surface and to again disarm these fears through his sin-
eating, writing role.

King uses the force of his diegesis to lead his
believing audience along a fictional path toward the desired
reaction. After drawing readers into a specific narrative
pattern, King directly manipulates their reactions to the
depicted predicament of a particular character or select
group of characters. For instance, in King's novel <u>Pet</u>

<u>Sematary</u> (1983), his readers are prepared for the drastic negative changes in all who are buried in the mysterious Indian burial ground. Here, King does more than lead his readers through the narrative; for instance, he forces them to imagine what will transpire following the work's closing scene:

> He [Louis Creed, the novel's protagonist] played solitaire that night until long after midnight.
>
> He was just dealing a fresh hand when he heard the back door open.
>
> <u>What you buy is what you own, and sooner or later what you own will come back to you</u>, Louis Creed thought.
>
> He did not turn around but only looked at his cards as the slow, gritting footsteps approached. He saw the queen of spades. He put his hand on it.
>
> The steps ended directly behind him.
>
> Silence.
>
> A cold hand fell on Louis's shoulder.
>
> Rachel's voice was grating, full of dirt.
>
> "Darling," it said. (410)

The reader is thus left with an open-ended situation full of imaginative potential.

Pet Sematary's closing paragraphs demonstrate King's
audience manipulation in two ways. First, the reader is
prepared for this scene by what has gone on before. Second,
King utilizes both word and symbol to elicit the reader's
response. When Creed draws the queen of spades, the death
card, the reader expects both Creed's own death, which does
not occur in the work, and something which does, death
personified by Creed's returning wife Rachel. Additionally,
King's referring to the voice as "it" leads readers to
accept the creature standing behind Creed not as the wife
that he buried "the other side of the deadfall" (407) but as
a creature that represents the evil residing in the sacred
burial ground and human fears of things that will not stay
dead. She is now no different from the cat, the bull, and
the village tough who preceded her in the to-the-grave-and-
back journey central to Pet Sematary.

However, audience reaction to horror fiction and cinema
goes beyond specific verbal and visual sequences laid before
them. Thus, as Terry Heller writes, "The implied reader's
close identification with the character who is terrorized
leads to a deep sympathetic involvement in his struggles to
master his world" (25), stemming, no doubt, from the
writer's ability to evoke his readers' collective
unconscious. Every Stephen King work pits some individual
or selected group against another individual or group over
whom dominance must be achieved. If King's anointed are to

survive and his narrative is to succeed in enlisting active audience participation, his readers must choose up sides and identify with the terrorized characters. King's semantics and syntax are chosen to create a specific reader orientation because, as Joseph Grixti writes, "King is very much aware of the importance of getting his readers to acknowledge the possibilities of 'seeing things directly,' and to recognize the frequent unreachability of perception" (67). For instance, in the brief, concluding passage from the closing section of <u>Pet Sematary</u> in which Louis Creed thinks "<u>What you buy is what you own, and sooner or later what you own will come back to you</u>" (410), King uses italics to intensify the importance of this reflection in the minds of his readers. Thus, the typography carries as much effect as do the words themselves.

The art of writing is paramount in King's artistic hierarchy. To King, writing is "a secret act" ("Two Past Midnight" 250) and "an act of self-hypnosis" ("Three Past Midnight" 405) creating a place where "terrors which should have been long dead start to walk and talk again" ("Three Past Midnight" 405), bringing into play the archetypal structure of the imagination, both the writer's and the reader's. According to Lennard Davis, "In reading we project our own feelings and thoughts into characters, we attribute to them a range of passion and actions that we might never allow ourselves" (20). By providing the proper

stimuli, the writer causes the reader to activate a personal unconscious in order to become directly tied to the collective unconscious the writer has laid before him. Linda Hutcheon stresses that the reader must "face his responsibility" (27) for assisting the author in creating a literary experience. By this token, the author-reader relationship has been set.

One of the concerns which King confronts in much of his fiction is just how writing that will trigger the reader's unconscious is accomplished. Many King works are appended either with introductions, forewords, or afterwards discussing the creation of a particular work and its place in the greater literary picture, much like Henry James's prefatory essays. For instance, in the introduction to Skeleton Crew (1985), King notes the genesis of such stories as "Word Processor of the Gods" (1983) and "The Reaper's Image" (1969) but contends that his faithful followers "won't like [the new collection] as well as you would a novel, because most of you have forgotten the real pleasures of the short story" (16). King then presents the short story art form as deserving the serious consideration given to the novel:

> A short story is a different thing altogether--a
> short story is like a quick kiss in the dark from
> a stranger. This is not, of course, the same
> thing as an affair or marriage, but kisses can be

> sweet, and their brevity forms their own
>
> attraction. (17)

King, here, makes an obtuse reference to the entire body of
fiction which he has written, and which has been frowned
upon by critics because of its genre or style, as an active
relationship between writer and reader.

In his prefaces, afterwards, essays, introductions,
public addresses, and Hitchcockian guest appearances in his
own films, King stresses the active involvement of an author
in every aspect of his work. In addition to directly
voicing his opinion on writing in his non-fiction, King
creates fictional personages who are writers playing both
major and supporting roles in his works as conveyors of his
artistic shadow. Through these writer characters, King
personifies the creative trials of all who are driven to
write. His authors range from those who are writers in name
only to those who write or attempt to write as part of their
diegetic purposes. King intensifies these latter writers'
relevance by including passages from fiction credited to
them.

For example, the perceptive viewer recognizes King's
appearance as a minister in the movie version of <u>Pet
Sematary</u> as demonstrating his sense of his characters as
extensions of himself. Similarly, the reader is led to
imagine <u>Misery</u>'s Paul Sheldon thinking and speaking in
King's voice. In fact, King has already shown that the

creative turmoil faced by Sheldon, such as keeping readers reading while maintaining artistic integrity, are King's own. When Sheldon returns to his popular romances, King justifies his own continuing to work in the "popular" horror genre which has placed him on the best seller lists. As the "King reader" is aware, on several occasions, King, like Sheldon, has toyed with "serious" or mainstream writing, a prime example being his 1982 Different Seasons collection of novellas containing the well-received "The Body," but he always returns to his genre writing.

To set the tone and to lay the foundation for an extensive study of Stephen King's fiction dealing with writers and writing, one would do well to begin by looking at his statements about writing in his now famous 1983 Playboy interview:

> [After Carrie was published,] I was free to quit teaching and fulfill what I believe is my only function in life: to write books. Good, bad, or indifferent books, that's for others to decide; for me, it's enough just to write. (qtd. in Norden 33)

Here we witness Stephen King the high school English teacher "wannabe" becoming Stephen King the teller of stories, Stephen King the master of fright, and Stephen King the possessor of his own book club. Even more important, we

encounter his actualizing a drive to write fueled by some inner personal need.

King claims that he has written most of his life, and "according to his aunt, he showed great interest in writing as early as the age of six. She says she cannot remember him ever just sitting idle, he was always writing" (Footman 3). Similarly, one of King's grade school teachers at West Durham, Maine, "describes his writing as well beyond his years and age level, and says he particularly enjoyed writing 'space stories'" (Footman 3). This youthful creativity intensified and followed King to the University of Maine at Orono where he was a regular contributor to the campus literary publication Ubris and where he wrote his weekly "King's Garbage Truck" column for the student newspaper, The Maine Campus. It was while he was a college student that he made his first sale, a story entitled "The Glass Floor" purchased by Startling Mystery Stories for $35 (Beahm 40-43).

King underscores the claim that the successful writer "must arouse the emotion of the reader--whether it's language or tears or tension" (qtd. in Murari 238). For King, the key to any writer's audience manipulation is the joining of the writer's and the reader's imaginations:

> The imagination is an eye, a marvelous third eye
> that floats free. The job of the fantasy writer,
> or the horror writer, is to provide a single,

powerful spectacle for that third eye. If I can

scare my reader and keep him turning the page, I

have succeeded in my craft. (qtd. in Murari 238)

This coincides with Linda Hutcheon's assertion in

Narcissistic Narrative (1980) that "The reader and writer

are engaged in acts which are parallel, if reversed in

direction, for both make fictive worlds in and through the

actual functioning of language" (30), making all literature

a partnership with both writer and reader participating in

the creation of narrative situations.

King is adamant that the story or plot of a work is the

most crucial element in keeping his readers satisfied, for

as he discloses, "story must be paramount, because it

defines the entire work of fiction. All other

considerations are secondary" (qtd. in Norden 53). However,

in order to uncover the substance of a gripping and

entertaining story or narrative, the writer must remove all

constraints from his own imagination because, according to

King, "You have to grow into your imagination. Your

imagination doesn't grow with you" (qtd. in Christian 34).

Subsequently, the imagination leads where it wants, at times

allowing the created to become the creator; the story takes

on a life of its own. As King confesses, "You can't always

tell yourself you're going to write one particular thing and

that's that. You get the story, and the story takes hold,

and away you go" (qtd. in Grant 22).

In attempting to guarantee the effectiveness of any story he is weaving, King becomes personally engaged and reaches down into "the gut, which is the place from which the strongest emotional writing originates" (Afterward, <u>Dark Tower</u> 223). King posits that, in addition to becoming emotionally involved with a story, a writer is granted manipulative power through his imagination and his desire to write because "If you're writing a book, you point your finger at somebody, just like God, and say, 'You turkey, you're coming with me,' and the character drops dead" (qtd. in Schaffer 114). This is the clearest statement by King concerning the writer's ability to make things happen and to control or realize the Jungian shadow lying within the individual's active imagination. In practice, King concretizes these theoretical generative and destructive promises of language and writing by populating much of his fiction with characters who write.

Nowhere does King better illustrate the vitality of language and the awesome potential of the writer than in his short story "Word Processor of the Gods." When Richard Hagstrom, the story's protagonist, first operates the hybrid word processor built earlier by his recently deceased nephew Jonathan, strange events involving the machine and word power transpire. King foreshadows the situation when he tells of Hagstrom's introduction to the special powers of

his new word processor, a power he feels more than he
understands:

> [He] pushed the EXECUTE button on the board. A
> funny little chill scraped across his spine as he
> did it--EXECUTE was a funny word to use when you
> thought of it. It wasn't a word he associated
> with writing; it was a word he associated with
> gas chambers and electric chairs. (276)

Later Hagstrom learns the potential power of a few simple
key strokes on his new machine:

> He typed:
>
> MY WIFE'S PHOTOGRAPH HANGS ON THE WEST WALL
> OF MY STUDY.
>
> He looked at the words and liked them no
> more than he liked the picture itself. He pushed
> the DELETE button. The words vanished. Now
> there was nothing at all on the screen but the
> steadily pulsing cursor.
>
> He looked up at the wall and saw that his
> wife's picture had also vanished. (278)

Through this word manipulation, replacing EXECUTE with its
near synonym DELETE, Hagstrom linguistically alters reality,
much as King does in his fiction, displaying an unconscious
desire to bring his shadow to the surface. This indirectly
illustrates the author's "duty to recreate the world as he

sees it" (Wornom 177) or to go where his active imagination or artistic shadow leads him.

But King does not let his role as a demigod become all-consuming because, as he quickly concedes, "I'm going to write what I need to write because if you don't that's when you start to lie" (qtd. in Wolensky and Davidson 28). This clearly displays his recognition that any successful writer must deal directly with the writing urged upon him by his shadow, not with the writing he might feel more comfortable with at any given moment. King argues that, just as the progression of a narrative is often dictated by the story itself, "what you choose to write about is buried so deeply inside it's like lodestones inside you and sooner or later you come near something that you're supposed to be doing with your life and it's like a magnet. It attracts" (qtd. in Wolensky and Davidson 24). King has found the inspiration for many of his major works by merely asking the simple question, "What if . . . ?" A narrative answer soon emerges from King's active imagination, drawn much like iron filings to a magnet. Too, King's major writer protagonists speak for their creator when they ask the same "What if?" concerning their own lives and writing abilities, eventually understanding their hidden selves. A conscientious reader soon determines that King asks more than just, "What if Dracula were to return?" or "What if buried persons refuse to stay buried?" King, through his fictional surrogates,

actually asks, "What if I no longer can write?" or "What if I can't write well?"

Given that Stephen King expends such an amount of time and effort pondering the writing process and the writer-reader relationship, it is only natural that this concern acquires motif status in his fiction. King freely populates much of his fiction with individuals who write or desire to write. Within the pages of numerous King stories and novels, the written word achieves a power paralleling that of other such King narrative or plot devices as good against evil in It (1986), man against machine in "The Mangler" (1972) and Christine (1983), and the individual against the group in The Dead Zone (1979), Firestarter (1980) and Carrie (1974). As does almost every other aspect of King's fiction, his writer-writing motif draws attention to itself and provides still more critical fodder.

Many critics choose to investigate King's "scripto-centric" works through traditional psychological and thematic approaches. Tony Magistrale, for instance, contends that through his writer dominated works, "King offers the means to salvation through art: the dark chaos of the world can be managed, but only through the illumination of the mind that has labored to gain control over itself" (Moral Voyages 120). The validity of Magistrale's assertion cannot be questioned because major King works such as The Shining, Misery, The Dark Half, and "Secret Window, Secret

Garden" do focus upon characters actively seeking release from their hidden darker sides through writing, with only some actually finding that which they seek.

Even though King stresses that "As a Freudian, I'm a real opportunist. I'm more apt to use the theories to advance my ideas rather than to use my ideas to explore further the theories" (qtd. in Magistrale, Second Decade 4), the careful reader must admit that King is just as opportunistic in his handling of Jungian psychology. In his works, he actually creates a collective unconscious for his readers, knowing how their psychologies already work. One is certain that King understands the popular versions of Freudian and Jungian psychology and that he knows his audience has a similar understanding.

In King's writer-centered works, the creator and the created, the writer and the written, provide a gradually intensifying analysis of the vitality of the creative process as an entity in itself as well as a window into the writer's soul. In the works to be considered in this study, the writer-writing paradigm substantiates Magistrale's contention that a writer attempts to gain control over the self or achieve a realization of the shadow through writing. It is, however, in King's four major writer-centered works that the potential of this motif comes to fruition. In The Shining, Misery, The Dark Half, and "Secret Window, Secret Garden," King directly examines and invites the reader to

examine the way he manipulates his text in order to control his audience. King contends that he does not have a hidden agenda in his fiction and that "Theme and symbol are very strong and valid parts of literature, and there's no reason not to put them right out front" (qtd. in Lofficier 62). Even so, the discussions and descriptions of the writing process in his metafiction must be viewed as carrying implicit meaning. These works, either intentionally or unintentionally, are the culminations of King's move toward the development of a metafiction. In his metafiction, King explores and attempts to demonstrate the fictionalizing process and the psychological source of his fiction. The creation of fiction and its psychological significance become these works' raison d'etre.

In Narcissistic Narrative (1980), Linda Hutcheon stresses that "Overtly narcissistic novels place fictionality, structure, and language as their content's core" (29) and that this "laying bare of literary devices in metafiction brings to the reader's attention those formal elements in which, through over-familiarization, he has become aware" (24). King's writer-centered works, to one degree or another, exemplify Hutcheon's laying bare of fictional techniques. In these works, King depicts the steps fiction takes from conception to completion. Here he illustrates Sarah Lauzen's contention that the writer and reader of metafiction are primarily concerned with "how the

text reaches the reader. Generally this means the physical presentation of the text in a book" (108).

King does not immediately jump into his highly psychological and metafictional Misery and The Dark Half. Many of his earlier works are about the underlying importance of the writing process and those who are involved in it. Understanding King's gradual movement into his highly metafictional works allows the reader to appreciate later the uniqueness of my study's four focused works which "contain within themselves the means for their own examination and elucidation as well as a critique of the current status of the literary species" (Lauzen 94). Lauzen's literary species can as easily refer to the creator of literature as to the result of the creative process. In this mien, the four works represent King's and his author characters' realization of their individual and collective shadows.

Chapter II

Let Me Write You a Story:

The Creative Urge in Stephen King's Fiction

I have designed my study around King's use of the writer as protagonist and of writing as a thematic center for many of his works. An investigation of the portion of King's canon which deals with writers and writing, in particular his four most metafictional four works (The Shining, Misery, The Dark Half, and "Secret Window, Secret Garden"), shows that this is not a one-work phenomenon. Sarah Lauzen provided an appropriate foundation for investigating King's writer novels as metafictional constructions when she wrote in 1987 that "metafictional novels are quest novels" (94). However, I am more interested in how King's four major metafictional works compose a psychological case study of a real writer, Stephen King, trying to come to terms with and to validate his artistic shadow.

King introduced his vision of the writer protagonist with the 1975 publication of 'Salem's Lot. Close investigation of King's writer protagonists discloses that they operate on one of two levels: those who appear as writers in name only and those whose literary creations are as important to a given narrative as the writer himself or herself. The significance of each of King's writer-centered

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works must be explored on an individual basis; nevertheless, they all have in common a character with an artistic shadow or secret self, "the creative and sensitive nature that can all too easily be cruelly misunderstood" (Reino 128). King, "by the frequent . . . uncontrollable, expression of private experiences, such as . . . nightmares, father-losses, and unremembered train traumas" (Reino 8), shows the power of these characters of the imagination and past experiences in building a writer's need to purge personal demons through writing. As King writes in 'Salem's Lot, "If fear can't be articulated, it can't be conquered" (204). This becomes central to understanding the Jungian implications of King's metafiction when one realizes that, regardless what he says, the major fears that King confronts is the fear of losing the ability to write and of not being taken seriously as a writer.

Although none of his works is a Roman a Clef, many of his fictional situations parallel events in King's life. However much he warns, "[N]ever believe a writer when he seems to be offering you autobiography, because we all lie" ("Evening" 17), King's writer-oriented works disclose more about King than he might want to admit. His writer protagonists suffer set backs as they grow professionally and artistically and, as did King, they must attempt to come to terms with their place in the greater literary picture. Some strive to fit into the literary mainstream, while

others find safety, success, and satisfaction writing genre fiction. When asked why so many writers hold key positions in his fiction, King posits that "most of us know that your work is your life, and you can't really separate what you do from what you are" (qtd. in Gagne 139-40).

Three early King works, 'Salem's Lot (1975), "The Body" (1982), and It (1986), can easily be classified as his pre-metafiction. All of these texts are about novelists who must confront their childhood fears, their shadows, in order to achieve personal and professonal goals. While their personal and professional goals are inseparable, part of the confrontation process involves separating reality from fiction. In each instance the protagonist must deal directly with a personal "monster" which represents his shadow if he is to assume control of his life: Ben Mears must confront Barlow, the vampire, in 'Salem's Lot; Gordie Lachance must find the body in the novella of the same title; and Bill Denbrough must come to terms with It.

With the exception of 'Salem's Lot, King allows his writer protagonists' works to carry some of the thematic load in his pre-metafictional texts. In each instance, King demonstrates that his characters' audiences are drawn into texts which had subconscious bases in the lives of their creators, much as his own audience is. For instance, in It, Bill Denbrough's successful fiction invites his readers into his psyche when he subconsciously writes about such

disturbing topics as the death of his little brother at the hands of the evil It and of a negative encounter during a college creative writing class. In "The Body," we find that the stories upon which Gordie Lachance has built a reputation are based upon childhood fears and encounters with his shadow. In fact, the text of "The Body" is presented as a published adult recollection of an event which had lain dormat in Gordie's memory since his youth.

Ben Mears, the protagonist of 'Salem's Lot and King's first writer protagonist, sets the stage for those writer characters who follow in King's fiction. Mears operates as he does because of the high power of his imagination, but his literary output is mentioned only in passing to give some thematic insight into the narrative in which he appears. According to Gary Crawford, Mears is "a writer recovering from the death of his wife, who returns to Jerusalem's Lot after many years to find relief from the guilt or torment he feels" (43). He finds, in the long run, that he is searching for relief from more than just his wife's death. King writes that while planning 'Salem's Lot, "I was thinking about secrets, things that have been hidden and were being dragged out into the light" ("An Evening" 3), clearly showing that both Mears and his creator King delve into their parallel shadows. Mears admits that he had returned to Jerusalem's Lot to write a book which proved to be about the Marsten House: "Maybe it didn't start out to

be, not wholly. I thought it was going to be about this town. But maybe I'm fooling myself" (110). Mears, as does Stephen King, searches the hidden recesses of his own psyche's haunted house to come to terms with his life and his art.

Mears initially finds himself combating the evil associated with the house that, personified by the character Barlow, represents Ben's deep dreads and fears. When young Mark Petrie tells Ben that Susan Norton, Ben's love interest who is imprisoned in the Marsten House, has become a vampire, Ben is transported back to the moment when he stood looking at the body of his wife Miranda following her death in a motorcycle accident. At the convergence of these traumatic points, Ben realizes that he felt at the time of Miranda's death "what he was feeling now: the complex and awful mental and physical interaction that is the beginning of acceptance, and the only counterpart to that feeling is rape" (315): he realizes that his past and his present are somehow directly interwoven and, like rape, are out of his control. This is the beginning of Ben's acceptance of what his past has done to create the adult he has become. There is no magic cure for his pain; in fact, when Ben first returns to 'Salem's Lot, he himself questions his return's potential:

> what magic could he expect to recapture by
> walking roads that he had once walked as a boy

and were probably asphalted and straightened and

logged off and littered with tourist beer cans?

The magic was gone, both white and black" (4).

In actuality, he is trying to find meaning for his present

by looking into the fears created by his past.

Just as Mears is unable to escape his deep hurt and

loss by returning to 'Salem's Lot, he is unable to elude the

nightmarish Marsten House and what it represents by leaving.

More directly related to Mears, the house represents the

point at which his "childhood horror and adult horror [have]

merged" ('Salem's Lot 340). According to King, all of his

characters are shown "facing up to the worst things in their

lives in various ways" (qtd. in Christian 37), whether a

childhood fear, an intense feeling of alienation or the

danger of losing the all-too-important creative spark. When

Mears entered 'Salem's Lot, he "swallowed and stared up at

the house, almost hypnotized" (6) and was made ill at ease

by the memories of his childhood encounter with the house.

King maintains constant notice of the Marsten House's

role in 'Salem's Lot by introducing the snow globe with "a

little house inside, . . . when you shake it, there's snow"

(28). Mears remembers that as part of a pre-pubescent

initiation ritual, he had to prove that he had been inside

the house, so he put the globe into his pocket as he moved

deeper into the house's interior. Young Ben's exit is

hastened when he imagines that he sees the long-dead body of

Hubie Marsten hanging from a rafter in one of the rooms, staring at him, causing the adult Ben to remember that it was then that "[I] noticed I still had the glass snow globe in my hand. And I've still got it" (29). The association reveals that the fears that drove him from the Marsten House and 'Salem's Lot remain with him. Toward the end of the novel, Mears throws "the paperweight into the corner and it shattered. He left without waiting to see what might leak out of it" (418), an action caused, says Joseph Reino, by Mears' possible "unconscious fear of having to face some unbearable realities" (6). But even more importantly, "As a symbol of the gothic imagination, encased in a globe of protective glass, impenetrable until finally bashed onto a floor, the paperweight image at the beginning and conclusion of 'Salem's Lot is stunningly effective" (Reino 7). Fueling what Reino calls the gothic imagination are Mears' and King's own pent up fears to be released when they are able to realize their shadows through their writing.

The novella "The Body" is often "acknowledged as the most nearly autobiographical of King's works" (Reino 117). The text recounts childhood adventures, fears and disappointments, often paralleling events in King's own life. George Beahm writes that the autobiographical elements in the story "are important not because they intrude into King's personal life, but because that private life has been carried over into fiction" (5).

Like Ben Mears, Gordy Lachance returns to the time and
the place of his youth in search of himself. However,
Lachance's return is more imaginative in nature: he returns
to a specific time through memories rather than physically
returning to a place as Mears does, the psychological
consuming the physical. According to Lachance, this is not
necessarily a pleasant undertaking:

> every now and then [the imagination] turns and
> bites the shit out of you with these long teeth,
> teeth that have been filed to points like the
> teeth of a cannibal. You see things you'd just
> as soon not see, things that keep you awake until
> first light. (404)

Although we repress those things with which we are unable to
deal rationally, when the time is right, the memories return
and must be dealt with. As Ben Mears and other King writers
do, Lachance must purge his memory bank and move on, or he
will be destroyed. Like King's other writer characters and
King himself, Lachance's purging comes through writing away
those painful memories. This, says King, is "translating
the real fears into symbolic fears so that you can deal with
them in another way" (qtd. in Robertson 231) because,
stresses Jung, symbolizing "is of the utmost importance for
understanding the final stages of the encounter between
conscious and unconscious" (9.289).

In Landscape of Fear, Tony Magistrale writes that
Lachance and his friends "are as much in flight from their
homes and community as they are curious about seeing Ray
Brower's corpse" (92). All four have been tormented and
retain hidden fears that they must overcome. Lachance
shares one fear with all other writers; he fears that others
may disapprove of his desire to write stories:

> I always felt uncomfortable when the talk turned
>
> to my stories, although all of them [his friends]
>
> seemed to like them--wanting to tell stories,
>
> even wanting to write them down . . . was just
>
> peculiar enough to be cool, like wanting to grow
>
> up to be a sewer inspector or a Grand Prix
>
> mechanic. (360)

It becomes apparent that only the adults with whom he comes
into contact might disapprove, if they give the situation
serious consideration at all, because the adults have lost
their innocence and allow themselves to be guided by their
own repressed, personal unconsciousness.

At one point when Lachance jokingly calls his friend
Chris "father," Chris explodes, not necessarily at him but
at the way adults regard children:

> It's like God gave you something, all those
>
> stories you can make up, and He said: This is
>
> what we got for you kid. Try not to lose it.
>
> But kids lose everything unless somebody looks

out for them and if your folks are too fucked up

to do it then maybe I ought to. (377-78)

This echoes Wordsworth's contention in "Ode: Intimations of

Immortality" that an artist's creations are born within

"Some fragment from his dream of human life, / Shaped by

himself with newly learned art" (92-93). But Lachance

receives no encouragement at home to pursue his art or to

realize his need for self-expression.

After their older son's death, Lachance's parents treat

their remaining child as if he did not exist:

This business about being ignored: I could never

really pin it down until I did a book report in

high school on this novel called The Invisible

Man . . . about a Negro. Nobody ever notices him

at all unless he fucks up. People look right

through him. When he talks, nobody answers.

(306)

As Tony Magistrale observes, Lachance and his companions,

like many other King child characters, "are more often than

not the outcasts, threatening the adult community--its

pervasive systems of regulation and deceit" (Landscape 111).

Lachance looks to escape his parents' total disregard of his

existence through the companionship of his friends, while

others in his group similarly attempt to escape their own

abuse at the hands of adults. As a youngster, King often

felt that he was not assimilated by the various cliques

which prevailed in the communities in which he lived; for instance, George Beahm recounts in The Stephen King Story that "King was in a physical sense an outsider--a large and ungainly child" (21). It is for this reason that Lachance muses, "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, did you?" (337). Only by later writing of his adventures during those two September days in his youth, does he come to terms with the outing's significance and what he and his friends really accomplished; they confronted and defeated the collective fears and found a place in which to belong.

Tony Magistrale observes that many of King's most successful characters maintain "a child-like faith in the magic of life" (Landscape 117). King's adult writers are like these children in that they are able to function in worlds created by active imaginations. In a 1983 interview for Waldenbooks Book Notes, King cautions that "when you live in your imagination a lot of the time, it may take you anywhere--anywhere at all" (124). Yet, even with the dangerous potential of an active imagination, it is the imagination that permits King and his writer characters to function and to develop some understanding of their lives.

The writer is more than a mature imaginative child, however, when he becomes able to channel the imagination to the point of giving physical substance to dreams, fears and concerns in the forms of novels and short stories. In a

conversation with his editor Keith, Lachance puts imagination, memory and writing into perspective:

> The only reason anyone writes stories is so they can understand the past and get ready for some future mortality; that's why all of the verbs have -ed endings, Keith my good man, even the ones that sell millions of paperbacks. The only two useful art forms are religion and stories. (395)

He realizes that one can undergo an equally cathartic experience either from a highly religious moment or from a writing or reading a "sin-eating" text.

The writer concretizes the transient thoughts of the child, those that often go undetected by outsiders but remain real and effective for the thinker. Because of his chronological distance from childhood memories and his ability to manipulate these memories, the mature writer Gordy Lachance is able to do something that the twelve-year-old, adventurous child was not: "I would have laughed then, though, if you had told me that one day not too many years from then I'd parlay all those childhood fears and night-sweats into about a million dollars" (350). However, Gordy Lachance and Stephen King successfully tease vast numbers of readers into accompanying them on the psychological quests depicted in their fiction.

Although Lachance comments upon his writing career throughout "The Body," the most telling connections between his childhood concerns and his adult profession come as two of his stories, "Stud City," reportedly published in Greenspan Quarterly, and "The Revenge of Lard Ass Hogan," published by Cavalier magazine, are presented in their entirety in the novella's text, pages 309-322 and 365-374, respectively. These stories are, as George Beahm discloses in his King biography, actually published stories by Stephen King. "Stud City" was published in the fall 1969 issue of Ubris and "The Revenge of Lard Ass Hogan" was printed in June of 1975 in Maine Review (102). The parallel between King and Lachance demonstrated by these stories further shows that King intends for the reader to equate Lachance's realizing his shadow and persevering with King's.

King continues using autobiographical allusions with the character of Bill Denbrough, the protagonist of IT. In The Stephen King Phenomenon (1986), Michael Collings limits the actual autobiographical realities of It:

> Denbrough's struggles do not, of course, project King's own experiences exactly; instead, they suggest and tantalize, while carrying a distinctive ring of authenticity that deepens Denbrough's character and prepares him for the test to come. (14)

However, Collings points to Denbrough's "early experiences with creative writing" which seem to "parallel King's own" (14). The similarities between King, Denbrough, and other King writer-characters go beyond their being successful writers who happened to have studied creative writing in college; they all seek to "re-capture the essence of childhood" (Collings 22) unincumbered by repressed adult fears. Like other writer characters in King's fiction, Denbrough moves into the world of "What if?" to confront and hopefully defeat his shadow, the evil It.

King combines Ben Mears' physical and Gordy Lachance's mental returns to the scenes of their childhoods in Denbrough's persona and experiences in It. This is done, no doubt, to formalize the power and the relationship of the imagination and fear. Tony Magistrale writes in Stephen King: The Second Decade that the imaginations of Denbrough and the other members of the Losers Club "produce a greater level of fear, and the associated secretions make them a more tender meal [for the evil It]" (106). Until they confront the archetypal, unnameable shadow which they call "It," none of them will be allowed to live happy lives. Stanley Uris is the first member of the Losers Club Mike Hanlon contacts with the message that he thinks It, the essence of evil permeating the town of Derry, has returned to their childhood hometown. Upon hearing that the dreaded It has returned, Stanley kills himself, becoming the one

Loser destroyed because he is unable to articulate or
confront his fears. Unlike their friend Stanley, the other
members of The Losers Club do confront unhappy childhood
memories reappearing in the many guises of It. During The
Losers' return to Derry, Bill Denbrough emerges as the
group's leader. His ascension is possible because, like
King, Denbrough has articulated his repressed demons through
the horror stories that have made him famous and refuses to
shy away from those fears.

When Denbrough writes the story "The Dark" following an
encounter with his creative writing instructor, he finds
that his writing, in reality, allows him to express
something hidden deep within his psyche. As the narrator of
It stresses, "He feels a holy exultation as he goes about
the business of writing this story; he even feels that he is
not so much telling the story as he is allowing the story to
flow through him" (128), reiterating King's contention that
a writer is not always able to consciously determine his
subject matter. Denbrough is doing more than just creating
a work of fiction; he is writing about the murder of his
little brother Georgie by Pennywise, the attractive clown
persona of It, when the Denbrough brothers were youngsters
in Derry. The novel's narrator proceeds, "If someone had
suggested to him that he was really writing about his
brother, George, he would have been surprised. He has not
thought about George in years--or so he honestly believes"

(121). Here the reader discovers that Denbrough's creative inclination allows him to subconsciously voice the fears and hurts about not being able to protect his little brother that have lain repressed since his youth in Derry.

Before he leaves for The Losers' reunion in Derry, Denbrough discovers that for some time he has dreamed, a situation which he has denied and has no memory of. Here, King freely uses dreams as a means of allowing his characters to actualize pent-up emotions and concerns. According to Jung, "The sources of dreams are often repressed instincts which have a natural tendency to influence the conscious mind," creating the individual's "active imagination" (9.49). As do many other King characters, Denbrough knows that he must confront whatever has created his fears and unpleasant memories. His first step toward this realization comes when he admits that he has suffered bad dreams over the years when he answers Hanlon's summons. At this point, Denbrough knows that he must act upon his newly acquired bit of self-understanding: "So now you know how fear tastes. . . . Time you found out, considering all you've written on the subject" (127).

Having already proven that he can subconsciously articulate his fears in his horror novels and their cinematic offspring, Denbrough returns to Derry to stand with his friends against the demonic It because, as Tony Magistrale argues, "The act of making the personal public--

of allowing sympathetic others to activate their sympathy--
somehow manages to create a degree of personal liberation"
(The Second Decade 111). Magistrale notes, "[T]he adult
Losers realize that the memory of what took place years ago
is only partial, that memories of events fade quickly as a
child moves on to adulthood and forgetfulness" (The Second
Decade 110). Their confrontation with It is the
intersection of their childhood pain and their adult
suppression of the memories of that pain, similar to the
convergence of Ben Mears' childhood and adult fears in
'Salem's Lot. Although Denbrough leads the Losers in the
process, he masters his own fears partly through writing.

Denbrough becomes able to dream freely, unencumbered by
hidden fears, a situation he has been unable to admit
earlier in the narrative. Only after defeating It and
rescuing his wife Audra from Its clutches, does he
successfully confront the subconscious fears that had driven
him to distraction and to stuttering as an adult. He has
come to terms with his own reality:

> he thinks that it is good to be a child, but it
> is also good to be a grownup and able to consider
> the mystery of childhood . . . its beliefs and
> desires. I will write about all of this one day,
> he thinks, and knows it's just a dawn thought, an
> after-dreaming thought. (1090)

Again, like other King writer characters and King himself, Denbrough confronts his demons and writes about his experiences in self-reflexive fiction.

Those writer characters who best illustrate King's movement into the world of metafiction as a means of realizing their and his shadows, however, are the writers found in The Shining, Misery, The Dark Half, and "Secret Window, Secret Garden." These writers will be discussed in depth in later chapters, yet one needs to understand their relationship to the total writer-protagonist component of the Stephen King canon. Tony Magistrale contends that these writers' lives and art are one:

> [These King] writer-protagonists make their lives their craft, but they owe their lives to their craft. The art--the skill of writing--is real magic, and the individual man who utilizes it must also stand in awe of it. This magic remains so intoxicating that the personal identities of [King and] King's writers cannot be separated from their art. (Moral Voyages 119)

Paul Sheldon, the writer protagonist of Misery, is the one King character best able to understand or at least best able to verbalize the centrality of writing in his life. He, in fact, realizes that a successful writer does more than create stories for others: "You were also a Sheherazade to yourself" (222), comparing all writers to the story teller-

as-tease who kept her audience enthralled for some one-thousand-one nights in order to remain alive. The writer, in fact, frees himself from his own personal constraints through the worlds he creates in the text.

Close reading of King's metafictional works shows that although all of King's writer characters manifest the same "magic," each uses it with a varying degree of success: two, Paul Sheldon in Misery and Thad Beaumont in The Dark Half, rectify their physical and psychological circumstances through literary endeavors while two, Jack Torrance in The Shining and Morton Rainey in "Secret Window, Secret Garden," fail and are eventually destroyed. The regenerative potential in writing finds added significance in both the successful and unsuccessful writer protagonists that King presents.

Chapter III

The Shining:

Trying to Write Away Ghosts

The Shining is most obviously the story of the gradual
mental disintegration of the protagonist, Jack Torrance. As
an indicator of Torrance's losing control of the many
shadows which populate his psyche, the narrative is built
around the structural device of the writing process. Burton
Hatlen asserts that "The Shining is not only literary but
metaliterary: in some measure the ultimate subject is
writing itself" (101). Although Stephen King chooses to
exclude The Shining from the list of what he considers his
major writer-oriented works ("Two Past" 237-238), it is, in
fact, his first metafictional work and the one in which
Stephen King first clearly discloses his quest to realize
his artistic shadow and remove all concerns about his
potential as a writer.

Jack Torrance's creative difficulties begin when he
stops relying upon his imagination to spur his desire to
write and starts looking for the genesis of a story in the
Overlook Hotel's history. In fact, King leads the reader to
think of the Overlook as a shadow with designs, reminiscent
of Annie Wilkes' designs on Paul Sheldon in Misery, on
keeping Torrance prisoner and force him to tell its story:
"Perhaps the Overlook, large and rambling Samuel Johnson

that it was, had picked him to be its Boswell" (282).
Torrance gives up his role as author, becoming the
Overlook's ghost writer, allowing his shadows to continue
their disruption. Instead of writing the Overlook's story,
he becomes its text. By telling Torrance's story, King
shows that, unlike his shadow, Jack Torrance, he remains in
control of the need to and means of writing.

As Torrance changes from an interpretor of the signs
and symbols around him into one able to do little more than
rearrange facts gleaned from scribblings and articles by
other writers, his young son, Danny, takes his first step
toward linguistic mastery. While his father merely reads
and stores others' ideas, Danny develops a rudimentary
concern for language. Much of Danny's perception develops
from his relationship with his imaginary companion Tony, who
materializes when Danny is in psychological or physical
danger to provide a means of escaping whatever threatens
Danny. His relationship with Tony is similar to that
between Torrance and the spirit of his dead father, although
not as debilitating. In each case, the shadow conveys
possible courses of actions for those living in the here and
now, as a writer does for the world he creates.

The primary intellectual difference between Danny and
his father is evident in Danny's ability to maintain some
stability. At the conclusion of a consultation about Danny,
Doctor Edmonds tells Jack and Wendy Torrance that Danny's

"ability to differentiate so sharply between Tony's world and 'real things' says a lot about the fundamentally healthy state of his mind" (150). Danny's stability stems from the "buffer somewhere between the conscious and subconscious, . . . [a] censor [which] only lets through a small amount, and often what does come through is only symbolic" (145). This echoes Jung's contention that "unless the facts are symbolically interpreted, the causes remain immutable substances which go on continuously" (8.24). Danny succeeds in realizing his shadow, Tony, as a symbolic gesture because he tries to interpret Tony's messages even when he may not understand the significance of the encounters. Torrance does not have a censor like Danny's and soon is unable to ascertain a difference between "real things" and the cloudy, ethereal world developing in his ravaged psyche. Rather than creating a work of fiction, he becomes a character in the Overlook "book."

The complexity of the Overlook Hotel's role is demonstrated by Tony Magistrale in his "Introduction" to The Shining Reader:

> A central issue of this novel is the critical
> argument concerning the degree of Jack's personal
> freedom: does the Overlook manipulate his fate,
> essentially constructing a "predestinate"
> environment, or is Jack free to exercise a

"conscious will" in his tenure at the Overlook? (vii)

Magistrale, however, leaves his questions unanswered. The reader must decide which is the central element and give Torrance's Freudian contention that "the subconscious never speaks to us in literal language, only in symbols" (264) serious consideration.

When writing assumes symbolic status through Torrance's inability to complete his play and his new interest in writing the book about The Overlook, the novel joins King's later metafictional works in depicting a writer's quest to come to terms with his artistic shadow. Like them, The Shining treats the complexities of the psyche as revealed in the archetypes, the collective unconscious, and the protagonist's confrontion with his shadow. In this novel, King introduces symbols which maintain motif status throughout the rest of his fiction: a place that represents innate evil, an isolated haunted house with hidden rooms and spirits that parallels the individual's psyche, ghosts that correspond to the tormented psyche, and doubles that clearly illustrate the many possible sides of a complex personality. Such an approach permits King to arouse his audience's fears by means of his fiction by understanding the collective fears of his readers and himself. The significant difference lies in King's ability to create his own personal

psychological surrogates in the guises of his characters, an ability to project and distinguish that Jack Torrance lacks.

In a passage later purged from the manuscript of The Shining, Torrance asserts that, regardless of perceived differences, all writers are the same and that all texts come from the same basic writer-reader interaction: all writers prove to be nothing more than "a pack of medeval [sic] street performers clad in motley, juggling half a dozen mouldy oranges called literature for their bread and butter" (The Shining ms 438). This passage strikes a defensive posture, demanding that the reader accept even the most novice of genre fiction writers as belonging to the artistic collective that also contains those authors considered literary giants. It also calls attention to the implied author, Stephen King, in ways that suggest a correspondence with the fictional Jack Torrance; each writer attempts to find his place in the world of literature.

Torrance is not caught up in the "popular" versus "serious" controversy as are Paul Sheldon of Misery and Thad Beaumont of The Dark Half. Instead, the novel is predicated upon his attempt to overcome an inability to write anything. His writer's block illuminates the underlying theme for all of King's writer-centered works, a writer's fighting to keep the mouldy literary oranges moving as he performs his artistic juggling act. Jack Torrance is unable to keep his oranges in motion. This creative disfunction destroys the

one means King provides for Torrance to exorcise his ghosts and escape, writing.

In contrast to Torrance's struggle to write anything at all, King boasts that The Shining "ran itself off in, I would say, four to six weeks, for the major part of the work" (qtd. in Moore 74). In practice, Jack Torrance becomes King's literary shadow when the narrator of The Shining discloses that he proposes the same "Shakesperean tragedy" (qtd. in Moore 74) format for his elusive play that King had envisioned for The Shining: "[Jack] had thought it was something old enough to be new, a play whose novelty alone might be enough to see it through a successful Broadway run: a tragedy in five acts" (257).

Although King wrote the novel with almost unbelievable ease, the mirroring formats for The Shining and Torrance's play advance the idea that there are more similarities between King and Torrance than King might like to admit. In a brief account of King's home life while he was writing The Shining, Tabitha King suggests that her husband experienced some of the same emotions Torrance experiences during his attempt to complete his play:

> At the time Steve wrote The Shining, he was a young father, married less than five years. He had grown up fatherless . . . . He experienced deep anger at his children and consequently a deep guilt as well, for the angriest parent knows

in his or her heart that the child is not to

blame. (1)

The struggling young author Jack Torrance functions at this
time as King's projection much as the previous Overlook
caretaker, Grady, serves as Torrance's. In each instance
the doubled pairs share identical concerns which must be
dealt with. Torrance reacts as Grady had reacted to the
threats he perceives his family as being to his success;
King, on the other hand, maintains control over his urges.

As Karl Miller writes in Doubles (1985), doubling is
appropriate for this novel and for its author's condition:

Doubles may appear to come from outside, as a

form of possession, or from inside, as a form of

projection. Doubles are both, and we see them as

both when, as we sometimes do, we see them as

devils and dolls. (416)

Doubles subvert our sense of reality and identity and are,
therefore, uncanny and scary. One realizes one's shadow by
dealing with this subversion. Jack Torrance is unsettled
and so looks in all the wrong places to regain his identity
as a writer: he looks in the secrets hidden in the
Overlook's basement, in conversations with his dead father's
ghost, and in a proposed play that he will never be able to
complete. King, on the other hand, finds his identity in
his writing. More importantly, King deals with his
subverted sense of identity by allowing his anger to spawn a

work of fiction. Tabitha King explains further that "[Steve] used [his] disturbing anger and guilt as the springboard from which to imagine Jack Torrance. And maybe the imagining was cathartic" (1). As King takes on the anxieties of his audience, his fiction provides a similar catharsis for him. This, as Jeanne Reesman writes, "explores how the fictional imagination can help humankind endure and prevail against evil" (157). The writer, after all, is a member of this humankind, and the same evil that confronts the reader often lurks within the writer's mind. A work of fiction, therefore, allows writer and reader to realize their individual shadows through a collective experience.

Burton Hatlen also emphasizes the connection between The Overlook Hotel and Jack Torrance and Stephen King by writing that "King suggests that the real danger [in The Shining] lies as much in Jack Torrance's mind as in the Overlook Hotel" (89). Early in the novel, Halloran, the departing cook, observes that "Jack Torrance had something-- something--that he was hiding. Or something he was holding in so deeply submerged in himself that it was impossible to get to" (88). The submerged something perceived by Halloran parallels the hidden subject matter that a writer, Jack Torrance or Stephen King, must bring to the psychological and artistic surface before the creative process can become a reality. Ideas must be brought from the world of the

imagination to the world of the page. The story of Torrance's failure at creating a text provides subject matter for a successful text recounting this failure.

King's use of writing exemplifies what Walker Percy calls "symbolization, [which helps us develop] our view of man's place in the world" (156-157). This symbolization is most evident in two diverse references to Jack Torrance's losing the ability to write. At one point, Danny Torrance laments that his father "has to finish his play or he might start doing the Bad Thing again" (85). The Bad Thing which Danny fears is Jack's heavy drinking and physical abuse of those around him, elements of his shadow which he is unable to control. The anger which Danny fears is clearly demonstrated in two earlier events, "the monstrous assault on his son and the incident in the parking lot with George Hatfield" (108), that result in Jack's breaking his two-year-old son's arm and being dismissed from his teaching position after striking a student. However, the reader recognizes the real Bad Thing as Torrance's inability to control any aspect of his life, especially his writing. For this reason, Torrence views his unfinished play, The Little School, as "the roadblock, a colossal symbol of the bad times" (107), something that needs to be completed if he is to be able to deal with the psychological baggage left by those bad times.

Later in the novel, the ghost of Torrance's father warns him that "each man kills the thing he loves" (227), hinting that his son has killed his ability to write, the thing that he loves most. Torrance fails to fathom this deeper truth in his father's message. He is unlike Halloran, one of the characters in King's fiction who "recognize[s] evil, that is, address[es] it, and [is] thus able to fight it" (Reesman 163). Torrance's unvented anger is the culprit which explodes and pushes him over the edge, again drawing attention to the reversed mirror images of Torrance and King. Unlike Torrance, King writes and escapes committing either the physical or psychological Bad Thing. He puts his urges onto paper and allows his self-created double to be destroyed in his place.

Torrance's loss of control and giving in to forces outside himself have parallels in his loss of control over language. According to Walker Percy, language "is the stuff of which our knowledge and awareness of the world are made, the medium through which we see our world" (151). There can be little doubt that Torrance has lost his ability to manage the words through which he could have seen his world; instead, he is consumed by the images generated by his imagination. King submits, as part of his prefatory matter for The Shining, that "The Overlook and the people associated with it exist wholly within the author's imagination" (iii), speaking as much about his own

imaginative world as about Torrance's, continuing the doubling of the two writers. Although Torrance tries to regain control of his imagination, he falls through Percy's "mirror" (151), much as Alice falls through the looking-glass. He, however, is unable discern any meaning from the initially unintelligible symbols and images which confront him as Alice is able to do when she recognizes the confusing conglomeration of letters as the text of "Jabberwocky" (Carroll 134). This inability to transform perceptions into words creates an artistic and intellectual void which cripples Torrance's ability to write. Conversely, King is able to verbalize threatenting psychological constraints through his writing, thus assuming control of his psychological and artistic drives.

Torrance's inability to write eventually becomes a symbol representing his self-perceived personal failure. According to Bruno Bettelheim, "[W]hatever forms the essence of our life's activity also tends to become its most pervasive fear" (44). Torrance fears that he no longer controls the word, the essence of his life's activities and the means by which he subconsciously hopes to explain away the shadows which plague him. He is a character programmed for failure because he "fools himself regarding his mental stability" (Bosky 261), insuring eventual "deterioration, loss of self-control and eventual destruction" (Notkin 132). He is not able "to repress certain instincts either wholly

or in part" or to sublimate them "to a suitable form of adaptation" (Jung 8.365). He physically strikes out against anything that he perceives as threatening, whether it is his wife, his son, or his student. By telling the story of Jack Torrance's demise, King bends his own fears and anger into a suitable form, a work of fiction, realizing his shadow by removing the mask behind which it hides.

In her 1980 review of Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of The Shining, Pauline Kael characterized Jack Torrance as "a man in a rage about his own inadequacy" (131). The sense of inadequacy which drives Torrance is all-inclusive: he is inadequate as a husband, as a father, as a teacher, as a hotel maintenance man, and, most of all, as a writer. His failure as a writer is the most significant inadequacy because, as Mary Jane Dickerson contends, "complicated relationships between writing and dying lie at the center of the unfolding horror in The Shining" (33), indicating that for writers like Jack Torrance and Stephen King writing is living and not writing is dying. This destructive potential of an uncontrolled imagination is foreshadowed by Mr. Ullman, the Overlook's manager, when he discloses that he is, at first, uneasy about hiring Torrance as winter caretaker: "Solitude can be damaging in itself" (8), and "I thought a, shall we say, less imaginative individual would be less susceptible to the rigors, the loneliness" (9). The reader sees the doppelgängerish relationship between Jack

Torrance and Grady, the earlier caretaker who kills his family and himself. But an active imagination alone is not Torrance's problem; rather, his difficulties stem from his incapacity to discipline it, sublimating his anxieties in art.

Jack Torrance is the "writer as caretaker rather than meaning-maker" (Dickerson 34). Unlike Paul Sheldon and Thad Beaumont who produce writing and manipulate readers, he, instead, becomes a mere preserver of the past, relying solely upon what others have said, with no creative input of his own. With each additional day of not producing, he descends deeper and deeper into his unbalanced mental state; he has no means of writing and proving his own worth to himself. One can only wonder what would have happened if Stephen King had possessed no creative outlet during the trying times described by his wife.

Alan Cohen contends that the reader can witness Torrance's collapse as much through his language as through the situations described by King and that "by the end of the novel Torrance lapses into monosyllables and primal expressions of frustration or anger" (48). For instance, early in the novel, the reader is conscious of Torrance's ability to use language in a complex, image-creating manner as he describes his having to work with the Overlook's topiary: "They grow, Danny, and lose their shape. So I'll have to give them a haircut once or twice a week until it

gets so cold they stop growing for a year" (69). Later when
he is no longer in control of anything in his life and is in
a murderous rage, he chases Danny through the halls of the
Overlook with his communicative abilities decayed to such
expletive-ridden, simple sentences as "Come here, you little
shit! Right now! (421) and "Danny! . . . Get out here,
goddammit!" (425).

Torrance's relationship with the Overlook exemplifies
the fiction-making process which underscores The Shining's
narrative and illustrates the mechanism through which the
novel grew from King's own reality and imagination. In each
instance, a writer's imagination is triggered by some
external force, and each writer creates a world revolving
around the imaginary events. The Overlook's story is
central to Jack Torrance's life during the long winter's
isolation, and in becoming a text, the Overlook bridges what
Linda Hutcheon classifies as "the 'ontological gap' between
a product of the mind, a linguist structure, and the events
in 'real' life which it reflects" (17). The hotel becomes
even more central when one considers its serving as the
shadow of American culture in general. The Overlook's
history is replete the negative components of America's
progress: corruption (157), money (156), movie moguls (154),
political chicanery (158), murder (164), and the Mafia
(160). The old west symbolism associated with the hotel as
illustrated by the seats in the bar that were "upholstered

in leather and embossed with cattle brands--Circle H, Bar D

Bar, Bar W, Lazy B" (238) and the evocation of Erroll Flynn

(156), who achieved much of his success portraying the

strong settler of the West while fighting shadows of his

own, suggest that the Overlook's ghosts are collectively the

repressed history of the American west. This collective or

cultural shadow is activated by Torrance's personal shadow

and easily overwhelms it; he begins living the Overlook's

tragic story rather than writing his own.

From the beginning, Jack Torrance knows that there is a

story to be extricated from the Overlook's hidden history.

In fact, Watson, who guides him through the recesses of the

Overlook after Torrance accepts the caretaker's position for

the winter, speculates aloud, "I expected some reporter

would dig it all up again and just sorta put Grady in it as

an excuse to rake over the scandals" (22), planting a seed

in Torrance's fertile imagination and in that of the reader

of The Shining as well. The adverse effect the Overlook

text has upon those able to read it but unable to fully

interpret it becomes apparent when Torrance learns that he

is not the first writer to be overpowered by the Overlook:

"In 1961 four writers, two of them Pulitzer Prize winners,

had leased the Overlook and reopened it as a writers'

school" (159). The writers' school failed just as all other

Overlook ventures, including Torrance's attempt at telling

the hotel's story, fail. The only person able to deal

successfully with the haunted hotel is Stephen King. Thus,
King realizes his personal shadow, the deeply hidden fear of
falling short as a writer, by creating a shadow, Jack
Torrance, something that escapes Torrance.

Although King alludes often to Edgar Allen Poe's story
"The Masque of the Red Death" in The Shining, the ultimate
"Red Death" allusion comes during the final clash between
Torrance and Danny. For a moment, Torrance regains control
of his actions and warns Danny to flee him and the hotel.
But before he can escape, Danny becomes transfixed as he
watches his father try to destroy the rage driving him to
kill his son:

> the mallet [that Jack intended to use to kill
>
> Danny] began to rise and descend, destroying
>
> the last of Jack Torrance's image. . . . But when
>
> it turned its attention back to Danny, his
>
> father was gone forever. (429)

This unmasking of the malignancy inhabiting the Overlook,
Jack Torrance, and, to some extent, Stephen King himself
echoes the unmasking of the stranger in "Masque of the Red
Death." Like Prince Prospero's guests, who "gasped in
unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and
corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a
rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form" (Poe, "Masque"
273), Danny is overwhelmed at the virulent and destructive
evil which lay beneath his father's surface.

The unmasking of Prospero's visitor and Torrance's shadow discloses the source and the result of long-hidden psychic turmoil. In both instances, the shadow is revealed. However, Prospero, his guests, and Jack Torrance are unable to deal with what is not found beneath the masks, a means of escaping their fears. However, King copes with the what is beneath his own mask by placing it in a "world of phantasy [sic]" (Freud 437) where he can safely deal with the shadow that has been released.

Literary allusions aside, King wants his reader to appreciate the psychological and literary text hidden within the Overlook because of the importance he places upon Torrance's attempts at deciphering it. When he first perceives the stuff that fiction is made of that is hidden in the story of the Overlook, Torrance is amazed:

> God what a story! And they had all been here, right above him, in those empty rooms. Screwing expensive whores on the third floor, maybe. Drinking magnums of champagne. Making deals that would turn over millions of dollars, maybe in the very suite of rooms where Presidents had stayed. There was a story, all right. (163)

Through the scrapbooks containing articles recounting the Overlook's history, the stories he is told upon arrival at the Overlook, and his own imagination, Jack Torrance decides that he must uncover all of the hotel's hidden past and tell

the Overlook's story. However, he does not realize that his own psyche holds secrets as interesting and as frightening as anything to be found in the hotel's basement. These personal secrets must be confronted if he is to succeed at dealing with any of the collective secrets found in the Overlook's history. However, he does not consciously attempt to dig up that which is hidden in his past and is never able to get beyond the planning stages for the book.

The elusive idea of a book about the Overlook takes precedence over the play which Torrance had gone to the Overlook to complete. Although he has completed a few writing projects, Torrance is a would-be writer type who wants to have written instead of actually writing. He jumps from one idea to the next. His change in artistic allegiance comes about because he has revised his attitude toward the play and its characters. In the beginning, he had a sepcific intention in mind for his play:

> [It was to be about the] conflict between Denker, a gifted student who had failed into becoming the brutal and brutalizing headmaster of a turn-of-the-century New England prep school, and Gary Benson, the student he sees as a younger version of himself. (107)

Although Gary Benson seems to be a younger version of both Jack Torrance and Stephen King, who also had to prove that they could write, the reader and Torrance both realize that

his sympathy turns from the student to the teacher. The reader realizes that Gary Benson has become George Hatfield, the student who causes Torrance's dismissal, and Torrance becomes Professor Denker driven by a need for revenge. His psychotic need for revenge is soon turned against Wendy and Danny.

Torrance was forced out of teaching because of his hostility and feels betrayed by those in charge who did not stand up for him when he was charged with brutalizing a student. In his opinion, "He had not done things. Things had been done to him" (108). King also left teaching but in a more positive vein and moved into writing which would allow him to vent his frustrations. King succeeds while Torrance does not. Here is perhaps the clearest disclosure of the underlying concept of King's metafiction. As a successful writer, King creates worlds through which he can show success by populating his fantasy world with writers who both succeed and fail in their drives to come to terms with themselves through their own fiction. In short, King intimates that he has realized his shadows and has dealt with them by successfully writing about writers who fail at their crafts, something at which he has not failed.

In a lengthy passage involving a confrontation between Gary Benson and Professor Denker, later blue-penciled by his editor from The Shining manuscript, King reproduces the tension which was to have carried the success of The Little

School and which controls Jack Torrance's life. Gary stands
before Professor Denker pleading his case against Denker's
charge that he plagiarized his final composition from an
undisclosed essay by Emerson, bringing into play a theme
which will be central to King's last metafictional work,
"Secret Window, Secret Garden." More important than the
possibility of Gary's stealing the work of another writer is
the possibility of his becoming nothing more than a
linguistic caretaker. Professor Denker's temper grows as he
becomes more hostile toward Gary and what he represents,
"Flashes in the pan [who] think they have everything. Looks
. . . charm . . . money . . . and just enough native wit to
skid through on" (ms 289), something which Jack Torrance
does not appear to have. Toward the end of the passage, the
stage directions indicate that Denker has lost all control
and retains only a single-minded desire to end Gary's tenure
at school:

DENKER

I don't care when the Board meets! I will find
the essay!

(Denker crosses upstage to one to the bookcases.
He rips the glass door open and one of the panes
shatters. He begins to rip books out wildly. He
is shouting now, and his shout has a half-crazed
quality that makes Gary look frightened. For the
first time we are seeing directly beneath

                    Denker's cultured, slightly ironic

                    exterior). (ms 289)

For the first time, King peels away the outer emotional and

psychological layers of a character, although it is not

immediately perceived as Jack Torrance, King's double in

this novel.

The tone set in this entire expurgated scene is

analogous to that of Torrance's own life. Throughout the

novel, King shows Torrance in a state of growing agitation

caused by his not completing the tasks that he sets for

himself, catapulting him toward his breaking point. Even

more telling at this juncture is the appearance of

Torrance's father's ghost. Following the advice of the

conjured-up spirit of his dead, abusive father, Torrance

takes out his ever-growing wrath upon his wife and his son,

because he believes what his spectral parent tells him:

"they'll always be conspiring against you, trying to hold

you back and drag you down" (227), echoing Denker's tirade

against Gary and his classmates. Similar to Torrance's and

Denker's paranoiac conviction that plots were being hatched

against them is King's anger towards his children as

described earlier by Tabitha King. They demanded time and

attention which took away from his writing. The

reappearance of the ghost of Torrance's long-absent father

produces another parallel with King's own life, because when

Stephen King was only a baby, his father disappeared, never

to be seen again, leaving only home movies, old science fiction magazines, and his own attempts at writing genre fiction as his legacy to his son (Beahm 21-22).

Jack Torrance fails both at interpreting the messages hidden in the Overlook's basement and scrapbooks and at creating a play worth completion. He allows the Overlook and the Overlook book to consume his creative endeavors because he begins questioning the quality of the play which he had come to the mountain to complete: "He looked down at the play with smoldering ill-temper. How could he have thought it was good? It was puerile. It had been done a thousand times. Worse, he had no idea how to finish it" (257). Earlier, Danny had a vision in which his father complained, "i'll [sic] end up with the whole fucking human race in it if I don't watch out (31). In these passages, King conveys the idea of plagiarism in a transformed sense. Although he did not pilfer his play's plot from another writer, Torrance admits that he is merely attempting to tell a story already told many times before with every character and character type that has appeared in all literature. Later, he "sat looking down at it, scowling, wondering if there was any way he could salvage the situation. He didn't really think there was. He had begun with one play and it had somehow turned into another" (259). He does not come to terms with his shadow because when he finds himself unable

to complete the writing venture before him, he merely goes on to another idea.

If the long passages from Torrance's play had remained in The Shining, readers would have seen the product of an incompetent writer. The reader would no longer need to be told why the play is bad or is a roadblock to Torrance's success; the quality of the deleted passage makes it obvious. One can easily imagine that King intended the passage from the play as a counterpoint for the successful prose that he is able to create in the novel. Covertly at least, King intimates that he can write about anything, indicating that he has confronted his shadow and no longer fears loss of his ability to write.

Alan Cohen contends that "Jack's susceptibility to dark voices . . . provokes much of the hardship inflicted on the Torrances. He is seduced mentally throughout The Shining by the sirens' song of the Overlook" (53). Jack Torrance's affinity with the Overlook text aptly parallels that between the reader and The Shining. In both, the audience must, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge contends, maintain a "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" (264) while gleaning the essence of their respective texts. King's readers demonstrate Coleridge's suspension by letting the images before them carry the brunt of texts' meaning because their personal and collective experiences prepare them to deal with the unreal worlds created by a maker of fiction. Jack

Torrance, however, does not suspend any degree of disbelief when he accepts all that goes on around him as reality.

In The Shining, as in his other writer-centered works, "King writes about writing in order to hold off the chaos of turning into a Jack Torrance" (Dickerson 45). One need only to remember Tabitha King's description of King's miasma during The Shining's creation and King's admission that only writing has kept him from committing some irrational, violent act to appreciate the novel. And like Danny Torrance, King finds release from the potential psychological entrapment of his imagination by putting his conclusions into words. Jack Torrance, on the other hand, can only receive messages, failing to give them any meaning. King, however, is able to transfer his own fears, disappointments, and rages to fictional characters in a world that he, as a successful writer, has created.

In order to function, Torrance must remove his writer's mask and conquer what hides behind it. According to Alan Cohen, "As Jack Torrance's self-pity and mental agony mount, his ability to speak and think diminish proportionately" (48). In Jack's situation, one could easily substitute "write" for "speak." In The Shining, writing and the products of writing represent more than the weakness in just one person. They more explicitly speak for the writing process which produced through the pen of Stephen King both Jack Torrance and the works credited to him. King's talent

for reeling readers into his narratives demonstrates the
ability of a writer to create worlds acceptable to persons
other than himself, for as Walker Percy writes, "the sound
has been transformed in our consciousness to 'become' the
thing signified" (156). We accept the writer's creation
because we accept the connotations of the individual words
making up the narrative: they become archetypal or
"dominants that emerge into consciousness as universal
ideas" (Jung 8.218) and which succeed because of the
collective unconscious shared by writer and reader.

The central metafictional worth of The Shining is
King's disclosure that the "shine, like truth, is a
dangerous power to wield. As both Danny and Jack learn,
there can be no hiding from either force" (58). The writer
who can create worlds from his imagination through language
continues to write and to grow; the writer who cannot is
destroyed, at least as an artist. Only when he is able to
write, do Torrance and his family find any relief from the
devils which live within his psyche:

> The actual act of his writing made [Wendy]
> immensely hopeful, not because she expected great
> things from the play but because her husband
> seemed to be slowly closing a huge door on a
> roomful of monsters. (121)

A bit later, when the reader is told that "Jack's typewriter
began its irregular bursts again" (123), the image of Jack

Nicholson typing away as Shelly Duvall listens hopefully in the cinema adaptation of The Shining is evoked. To her chagrin and to the audience's dismay, the movie Jack Torrance, merely types, over and over, "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy," a clearer example than even his planned Overlook book of his becoming one destined to regurgitate words instead of creating a text.

By producing The Shining, Stephen King realizes his artistic shadow. He discovers that if he is to succeed as a writer, he must deal with personal and artistic problems as they arise and not, as Jack Torrance attempts to do, try to run fast enough and far enough to leave them behind. These shadows, after all, lie within the individual, in this case a writer, and not in the environment that surrounds him. King has been able to write and live in spite of the hurdles thrown before him.

King provides the story of this drunken, misdirected writer, and the process by which Torrance's story came into being as an allegory about all writers. In his later, increasingly more metafictional works, King delves more into specific situations with which he and his surrogate authors must deal to retain control of themselves and their art. He, however, uses the psychological and artistic foundations set forth in The Shining as points of departure in these later works. The physical and psychological isolation of the protagonist, the shadows casting a pall over the

protagonist's life, the drive to write, and the need to understand oneself remain constant themes.

Chapter IV

Misery:

On Becoming Scheherazade

King has said that Misery "tried, at least in part, to illustrate the powerful hold fiction can achieve over the reader" ("Two Past Midnight" 250). A close reading shows that King and his fictional stand-in, Paul Sheldon, are as acutely affected by the fiction making process as their fans are. More fully than The Shining, Misery thrusts the reader into the world of the writer, a world built upon the need and the power to create, thus, as Linda Hutcheon writes, "laying bare . . . literary devices, calling them to the reader's attention" (Hutcheon 24). In the novel's closing paragraph, Sheldon represents all writers who find refuge in writing: a "hole opened and Paul stared through at what was there, unaware that his fingers were picking up speed, unaware that his aching legs were in the same city" (311). Sheldon is made oblivious to his surroundings by his creative drive.

Sheldon, however, is not a unique King persona. King himself tied Misery to much of his other fiction when he admitted to Tony Magistrale that "what I have written about writers and writing in the last five years or so has been a real effort on my part to understand what I am doing, what it means, what it is doing to me, what it is doing for me"

(qtd. in Magistrale, Second Decade 11). Reviewer Steve Paul
appreciates this attempt, writing in 1987 that "[Misery is]
King's confession of the agony that goes into the making of
all that money, of the writer's terror of staring into the
gaping maw and wondering whether he has what it takes to
plunge in" (n. pag.). The maw that Paul perceives is
presaged by the Nietzschean epigraph King provides for part
one of Misery: "When you look into the abyss, the abyss also
looks into you" (10).

The title of Misery has a multiplicity of meanings.
Leo Hoek contends that a work's title goes beyond being
merely a name under which the work can be filed:

> the title opens the text and constitutes the
> natural point of departure. The title finds
> itself in a paradigmatic rapport with the text,
> of which it constitutes at least a partial
> resume. (3)[1]

It is, on its simplest level, the name of Paul Sheldon's
protagonist, but according to Clare Hanson, King "explores
the relation between 'misery' as a common noun (defined by
King as 'pain, usually lengthy and often pointless') and the
generation of texts, stories" (149). This connection is
strengthened when King uses as the epigraph for section

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[1]The English translation of Hoek's French passages was
provided by Dr. Charlotte King, Associate Professor of
Modern Foreign Languages, Louisiana State University-
Shreveport.

two of the novel a quotation from Montaigne: "Writing does not cause misery, it is born of misery" (91). Misery represents the title character, the text's pervading mood, the fiction coming from the fertile imagination of its protagonist, and the psychological source of King's fiction.

The pain that initially causes any author's misery arises from the physical and existential anguish which can be relieved only through the power to create. As Sheldon tells himself, "Go through it, then. Go all the way through it, Paul. Start with Misery" (220). Thus, the beginning is seen. The writer must attempt to transcend the misery of his existence through his art. A dissection of the concept of misery as it pertains to King's novel indicates the work's metafictional potential because such an approach draws attention to the basic drive for any creative process.

Sheldon's most obvious source of pain is Annie Wilkes, who by happenstance rescues him from his wrecked car and holds him prisoner. She is Paul's self-proclaimed "number-one fan" (6) who has "read each of [his] eight novels at least twice, and had read her very favorite, the Misery novels, four, five, maybe six times" (9). The injured Paul Sheldon's falling into the hands of this demented, former nurse goes beyond coincidence. King designs the predicament so that any exaggeration found in the Paul/Annie affiliation sustains Misery's theme of a writer's diligently striving to meet his readers' expectations while attempting to meet his

own artistic aspirations. At one point, Annie shows that
she knows that Sheldon has been trying to manipulate her by
concocting a return for Misery Chastain that depends upon a
deus ex machina contrivance:

> Paul said nothing, but he could guess. He
> understood how she could like what he had written
> and still know it was not right--know it and say
> it not with an editor's sometimes untrustworthy
> literary sophistication but with Constant
> Reader's flat and uncontradictable certainty. He
> understood, and was amazed to find he was ashamed
> of himself. She was right. He had written a
> cheat. (102)

From the beginning, Paul Sheldon seeks to maintain some
degree of artistic self-respect. But to do this, he must
confront his fears and put them on paper.

Paul Sheldon serves as King's surrogate: he looks over
the edge into the psychological abyss faced by all writers
and confronts the miseries involved in any creative process.
Sheldon and his actions in Misery represent King's
conception of the creative process and the psychological
baggage it carries into any writer's life. Jerry Earl Brown
writes in a 1987 review of Misery that Sheldon is like "any
writer hopelessly hooked and held hostage to his own
profession, writing is his life" (n. pag.). Other King
writer protagonists--Jack Torrence in The Shining, Thad

Beaumont in <u>The Dark Half</u>, and Morton Rainey in "Secret Window, Secret Garden"--are similarly driven to create.

<u>Misery</u> becomes more than theoretically metafictional when King demonstrates the actual creation of the images that entrance and tease the reader throughout the pages of <u>Misery</u> and the sub-textual <u>Misery's Return</u>. Clare Hanson intimates that King's writer-centered works do speak for the fiction maker and the fiction-making process:

> King's writing would seem to suggest that the
> production of a Gothic/horror text is connected
> with an ability to reach down to experience
> before the symbolic, "stirring up," so to speak,
> some of the horrors which (can) attend the birth
> of the self: the text works in this way as an
> exorcism. (150)

In <u>Misery</u>, King draws attention to a writer's attempt to exorcize personal demons, the writer being both the fictional Paul Sheldon and the real Stephen King. King admits that he and his stand-ins choose to investigate their inner selves through fiction:

> Because when the door of the fictional
> imagination is closed to you, when you can no
> longer work out your problem on paper, then the
> problem has overwhelmed you, taken your control
> and freedom away. (qtd. in Magistrale, <u>Second</u>
> <u>Decade</u> 213)

Without any artistic avenue of escape, a writer must allow his shadows to remain hidden and unrealized.

In the early sections of Misery, both the reader and Paul Sheldon understand that Sheldon controls no portion of his situation and that he must concoct Annie Wilkes' demanded resurrection of Misery Chastain if he is to escape physical death and further mutilation at the hands of his irate and unbalanced "number-one fan" or escape artistic death created by his unwillingness to accept the true source of all fiction. As Tony Magistrale suggests, "The awakening of Paul's imaginative talents also rekindles his will to live and to escape Annie's bondage" (Moral Voyages 116). Surprisingly, he finds his return to Misery's saga easier than he thought it would be when, upon completing his first "serious novel," Fast Cars, he cries, "Free at last! Free at last! Great God Almighty, I'm free at last! The silly bitch finally bought the farm!" (15). The echo of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shows the extent of the false freedom Paul Sheldon has while he fails to fathom the real obstacles placed in his path. The ease with which he turns from his "serious" fiction amazes him:

> [Sheldon] had been surprised, really at how easy
> it had been to slip back into Misery's world.
> Her world was corny and melodramatic, but that
> did not change the fact that returning there had
> been nowhere near as distasteful as he had

        expected--it had been, in fact, rather

        comforting, like putting on a pair of old

        slippers. (97)

Sheldon is still able to write, but he is no longer greatly
troubled by the hack writer/serious writer concern which had
originally lured him away from his Misery Chastain novels.
In fact, he accepts that "Maybe he had wildly over-
estimated just how good Fast Cars had been" (263),
signifying that little differentiates the Misery romances
from his literary fait accompli, Fast Cars; both are merely
works of fiction, creations of a writer's imagination.
Here, too, King's fans are teased with the defensive
proposition that although King's works may be frowned upon
by many critics, the results are as viable as any other work
of fiction and that he has demonstrated his ability to
write.

    The further Sheldon moves into Misery's Return, the
more the reader is goaded by the words he writes. By
providing extensive passages from Sheldon's text, King gives
insight into Sheldon's physical and psychological
rejuvenation. The text within the text demonstrates, if
only subconsciously, Sheldon's coming to terms with many of
the suppressed fears from his past. In each instance,
Sheldon and King's readers concurrently become cognizant of
the developing situation. For instance, during one period
of delirium caused by the pain from his wreck and Annie's

care giving and drug inducement, Sheldon mentally returns to
a disturbing moment in his past:

> An awful memory bloomed there in the dark: his
> mother had taken him to the Boston Zoo, and he
> had been looking at a great big bird . . . . He
> had asked his mother where the bird came from and
> when she said _Africa_ he had understood it was
> doomed to die in the cage where it lived, far
> away from wherever God had meant it to be, and he
> cried. (27)

Young Sheldon's emotional outburst elicits a harsh reprimand
from his mother.

His mother's view of him as "a bawl-baby and a sissy"
(27), contending that his sympathetic response is not
normal, and maintaining that "Nobody on MY side of the
family had an imagination like his!" (28) remains buried in
the recesses of his psyche, coming to the surface only when
he writes _Misery's Return_ as an escape from the immediate
danger in which he finds himself. The introduction of his
mother and later Annie Wilkes and Misery Chastain sheds some
light upon a facet of Sheldon's predicament which he does
not readily recognize, if he recognizes it at all. Through
Paul's dealings with these latter two women, King
demonstrates Sheldon's, and possibly King's, own
anima/animus conflict.

Jung sets forth the characteristics of the mother
archetype:

> maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic
> authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual
> exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful
> instinct or impulse; and all that is benign, all
> that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth
> and fertility. (9.82)

However, Jung goes further to say that "the image changes
markedly when it appears in the individual psyche" (9.82),
demonstrated by the person of Paul Sheldon's mother.
Instead of nurturing her son, Mrs. Sheldon pushes her son
toward an the edge of an emotional abyss where he teeters
for most of his life. Sheldon must deal with his anima
because, according to Jung, it "is a factor of the utmost
importance in the psychology of a man wherever emotions and
affects are at work [and] mythologizes all emotional
relations with his work and with other people of both sexes"
(9.70). Jung further contends that the anima "is ready to
spring out and project itself at the first opportunity, the
moment a woman makes an impression that is out of the
ordinary" (9.69). Like the mother figure, the anima changes
as a male changes: "An infantile man generally has a
maternal anima; an adult man, the figure of a younger woman"
(Jung 9.200).

When Paul Sheldon finally becomes independent of his
mother's looming image, repeated in his physical and
psychological imprisonment by Annie Wilkes, he returns his
attention to the character of the young and beautiful Misery
Chastain. He understands that, in order to fulfill his own
psychological needs, he must first deal with Misery's needs,
even to the point of returning to her after a fling with
"serious" literature. Both Sheldon's mother and Annie are
strong, domineering women who have survived by allowing
their masculine shadows to emerge. Only after he realizes
his new anima shadow by creating a woman protagonist does
Sheldon regain his ability to write. After all, it was this
feminine character who had brought fame and fortune to
Sheldon in the past, and he finally acknowledges her
significance by writing Misery's Return.

The conclusion of Misery's Return bodes well for
Sheldon's and Misery's rebirths:

> Geoffrey closed the door and went up to
> the afterdeck. Instead of throwing himself over
> the rail, as he might have done, he lit his pipe
> and smoked a bowl of tobacco slowly, watching the
> sun go down behind the distant, disappearing
> cloud on the horizon--that cloud which was the
> coast of Africa. (287)

The created Africa of Sheldon's imagination and the remembered Africa of his childhood visit to the Boston Zoo fuse, and he feels relieved:

> It was good to be done--always good to be done.
> Good to have produced, to have caused a thing to
> be. In a numb sort of way he understood the
> bravery of the act, of making little lives that
> weren't, creating the appearance of motion and
> the illusion of warmth. (288)

The "being done" Sheldon refers to has a two-fold connotation: a writer's completion of a work of fiction and an individual's realizing his psychic shadow and destroying a negative image created by a long-ago, often-forgotten traumatic experience. This attitude parallels King's admission in the last sentence of the novel, "Now my tale is told" (310): he has completed the novel Misery, and he has laid out for all to see the artistic shadow he constantly carries with him.

Sheldon eliminates his own demons while keeping Annie Wilkes, her carving knife, and her torch at bay by creating a work which he suspects critics will throw upon the literary garbage heap of those works they often tag as "popular" but which he knows his legion of fans will accept with open arms. In the beginning, he demonstrates a writer's dread of not producing good literature. However, as time and narrative progress, he is thrown into the act of

writing, and the process assumes supremacy over the product.
Misery becomes metafictional when King's and Sheldon's
concerns turn to the logistics of fiction's movement from
their imaginations to their readers'.

At first glimpse, King seems to utilize the idea of the
isolated writer struggling to overcome obvious restraints
for effect only. Like Jack Torrance in The Shining, authors
who allow themselves to remain in isolation find that their
shadows eventually overcome them much as the permeating evil
overcomes places in such King works as 'Salem's Lot and
Carrie. However, King soon discloses that he has something
more complex and telling in mind for this situation. The
intensified presentation of writing as a thematic center for
his novel teases his readers into scrutinizing how the
various narrative components directly disclose the process
which brought about both the novel Misery and its
protagonist's personal misery.

Even when confronted by apparent emotional or physical
restraints, a writer's imagination is never stilled. At one
point after listening to one of Annie's cows bellow in the
distant barn, Sheldon allows his imagination to take
control:

> Paul wondered uneasily if perhaps the poor
> animal's udder had burst, resulting in death by
> exsanguination. For a moment his imagination--so
> vivid!--tried to present him with a picture of

the cow lying dead in a puddle of mixed milk and

blood, and he quickly willed it away. (189)

Sheldon's writer's imagination attempts to create some

reality out of situations beyond his immediate grasp in the

world just outside of his bedroom window, similar to the

realities he has created for Annie in Misery's Return and

which Stephen King has created for his readers in Misery.

The psychological and autobiographical potency of the

novel's metafictional components emerges as King depicts

Sheldon's creation of Misery's Return. Describing his own

writing routine, King shows that Sheldon's techniques

closely parallel his own. King often explains that he is a

writer of habit:

I'm up at 6:30 every morning and . . .

just walk around for about four miles, sort of

sniffing at this book in my mind.

I get back at 9:30 and write to 11:30.

Everyday I write 1,500 words. In the

afternoon I read and sort of gibber around.

(qtd. in Hanlon 218)

As Sheldon sets out to create the novel that his audience of

one demands, he, too, emerges as a writer of habit. At one

point, he sends Annie back to the Paper Patch for special

paper, "Hammermill Bond" or "Triad Modern" (67). Sheldon's

primary reason for sending Annie back to the office supply

store is to give him a chance to escape or at least to learn

more about his surroundings beyond the room in which he has been imprisoned. However, this need for specific brands of paper manifests his concerns with the seemingly mundane specifics of getting an idea onto paper.

Even more telling is Sheldon's recounting his personal ritual to involve the muse: upon completing Fast Cars he had "called room service for a bottle of Dom Perignon. He remembered waiting for it to come, walking back and forth in the room where he had finished all of his books since 1974" (14). King further comments on his career by having Sheldon publish his first Misery romance the same year King published his first horror novel, Carrie. Sheldon, like King, was type-cast by the genre which gave him entry into the publishing world. King, unlike Sheldon, argues that he has had little problem with being type-cast. However, his account of Sheldon's experiences suggests otherwise.

The typed, mistyped and handwritten pages of the Misery's Return manuscript concretize Sheldon's subconscious need to write. King does not merely present the finished manuscript but shows its processes and stages of completion. By divulging the stages of the sub-textual Misery's Return's development and the intensity of the author's need to complete the project, King creates a metadiagetic component within the Misery narrative. The story of Paul's captivity develops into the story of his psychological uproar as he becomes more interested in his new Misery Chastain novel.

Paul's two attempts at chapter one of Misery's Return
tell much about the importance of the author's emotional and
psychological state during the fiction-making process.
Only after Annie refuses his initial first chapter (Misery
93-97) does Sheldon throw himself into producing the quality
of work that he knows he can produce and in which he can
take some pride. Sheldon's second effort at an opening
chapter (Misery 113-118) pleases Annie and displays
Sheldon's craftsmanship.

The first draft lacks complexity in both wording and
structure, moving from its simple, superficial opening
sentence: "Although Ian Carmichael would not have moved from
Little Dunhope for all the jewels in the Queen's treasury,
he had to admit to himself that when it rained in Cornwall,
it rained harder than anywhere else in England" (94). The
underscored letters represent the hand-lettering needed to
complete the manuscript because the letter "n" has fallen
from Paul's old Royal's keys. The second draft of the same
chapter shows a more complex structure, which can be seen
from the corresponding opening sentence: "For a moment
Geoffrey Alliburton was not sure who the old man at the door
was, and this was not entirely because the bell had awakened
him from a deepening doze" (113). This opening sentence
introduces the mystery needed to successfully bring a dead
character back to life that is not found in Sheldon's first
offering because he must formulate an acceptable identity

for this intruder and a reason for his appearance. In addition, it provides the method for the transference of the work's text and Sheldon's attitudes to a reader such as Annie Wilkes who is kept enthralled and is now willing to accept the story of Misery's resurrection.

Similarly, the old Royal typewriter that Annie provides becomes more than it originally appears to be. For Sheldon, the old Royal "looked like trouble. The ribbon was a faded two-tone, red over black. He had forgotten there were such ribbons. The sight of this one called up no pleasant nostalgia" (54). The antiquated typewriter forces Sheldon to realize that each writing venture begins at the same place; the typewriter challenges the author's inertia, almost demanding that he show that he can still write: "The Royal grinned at him, promising trouble" (54). But Paul Sheldon discovers that his creative side still works and that he can still write, in spite of his number one fan's holding him prisoner and his being forced to write on an antiquated machine as letters fall off, one by one. As he realizes that the creation of Misery Chastain demands his artistic control, Sheldon permits himself to throw as much of himself into the re-creation of Misery Chastain's world as he had done while creating the world of the "serious" novel, Fast Cars.

However, the typewriter assumes a metaphysical relevance when King complicates its role in Paul Sheldon's

dual escape: it clacks out the letters that eventually become the story of Misery Chastain's return from the grave, and it serves as the weapon with which Sheldon batters Annie Wilkes to death. When he later sits down at his word processor in his New York apartment the image of Annie returns:

> He heard a noise behind and turned from the blank screen to see Annie coming out of the kitchen dressed in jeans and a red flannel logger's shirt, the chainsaw in her hands.

> He closed his eyes, opened them, saw the same old nothing, and was suddenly angry. He turned back to the word processor and wrote fast, almost bludgeoning the keys. (308-309)

Paul finds that Annie threatens to return, at least in his imagination, if he allows himself to cease creating and fail to remain in control of his fears.

Like Paul Sheldon, Stephen King concedes that he uses his fiction to destroy the psychic devils that plague him: at the same time, writing is both a demon and a drug. Misery, the novel, is King's most straightforward depiction of the fiction making process in action. King here provides a matrix for investigating the host narrative itself by showing how fiction comes into being by following the creative process involved with the production of Misery's Return. King repeats at the end of Misery, "NOW MY TALE IS

TOLD!" (298), the inscription on the glass penguin Sheldon feared would give him away when he knocked it over during one of his surreptitious trips through Annie's house. He thus tells the reader that the world as Paul Sheldon sees it and the world as Stephen King has written it are both based upon the storytelling art and should be investigated from the same approaches.

In Misery, King provides more than just the story designed to keep Annie Wilkes from killing Paul Sheldon and to keep his readers entertained. Sheldon eventually gives in to his creative mania, doing whatever he must to finish the manuscript which he decides he must complete for himself as much as for his captor. He shows that the finished product is his creation alone by writing the closure in his own script rather than typing it: "And then, because he could not stand to do otherwise, Paul Sheldon rolled the last page out of the typewriter and scrawled the most loved and hated phrase in the writer's vocabulary with a pen: THE END" (287). By completing Misery's Return, he proves to Annie that he can write a story of which she will approve, to himself that he can tease readers into staying with his extended narratives, and to his long-dead mother that his imagination is a strength rather than a weakness.

Failing to write is as disturbing to the writer as writing itself is. As Misery's narrator discloses, following his rescue from Annie's isolated house, Paul

Sheldon "was drinking too much and not writing at all. His dreams were bad" (303). As in the cases of Ben Denbrough in *It* and Jack Torrance in *The Shining*, when he is unable to verbalize his fears, Paul Sheldon finds his nights filled with restless sleep punctuated by dreams of disturbing things seeking release, much like King's things that lurk beyond the door ("King's Garbage Truck" 5). Being unable to write, Paul Sheldon is unable to disclose these demons which are the genesis of the misery that leads to the author's world of the "gotta." The need to write is still present, and the muse must be obeyed. Tony Magistrale displays a clear parallel between Paul Sheldon's and Stephen King's mirroring needs to write:

> Stephen King no longer writes out of financial necessity, but his rate of production, over the past two decades--nearly a book a year--indicates that his writing is indeed necessary to preserving some sort of balance in his life and temperament. (*Second Decade* 132)

As in the case of the fictional Paul Sheldon, King's "gotta" gains the upper hand and forces him to write.

King has teased Paul Sheldon into action by providing emotional, artistic, and physical confinements which he must escape if he and the narrative in which King presents him are to succeed. The King/Sheldon symbiotic relationship is made clear when one considers King's disclosures of the

fears which he has admitted confront him as a writer.
Whether through direct presentation or strong hints, King
shows that he fears what Paul Sheldon fears, uncontrollable
fans and being forced to write something that he does not
want to write because of fan expectations. Misery
dramatizes Wolfgang Iser's notion of a writer's transference
of textual intent to a specific audience:

> [The] transfer of text to reader is often
> regarded as being brought about solely by the
> text. Any successful transfer however--though
> initiated by the text--depends on the extent to
> which this text can activate the individual
> reader's faculties of perceiving and processing.
> (107)

King similarly observes that "imagery does not occur on the
writer's page; it occurs in the reader's mind" ("Imagery"
12). The writer is able to transfer textual meaning to the
reader's imagination by playing upon the collective
unconscious. For instance, any reader, without having
experienced similar events, can appreciate the fear Paul
Sheldon suffers being held prisoner by an unbalanced
individual who exerts authority through threat of physical
pain.

For the fictionalizing process to be complete, each
work must have an audience to serve as the receiver of the
story. Annie Wilkes clearly symbolizes the readers with

whom all writers of genre fiction must deal. Through his

conflict with his artistic loyalties, Paul Sheldon intimates

that a "literary" text activates a different group of

readers than a "popular" text does. King uses Sheldon's

artistic dilemma to indicate that there is an even deeper

meaning of the titled misery: Sheldon realizes that he must

write Misery Chastain novels for his own artistic peace of

mind. However, this realization underscores King's

cynicism, clearly indicated in the title Misery, which

suggests that there is nothing intrinsically better about a

"literary" novel.

After Paul Sheldon's story has been told by Stephen

King, the reader must glean the meaning voiced within the

pages of the novel. The writer has been successful if the

reader comes away from the work with the attitude or

understanding striven for by the work's creator. In

Sheldon's mastery of technique and audience, King flaunts

his own ability to tease readers into accepting the

fictional worlds he creates. Misery becomes metafictional

when King's and Sheldon's concerns turn to the logistics of

fiction's movement from the writer's imagination to the

reader's. To accomplish this, King utilizes the Victorian

forerunner of Iser's "implied reader," the "constant

reader," represented by Annie Wilkes:

> [Annie had] shown not the slightest interest in a
> trick of the trade that would have held a class

of would-be writers spellbound. Annie Wilkes was

the perfect audience, a woman who loved stories

without having the slightest interest in the

mechanics of making them. She was the embodiment

of that Victorian archetype, Constant Reader.

(57)

King flatters his readers by making them privy to the how-to

elements which do not interest Annie.

When King announced that his intention for _Misery_ was

to show the influence of fiction upon an audience, he

created Walter Ong's "fictionalized" mood for his "absent"

reader (Ong 102). King, speaking through Paul Sheldon,

labels the involuntary drive the writer creates in his

audience "The gotta" (224-226), possessing equal force with

"the gotta" the writer himself confronts. Sheldon

understands that a successful author makes the reader need

to know more about what transpires within a narrative. This

"gotta" is the drive which, says _Misery_'s narrator, makes a

reader declare to a spouse, "'I think I'll stay up another

fifteen-twenty minutes, honey, I gotta see how this chapter

comes out'" (224). At one point, Sheldon knows that he has

control over Annie because she allows him to return to work

on _Misery's Return_ only because she had "to get her fix. To

get her gotta" (226).

From the opening passages, the reader is thrown _in_

medias res into the narrative. There is no indication what

has happened before the opening scene or to whom. The narrator at once grasps reader attention with the cryptic opener, "umber whunnn/ yerrnnn umber whunnnn/ fayunnn" (3). King's making the teller of his tale known to the reader would have removed the most compelling quality of his narrative, an unidentifiable narrator, which makes each reader an active participant in the creative process. In doing so, he shows a contrast between the real reader, one who must deal with possibly unmet literary expectations in King's fiction, and Annie, who is completely consumed by the story she wants told by a writer she wants to tell it. At each juncture, the real reader must concentrate to grasp the significance of each portion, page, paragraph, or even phrase King and Sheldon put forward.

By engaging the reader of a metadiagetic level, King forces the reader to make interpretive choices. One of these is between Paul Sheldon's contention that the events of the narrative he recounts actually happened to him and his metadiagetic view of everything as fiction, as the product of an author's and a reader's imaginations working overtime. The possibility that Sheldon's narrative is just the product of "his" active imagination makes any reader realize the narrative currently holding him enthralled is nothing more than the product of Stephen King's imagination and causes the reader to think critically.

That <u>Misery</u> is a fabrication which acquires meaning only when decoded becomes most evident at the close of the novel. As the reader prepares to exit the narrative, King presents one last image which can cause some reader consternation. The still unidentified narrator hints that much of Sheldon's post-traumatic fear is mental, not greatly dissimilar to the distresses he suffered during his visit to the Boston Zoo with his mother:

> only when he let himself into his apartment he
> knew it was the cleaning woman who had pulled the
> drapes, and although he fell down and had to
> smother a scream of fright when Annie rose up
> like Cain from behind the sofa, it was just the
> cat, a cross-eyed Siamese named Dumpster he had
> gotten last month. (307)

King magnifies the significance of Annie's lying dormant in Paul Sheldon's imagination, awaiting a new life by telling the reader that "Annie Wilkes was in her grave. But, like Misery Chastain, she rests uneasily. In his dreams and waking fantasies, he dug her up again and again. You couldn't kill a goddess" (307). According to Clare Hanson, "Annie, like the mother, must exist in order for the self/the text to begin to be born" (150). Only after he recognizes the power that the fear represented by Annie, a stand-in for his mother, has in his life is Sheldon able to confront it, although he does not defeat it, at least not by

the end of Misery. Annie Wilkes, the figure of conflict, is needed to insure the reader's concern for the protagonist and continued interest in the narrative. Like Annie reacting to the chapter plays of her youth, Misery's readers are teased into attempting to determine what will happen next, with only their artistic and psychological backgrounds as tools of interpretation.

Janet Dailey's contention that "The story is what counts" (n. pag.) in Misery pushes the novel even deeper into the metafictional maze. Dailey draws all attention to the narrative's diagesis. The reader's engagement in the fiction-making process creates an artistic partnership, and as Jerry Earl Brown writes, "it's a credit to King's skills and no doubt to his very nature that the seriousness of it [Misery's underlying raison d'etre] doesn't get too thick or intrusive" (n. pag.). Throughout the novel, the reader witnesses each stage in the creation of a work of fiction and the psychological strains creation places upon the creator by forcing him to dredge up hidden fears and confront them in his fiction. Jerry Brown deduces that the good reader will see that Sheldon "writes--in a very literal sense--to live, as on a psychological and metaphorical level he has been writing 'to live' ever since becoming a writer" (n. pag.).

Misery is based upon a combination of two forms of fiction which Robert Scholes refers to as "fiction of ideas"

and "fiction of forms" (102). As such, the novel draws attention to the foundation upon which it is constructed. According to Scholes, "fiction of ideas" is "fiction which is most directly animated by the essential ideas of fiction" (102). Although audiences may change, the underlying concept in fiction making remains constant; the teller or the writer must use his or her ability to create images and worlds acceptable to the immediate audience. Paul Sheldon and Stephen King understand that to be true to their craft, they, any writer for that matter, must not cheat the audience: what happens within a narrative must be expected and accepted by the reader, if only by the way characters act or react.

In the first draft of the opening chapter of Misery's Return, for example, Sheldon uses hackneyed tricks to give Annie what she wants, basing Misery's survival upon nothing more than coincidence: she is rescued by a doctor's arriving just in the nick of time, as in the "chapter-plays" that had kept Annie returning to the theater each Saturday through their teaser endings. However, even as a child, Annie was unwilling to accept just any reprise for the hero. Any rescue or escape had to ring true. When Annie reacts violently to his attempted subtrafuge, Sheldon revises the chapter and successfully entices Annie into the world he has created when she comments, "You think it's good, don't you? . . . You're not doing it just for me anymore, are you?"

(279). At this point, Paul Sheldon and Misery's readers finally accept the fiction-creation process as being a two-sided affair between writer and reader. In addition, Sheldon's enticement of Annie Wilkes through his writing skills illustrates Tony Magistrale's contention that "The power of language is talismanic in King's world. Many of his characters use the written word as a means of regaining control over their own lives and the lives of those who touch them" (Second Decade 132).

Although the term "fiction of ideas" accounts for a foundation for King's Misery, Scholes' second classification, "fiction of forms" or "fiction which imitates other fiction" (102), describes Misery's metafictional characteristics. The literary precursors employed by King transcend the obvious attempts of some critics to show that King merely takes successful literary techniques and concepts and hides them in new wrappings. Instead, King's direct references and obtuse allusions to both individual works and entire literary genres illustrate Scholes' point that "the fiction of forms is aware of the problem of imitating the forms of the past and seeks to deal with it by elaboration, by developing and extending the implications of the form" (103). The forms implemented in Misery are the "popular" fiction genre and metafictional novels themselves.

The casual reader of genre fiction usually has preconceived ideas as to what any work should contain, how the narrative should be presented, and how the characters should act. The "popular" reader is often more interested in the story itself than in its meaning. King freely populates Misery with mention of various examples of popular storytelling, such as H. Rider Haggard's works (67), Saturday morning "chapter plays" (102), and the storyteller's storyteller, Scheherazade (225), to lay the foundation of Paul's creative efforts and, indirectly, King's own. Each is an example of a work whose success greatly depends upon providing an acceptable series of actions for the work's cast of characters.

As King gives rise to Misery and Misery's Return's being representatives of "fictions of forms" by means of references to other examples of popular storytelling, he also draws attention to the metafictionality of Misery by incorporating mention of clearly metafictional works. Several references to the works of John Fowles are made. Each points to a particular instance in which the situation of Paul Sheldon is an example of something coming from a work of fiction. The first mention of Fowles' The Collector (1963) comes when Sheldon wonders if Annie has this particular novel on her bookshelf (151). This cryptic mention could easily be passed over as mere atmosphere and lose its metafictional importance if King did not use a

quotation from the book as the epigraph for section three of
Misery to set up the concluding section's premise that Paul
Sheldon eventually looks upon his completed Misery's Return
with a degree of pride and appreciation. The Collector
passage could easily have been about Paul Sheldon:

> Writing here is a sort of drug. It's the only
>
> thing I look forward to. This afternoon I read
>
> what I wrote . . . And it seemed vivid. I know
>
> it seems vivid because my imagination fills in
>
> all the bits another person wouldn't understand.
>
> I mean, it's vanity. But it seems a sort of
>
> magic . . . . And I just couldn't live in this
>
> present. I would go mad if I did. (Misery 209)

Both The Collector and Misery are tales of individuals
attempting to come to terms with their roles as artists in
worlds which hold them artistic hostages: Paul Sheldon by
Annie Wilkes in Misery and Miranda by Caliban in The
Collector. There is a difference, however, between Sheldon
and Miranda, for as Tony Magistrale reveals, Sheldon "uses
his art to escape the bondage that eventually kills Miranda"
(Second Generation 127).

Miranda romanticizes her plight in a journal entry for
October 29th:

> Once upon a time (I said, and he stared bitterly
>
> at the floor) there was a very ugly monster who
>
> captured a princess and put her in a dungeon in

his castle. . . . Every evening it was the same.

He asked her to lie, and she wouldn't. (Fowles

199)

Fowles ends the passage with the monster (Caliban) setting her free and joining her in the natural beauty beyond the walls of his castle. Each character attempts to control the creative urge that, in the end, controls them. Magistrale, in addition, sees Paul Sheldon as "veiled autobiographical portrait of King himself: both writers struggle to attain critical recognition in genres (romance and horror, respectively) that are often too restrictive and thus easily disparaged" (Second Generation 127), thus intimating that King uses the work of fiction currently before the reader to draw direct attention to his own writing situation.

In support of his indirectly associating the crux of the Misery narrative with other metafictional works, King refers to another metafictional author, John Barth. He makes a cloaked reference to Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse" (1968) to generate a means for reader understanding of Paul Sheldon's mental predicament of having to deal with drug induced hallucinations: "When you lived in the funhouse, the laff riot just never stopped" (Misery 45). Paul Sheldon undergoes both mental and physical experiences which lead him to maintain control over reality through his ability to write; he can include his real world in his fiction in any guise he wishes. As Barth's narrator projects, "The more

clearly an author identifies with the narrator, literally or metaphorically, the less advisable it is, as a rule, to use the first-person narrative viewpoint" (77). This no doubt is the reason King chooses a disembodied narrator in Misery.

King readily concedes that his works have been influenced by earlier theorists and writers but contends that he uses these forerunners and is not used by them: "I'm more apt to use the theories to advance my ideas than to use my ideas to explore further the theories" (qtd. in Magistrale, Second Decade 5). This is exactly what transpires in Misery. This work, more than any other single King writer-centered work, draws attention to the actual procedures employed by a writer in bringing an idea or an image to fruition as a completed piece of fiction.

Witnessing Paul Sheldon's creation of Misery's Return puts the reader into a privileged position. The step-by-step movement from narrative conceptualization to completion is depicted in a no-holds-barred manner. But more than this occurs. The reader realizes that even the production of a piece of literary fluff demands total emersion of the writer into the creative process and that from this perspective it is highly serious. As Paul Sheldon becomes more involved with completing the work that Annie has forced upon him, the book develops an "urgency when Paul had firmly believed he could never feel urgent about Misery again" (152). Sheldon also finds that the physical aspects of the novel begin to

come to the forefront: "Minor matters such as what the fucking book was supposed to be <u>about</u> would have to wait" (152). Getting the story told in the most effective possible manner becomes a matter of life and death.

King admits that "genre novels generally in the past weren't regarded as worthy of critical notice" (qtd. in Robertson 234), but he is confident that "any genre can produce fine literature" (qtd. in Robertson 234). The key to genre literature's having a chance at rising toward the surface of literary acceptance lies in its creators: if a writer approaches his chore with the intention of producing a piece of fiction of which he can be proud, then a product worthy of serious consideration will be created. This is what Paul Sheldon does with his return to the Misery novels and what King does by returning to the horror genre fiction expected by his fans.

Chapter V

The Dark Half:

Fighting the Urge

In The Dark Half, King again displays the actual fiction-making process employed by his protagonist Thad Beaumont to combat threats to his well-being. To produce fiction that will rid him and his family of George Stark and allow him to return order to his world he must put aside, momentarily at least, his drive to write what he considers "quality fiction" that had made him "a one-time National Book Award nominee" (17) and return to the hard-boiled thrillers that he wrote under the George Stark pseudonym and which brought him a great deal of wealth. Thad Beaumont's dilemma is similar to that of Misery's Paul Sheldon in being an artist who writes "popular" fiction while maintaining a desire to create "serious" fiction that will bring him critical recognition. To keep his artistic halves separate, Beaumont has written his hard-boiled crime novels under the name George Stark, creating an artistic shadow or a dark half for himself. George Romero, who eventually brought The Dark Half to the screen in May of 1993, explains that it was King's concern with a writer's multiplicity of personas that drew him to the novel:

[T]here are really two halves to a writer, a painter--and very often we wish we could be that

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other guy because he's the one who always seems
to have the snappy answers, always seems to know
what to say and doesn't stumble. (qtd. in Van
Gelder C8)

The battle for artistic dominance between Thad Beaumont's
halves creates The Dark Half's conflict.

The Dark Half is perhaps King's most peculiar writer-
centered work because he creates a physically present
antagonist for Thad Beaumont rather than relying upon
emotionally generated ghosts and voices, as in The Shining,
or a derranged captor, as in Misery. The title The Dark
Half again evokes Leo Hoek's argument that a title is "the
natural point of departure" (3) and for interpreting a
narrative. On the surface, the "dark half" is George Stark,
a calculating murderer representing the baser side of human
nature. On the deeper, more fundamental level, the "dark
half" is the part of a writer's psyche which allows him or
her to create work considered second rate by its creator.
In this novel, King allows the darker psychological and
artistic sides of Beaumont to materialize as George Stark,
who refuses to stay physically and artistically buried and
who is intent upon gaining complete control. Only by
"salvation through art" (Magistrale, Moral Voyages 120) is
Beaumont able to persevere.

The fight to escape the shadow of George Stark is
complicated by readers who refuse to acknowledge Beaumont as

the creator of their favorite author's novels. Thad's wife, Liz, tells how some fans will not accept George Stark as being only a pseudonym that can be easily buried:

> Stark had a lot of fans . . . . Some of them were angry that Thad wasn't going to write any more novels as Stark . . . . One lady went so far as to suggest that Alexis Machine [Stark's protagonist] should come out of retirement and cook Thad's goose. (122)

An artist's concern over audience fanaticism, Liz contends, is "not that lame when you think about the fellow who shot John Lennon and the one who tried to kill Ronald Reagan to impress Jodie Foster. They are out there" (124).

Janet Beaulieu wrote in 1989 that in The Dark Half "King skillfully interweaves fact and fiction, leaving the reader frequently wondering which is which, wanting to know the answers, but also realizing that that knowledge wouldn't particularly matter" (n. pag.). King shows how a writer brings his readers into a dialogue: "I think of writing as an act of communication with other people, as an act of getting in touch with them" (qtd. in Fletcher x).

The autobiographical center for The Dark Half (King once wrote under the name of Richard Bachman) adds dimension to its concentration upon the writer's inner artistic turmoil, drawing attention to the novel's being about two battles

for supremacy with artistic shadows, Stephen King's and Thad Beaumont's.

To make his reader a witness to the numerous trials which confront a writer during the creative process, King provides examples of manuscripts credited to George Stark in their various stages of development. This techinque, writes Tyson Blue, "offers unique and fascinating insights into King's perception of what it is he does and how it affects him, as well as how he is affected by his craft" (8). To King, writing is a act of vitality, one which comes to life in the creator's imagination but which demands life once it gets started. George Stark was born in Beaumont's imagination to provide a viable means of his producing suspense genre, mass-market fiction to fill a void in his professional life. King, similarly, created Richard Bachman under whose name he could write such works as The Running Man (1982) and Thinner (1984) while continuing to write the type of fiction Stephen King fans recognize and expect. In both instances, the creator must decide if he is to destroy the shadow which has all but assumed a life of its own or be consumed by it.

Stark becomes more than a mere imaginary part of Beaumont's world. He is King's personification of the shadow with which all writers must deal. Liz Beaumont describes how a writer must sometimes develop a counter identity to write himself out of the hole:

> Thad was suffering from serious writer's block,
> and he needed a jump-start . . . . George Stark
> was there all along. I'd seen signs of him in
> some of the unfinished stuff that Thad did from
> time to time. It was just a case of getting him
> to come out of the closet. (23)

By creating a shadow behind which he can hide, Beaumont escapes the terminal writer's block that destroys Jack Torrance in The Shining.

King again chooses sectional epigraphs to set the tone of the novel, but for The Dark Half, the epigraphs are attributed to the protagonist's shadow rather than to writers such as Nietzsche or Montaigne. For example, for the epigraph to part one, King presents a brief passage credited to Machine's Way, a thriller credited to George Stark: "'I want to see the blood flow. Don't make me tell you twice'" (10). The urgency of Alexis Machine's need to see action easily parallels the writer's need to move a narrative from one point to another. The writer, much like Machine, discovers the impotency of complacency and inaction.

This complacency and inaction becomes critical when Thad Beaumont realizes that his acquired persona has become more than just a name under which he can produce works of fiction more eagerly accepted by the book-buying public.

While writing the Alexis Machine novels, Thad Beaumont

becomes George Stark in more than a passing way:

> Writing had come a lot easier for George, but for
>
> Thad Beaumont it was goddam hard. Liz didn't
>
> come near when he was trying--and sometimes
>
> actually succeeding [at creating the harsh,
>
> violent fictional world of Alexis Machine]. (16)

Stark takes over Beaumont's life with disasterous results,

such as Victor Frankenstein's creature takes over his. Upon

being challenged by his version of George Stark,

Frankenstein shouts, "Cursed be the day, abhorrent devil, in

which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself)

be the hands that formed you!" (Shelley 101) and admits that

"For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a

creator towards his creature were" (102). The monster is

Victor's shadow much as Stark is Beaumont's and Beaumont is

King's. In each case, the creator must regain control of the

shadow or be destroyed by it.

One's attention is still drawn from the novel to King's

own bout with an active pseudonym Richard Bachman:

> [T]he fiction published under King's own name
>
> may have been possible only after Bachman had his
>
> say. To whatever extent Bachman may have been
>
> King's adversary, he appears to have been a

necessary one. (Magistrale, Second Decade 65-66)

Here the significance of the Beaumont/Stark conflict becomes clear. The two sides of the work's protagonist are struggling neither for physical or psychological dominance but for artistic control. Beaumont is able to write works he wants to write only after his shadow, George Stark, is dealt with, as was the case of Stephen King and Richard Bachman. According to Mark Donovan, "As Thad Beaumont, he writes critically acclaimed, serious novels nobody reads. As George Stark, he churns out grisly best-sellers about a vicious killer" (44-45). James Lileks extends the complication: "The Stark novels also made Beaumont uncomfortable--partly because they were so much more popular than his serious fiction, partly because Beaumont was unnerved that he could write such vicious tales" (n. pag.). The writer merely becomes a conduit for the shadow seeking release: thus Thad Beaumont becomes the conduit for George Stark's release and Stephen King for Richard Bachman's.

As the narrative progresses, the reader realizes that the dark side is Beaumont's artistic shadow. The Dark Half is as much about Thad Beaumont's defending himself against artistic destruction as it is about his superficial physical predicament. Like Paul Sheldon in Misery, Beaumont must come to terms with fame derived from works which he considers less significant than the "serious" works he creates. To defeat his shadowy nemesis, Beaumont needs weapons not readily available through the local and state

police sent to protect him and his family from the physical
George Stark. When he realizes the potency of the words he
uses in creating imaginary worlds and a malignant being who
stands to destroy him, he calls upon writing to bring
together "a fiction-writer's grasp of the twin realities
that exist for him--the one in the real world and the one in
the manuscript world" (206). His real world can be saved
only by his manipulating his manuscript world.

Beaumont's new understanding eventually empowers him to
create his "redeemer figure[s]" (Jung 8.111), the sparrows
which "signify the instinctive forces of the unconscious"
(Jung 9.366). If one were to exclude the human characters,
these sparrows are the most recurring entities in The Dark
Half. With each appearance of these birds, one suspects
that they have a more important role to play than carrying
away the dreaded George Stark. Each manifestation of the
sparrows leads Thad Beaumont to put his personal and
artistic energies into George Stark's destruction.

After George Stark kills Homer Gamache and Beaumont is
accused of the crime, the narrative reaches the point at
which Beaumont must establish a defense using his
imagination. His active imagination is as disturbing as it
is delivering:

>A phantom sound filled his mind--not his head but
>his mind--for a moment. It was a sound which
>imparted an aching sense of déjà vu, for it had

been almost thirty years since he had last heard

it. It was the ghostly sound of hundreds,

perhaps thousands, of small birds. (94)

A similar phenomenon had accompanied the headaches which

lead to eleven-year-old Thad Beaumont's brain surgery thirty

years earlier.

During the operation, Beaumont's surgeon does not find

a tumor, as originally expected, but parts of a twin fetus

which had lodged themselves in his brain. The most

disturbing part is an "eye [that goes] on pulsing and trying

to wink right up to the second when [Doctor] Pritchard used

the needle-scalpel to first puncture and then excise it"

(9). To explain his discovery, the surgeon says that in "a

great many deliveries where the mother gives birth to a

single child, that child actually started existence as a

twin . . . [,but the] stronger absorbs the weaker" (10).

However, the eye cannot be passed over so quickly. Jung

equates the eye with unconsciousness (9.337). By being

given a third eye, Beaumont is better able to comprehend the

shadow which eventually creeps into his consciousness.

Since Beaumont is a surrogate for King, the reader is lead

to believe that King, too, understands elements of his

consciousness more clearly and is able to express his

perceptions through his text. King describes the

imagination as being "a marvelous third eye which floats

free," and the task of a writer "is to provide a single,

powerful spectacle for that third eye" (qtd. in Murari 238).
Through his text, King again makes his readers privileged
individuals, showing them that they also have a third eye to
be called into play in the reading process. For instance,
to challenge readers' third eyes, King makes them wonder if
the sparrows were the direct cause of Beaumont's problems
or, as seen by his colleague Rawlie Barringer, "psychopomps"
whose job it was "to guide lost souls back into the land of
the living" (314).

Subsequent appearances and departures of the sparrows
create a coming together between the writer and the reader
because, as William York Tindall writes in The Literary
Symbol (1960), "symbols, plainly for a character in the
book, are there to carry something to him and by his
reaction to enlighten us about him" (14-15) and "for author
and reader the symbol is unitive" (16). Thus, the birds
hint to both Beaumont and readers of The Dark Side that
everything transpiring in the novel comes from the active
imagination of an artist. The sparrows represent Stark,
who, if we are to believe the novel, is Beaumont's twin or
doppelgänger. However, like the birds he was born in the
"mind" of Thad Beaumont. Because they do come from an
artist's imagination and demand an explanation, the sparrows
are akin to other feathered symbols of the imagination, such
as Wordsworth's skylark, Whitman's hermit thrush, or more
closely, Poe's raven.

Throughout the novel, George Stark stalks Beaumont, demanding that he write another Alexis Machine novel and give Stark a literary life of his own, threatens Thad's wife and children, and leaves finger prints that are identified as Beaumont's at each crime, laying the blame for the murders upon Beaumont. When he finally regains control over Stark, Beaumont knows that a suitable ending has come and cries to the sparrows that he likewise has created to "Take him, then! Take him! TAKE HIM BACK TO HELL WHERE HE BELONGS!" (456). After we have recovered from our suspension of disbelief, we realize that the hell to which he condemns Stark is the unconscious from which he came. Only Beaumont knows about the sparrows; Stark does not. After one conversation with Stark, Beaumont realizes that "He doesn't know. He really doesn't. The sparrows . . . they are still hidden from him. That secret is mine" (427), indicating that only seers like Beaumont and King are prepared to see through their third eyes the significance of the birds.

Understanding that the sparrows represent his "'realization of the shadow,' the growing awareness of the inferior part of the personality" (Jung 8.208) is not easy for Beaumont because it negates any possiblity that he is in control of his personal and artistic lives. At one point, after the sparrows have reappeared and have been mentioned in messages left behind by Stark, Beaumont conducts a self-

interview, his version of self-analysis, to determine the sparrows' being and origin:

> Question: Who wrote about the sparrows? Who wrote it in blood!
>
> Answer: The one who knows. The one to whom the sparrows belong.
>
> Question: Who is the one who knows? Who owns the sparrows?
>
> Answer: I am the knower. I am the owner.
> (261)

In fact, he alludes in an earlier confrontation with George Stark to his creating the sparrows: "I think I'm the only one who knows about the sparrows, George. I think maybe I wrote it" (248). By referring to himself as "the knower," Beaumont strengthens his role as an active creator instead of a caretaker of stories like Jack Torrance becomes in The Shining. Everything involving George Stark evolves from the imagination of Thad Beaumont, just as everything involving Thad Beaumont evolves from Stephen King's.

To maintain control over George Stark and over his own art and imagination, Thad Beaumont must manipulate the sparrows, which represent all that lies within his imagination. This control comes only when he writes at his own speed and in his own style. The narrator recounts a seemingly autoerotic moment when Beaumont realizes that "He could get rid of the sparrows and the burning, maddening

itch in his hand only by using the typewriter" (316), again
indicating that the creator must maintain control of the
created.

Once Thad Beaumont's imagination is triggered and he
has developed a need to write, King brings the tools of
Thad's trade into play. As himself, Thad uses a typewriter
to write, a practice begun when "[his] mother had bought him
an old Remington 32 typewriter as a get-well present" (11)
following his surgery when he was eleven years of age. As
George Stark, he uses pencils known as "Berol Black
Beauties" (99). The differing writing tools highlight the
discrepancy in the products of the two halves of Beaumont's
imagination. The refined fiction of Thad Beaumont comes
from a product of technology while the visceral fiction of
George Stark comes from the highly tactile, less complicated
pencil.

At one point, King presents a quantifiable difference
between Beaumont's and Stark's writing techniques:

> On top of the typewriter was the day's output.
> Six pages. It was his usual number . . . . when
> he was working as himself, that was. As Stark he
> usually did eight, and sometimes ten. (131)

In addition to being the means by which Beaumont puts his
thoughts onto paper, the typewriter becomes the symbol of
his eventual defeat of his darker side. Earlier in the
novel, he dreams of someone entering his home intent on

harming all residing there. The stranger gains entry by using a key which "wasn't a housekey [sic] at all but a typewriter key on the end of a long steel rod" (34). This symbolic entry into Beaumont's imagination is depicted by his darker half's securing control of his means of remaining sane and productive. The image of his dream opponent possessing the key to his safety remains with Beaumont, for as the narrator discloses, "That was one of the rare [dreams] he kept with him, as real as a memory" (40). As Jung posits, "the most beautiful and impressive dreams have no lasting or transformative effect on the dreamer. He may be impressed by them, but he does not necessarily see any problem in them" (9.118), underscoring the authority of Beaumont's dream. This is the beginning of Beaumont's war with his shadow and the end of any psychological or artistic complacency.

The narrator earlier recounts that Beaumont "didn't even use the pencil anymore. The Berols belonged to a dead age . . . a dark age" (98). The dark age represented by the black pencils was the time when Beaumont wrote novels under the name of George Stark. Through the earlier disclosure of the difference in daily page production of Thad Beaumont and George Stark, King leads the reader to consider the Beaumont pages superior to the Stark pages. There are fewer of them because the Stark fiction can be cranked out at a faster pace. This perceived superiority is later more graphically

illustrated when Stark visits the apartment of Miriam
Cowley, the ex-wife of Beaumont's agent Rick Cowley, to
continue his reign of terror against all associated with
Thad Beaumont. While in the apartment, Stark sees a
bookcase and notices "both of Beaumont's [books] on one
shelf and four of Stark's on another. Beaumont's were on a
higher shelf" (143). Here, King concretizes the underlying
abstract argument about the superiority of "serious" fiction
over "popular" fiction by inserting a descriptive image of
the placement of the books into one of the most suspenseful
and horrifying scenes of Stark's revenge. However, King's
passage is so filled with violence that it could have been
written with the black pencils of George Stark, utilizing
the same techniques to maintain reader interest that had
become repugnant to King's most obvious shadow, Thad
Beaumont.

Passages attributed to Beaumont's two personas show
differing styles and intents. King appropriately prefaces
the last section of The Dark Half with a passage from The
Sudden Dancers by Thaddeus Beaumont. The resolution of the
narrative has been reached: the artistic side that Thad
Beaumont views most favorably throughout the novel prevails.
One, however, must not dismiss the concluding Thad Beaumont
passage so quickly. The metadiagetic elements introducing
the sections of The Dark Half draw attention to themselves
because the reader becomes more interested in seeing what is

being produced by both Beaumont and Stark than in merely
accepting a narrator's description of the writing.

The debate over which passages are superior becomes
moot when one accepts them as being written by the same
person. However, to show that at one point in the novel the
debate was serious, King intentionally includes the
resistant reader in the character of Dodie Eberhart, who
"had been a dedicated [Stark] fan from Machine's Way and
Oxford Blues right up to Riding to Babylon, which looked to
be the last of them" (75). Although she has never been
disappointed by Stark's fiction, Dodie finds the works
credited to Thad Beaumont lacking because of his writing
style. At one point she almost casts his Purple Haze aside
because she finds it weak, even though she knows that George
Stark and Thad Beaumont are the same person:

>she would have found it difficult or impossible
>to believe both writers were the same man.
>Except . . . about three-quarters of the way
>through it, at a point where she had been about
>ready to throw the boring piece of shit across
>the room and forget the whole thing, there was a
>scene in which a farmer shot a horse. The horse
>had two broken legs and needed to be shot, but
>the thing was, old Farmer John had enjoyed it.
>Had, in fact, put the barrel of the gun against
>the horse's head and then jerked himself off,

squeezing the trigger at the moment of climax.
(75)

Only when she comes across this passage that would have made
Stark proud does she admit that the two writers are the same
person.

Although, as Tyson Blue observes, both The Dark Half
and in Misery are about "the craft of writing, the creative
process, which is both the cause of the protagonists'
suffering and their salvation from it" (8), there is a
difference in the sources of the danger that the
protagonists face. William Gagliani contends that "With The
Dark Half, [King] goes one [step] further by placing the
danger literally inside the writer's brain" (n. pag.).
Nonetheless, the dangers that Beaumont faces as an
individual striving for his physical, psychological and
artistic survival are as pressing as those faced by Paul
Sheldon in Misery. He knows that if his conflict with his
shadow George Stark were the subject of fiction, which of
course it is, all of the loose ends would eventually be tied
up. Thus King wraps up the novel, just as he resolved his
own relationship with the Richard Bachman persona that he
had created to keep his own career vital.

By tying up of the loose ends into a completed whole,
King recreates Jung's depiction of completeness. Jung
represented psychological completeness by referring to
mandala because, according to Jung, the basis of the

psychological mandala "is the premonition of a centre of personality, a kind of central point within the psyche" (9. 357). Jung often required his patients to create their interpretation of the completed circle (9.387-390). Beaumont's psyche becomes complete when he regains control of his consciousness by destroying George Stark.

Chapter VI

"Secret Window, Secret Garden":

Losing the Battle

In the introduction to "Secret Window, Secret Garden,"
Stephen King contends that the novella is his "last story
about writers and writing" ("Two Past" 237). When
considering it the coda for King's writer-centered works,
the practiced eye easily recognizes its similarities with
King's other writer works. In 1990 Phil Kloer wrote that
"Secret Window, Secret Garden" was "another inside-the-head-
of-a-writer story (like 'Misery' and 'The Shining') that
borrows minor keys from both these novels and twists them
into something new and deeply disturbing" (n. pag.), to
which Anita Schrodt adds, "Secret Window, Secret Garden [is]
more or less the flip side of [King's] novel 'The Dark
Half!" (n. pag.). This novella is more than a
recapitulation of King's artistic concerns; moreover, it
shows that King has not come to closure in his quest for an
artistic identity. Instead, he returns to the concept of
the writer who is unable to write with which he began quest
in The Shining.

Like King writing-oriented forerunners, "Secret Window,
Secret Garden" focuses upon the writer obsession of King's
fictional shadows. In The Shining, Jack Torrance is
obsessed with overcoming an interminable writer's block and

writing anything while Paul Sheldon in _Misery_ and Thad

Beaumont in _The Dark Half_ are obsessed with rising above the

popular success that they have enjoyed. King complicates

the plot of "Secret Window, Secret Garden" by intimating

throughout the work that protagonist Morton Rainey stole the

stories which had gained him fame. The mental and emotional

straits in which Morton Rainey finds himself because of this

possibliity are considerable. The accusation of plagiarism

is more frightening than terminal writer's block because

when a writer finally overcomes writer's block, the works he

produces are at least supposedly his.

When John Shooter, the work's antagonist and Mort

Rainey's shadow, first appears, Rainey merely thinks he is

dealing "with one of the crazy folks" (242), as he calls the

army of fans surrounding every public figure. But as time

progresses and as Shooter continues to accuse him of

stealing his story "Secret Window, Secret Garden," and

publishing it as "Sowing Season," Rainey begins taking his

visitor from Mississippi more seriously and himself less so.

In fact, he at one point questions his own memory-cum-

sanity: "What about stealing the story in the first place?

Maybe you forgot that" (294).

It is only at the end of the story that we discover

that what we have expected all along is true; John Shooter

is, in actuality, Morton Rainey's shadow shadow and a

manifestation of his guilt. The possibility that Shooter's

accusations are true is given credibility when we learn that earlier in his career, Rainey passed off "Crowfoot Mile," a story by a classmate John Kintner, as his own and submitted it to and had it published by <u>Aspen Quarterly</u> under the altered title "Eye of the Crow." At one point, in a dream sequence, Rainey's confusion becomes apparent:

> "I know you," Mort said in the dream.
>
> "That's right pilgrim," John Kintner said in his bald, drawling Southern accent. "You just put me together wrong. Now keep on writing."
>
> (350)

Unlike the person in his dream, Rainey is unable to keep on writing. This makes the persona hiding behind Mort's mask strong enough to eventually destroy him.

Dream sequences serve as windows through which both Rainey and King's readers see the hidden fears and guilts seek release. In <u>Transparent Minds</u> (1978), Dorrit Cohn indicates that dreams are a viable means of adding to the complexity of the narrative by permitting entrance into the repressed psyche of a character: "[T]he dreaming mind variously interacts with and reacts to the dreamed experience, so that a dream often includes the dreamer's thoughts in his dream" (51). The dream sequences in "Secret Window, Secret Garden" attract reader notice to narrative complications: in order to make the entire narrative succeed, King must weave both Rainey's conscious and

unconscious into a workable tapestry, substantiating Cohn's contention that "a dreamer does not tell himself his dream while he dreams it, any more than the waking person tells himself his experiences while they are in progress" (52).

The conscious Mort Rainey wants to derive some meaning from his encounters with John Shooter and the implications Shooter has raised. In addition to Rainey's concerns, King causes readers to wonder why Rainey is being persecuted by a shadow that he eventually comes to consider "either a supernatural being or a supercriminal" (317) and why he has found it impossible to write. To provide answers for both Rainey's and the reader's questions, King divulges Rainey's checkered past.

Narrative integrity is maintained as each dream builds upon the preceding one, moving from a cornfield (255) to the "HOME TEAM WRITING ROOM [of] PROF. DELLACOURT" (349), eventually creating a completed psychological picture of Mort Rainey. While searching for some meaning in his newly formed relationship with John Shooter, Rainey has a disturbing dream:

> [H]e was lost in a vast cornfield. He blundered from one row to the next, and the sun glinted off the watches he was wearing--half a dozen on each forearm, and each watch set to a different time" (255).

His random movement in an alien environment uncontrolled by a determined chronology draws the reader into a timeless predicament and causes him or her, as Rainey does, to fashion some possible interpretation for the dream. Here, for the first time, King creates a narrative segment for which he has provided no explanation. Although primarily diagetic, being part of the narrative in progress, this dream becomes metadiagetic as well, being a brief story in its own right for which both Rainey's and King's readers must find an explanation.

Like the cornfield dream, the two remaining dreams are parts of the overall "Secret Window, Secret Garden" story as well as being stories that briefly stand on their own. Both occur in a classroom, the second becoming more detailed and more telling:

> [Rainey] was [in] a familar classroom, although he couldn't have said just why. He was in the classroom with John Shooter. Shooter was holding a grocery bag in the curve of one arm. He took an orange out of the bag and bounced it reflectively up and down in his hand. (276)

As Rainey stood looking at a blackboard emblazoned with the words "Sowing Season <u>A Short Story by Morton Rainey</u>" (276), "something whizzed over Mort's shoulder, just missing his head. The orange . . . struck the blackboard and burst open

with a rotten squashing sound, and splattered gore across
what had been written there" (276).

The psychological significance of the dreams grows.
The second classroom dream "was in the world's biggest
classroom [identified as] "HOME TEAM WRITING ROOM--PROF.
DELLACOURT" (349). Rainey again stands at the front of the
classroom:

> he had written the same sentence on the
> blackboard five hundred times: I shall not copy
> from John Kintner. He must have written it four
> hundred times already, he thought, but four
> hundred wasn't enough. Stealing a man's work
> when a man's work was all he really had was
> unforgivable. (439)

Rainey no longer is concerned with being punished by thrown
oranges; rather, his punishment now stems from a sense of
guilt that he and the reader do not completely understand.

King contends that the sources for his stories lie
just beyond the entrance "that separates the conscious and
the unconscious" ("The Horror Writer" 12), indicating that
he, the reader, and Morton Rainey are members of the same
collective unconscious. Rainey's dreams contain everything
needed for him and the reader to understand his reactions
and for the reader to fathom the text's underlying theme,
"just who the writer is--and is not--when he writes" (Stamm

n. pag.). Although he at first does not understand how, Rainey discloses just who he is through his dreams.

The primary task set before any writer is to find a motivation for a story. The bag of oranges held by Shooter in the first dream harkens back to the entertainer juggling oranges is an edited-out passage of The Shining. When the entertainer drops an orange, "it falls to the muddy cobbles and smashes open, . . . [exposing] all sorts of rotten symbolism [and other literary devices]" (The Shining ms 439). In both The Shining and "Secret Window, Secret Garden," King chose well when he decided upon the orange to symbolize the writer's psyche. Like the seed and pulp of an orange, the writer's shadow is freed only when the surrounding, confining outer skin of the imagination is broken and the substance within to fall where it may.

When one inevitably accepts Shooter as the Rainey's shadow, the dreams become even more significant. The first question one should ask when considering the Shooter character is, "What are his motives?" He is from rural, Perkinsburg, Mississippi, and is not greatly out of place in Rainey's and King's rural Maine home area:

> He was wearing a blue work-shirt. It was
> buttoned neatly all the way to the loose, razor-
> reddened flesh of his neck, although he wore no
> tie. The bottom of the shirt disappeared into a
> pair of blue-jeans that looked too big for the

> man who was wearing them. They ended in cuffs
> which lay neatly on a pair of faded yellow work-
> shoes which looked made for walking in a furrow
> of played-out earth about three and a half feet
> behind a mule's ass. (241)

Shooter floats through the narrative like an avenging being found in a Southern Gothic novel. In fact, Mort admits that Shooter appeared as if he were "out of a novel by William Faulkner" (241) and later, following the burning of their home in Derry, Amy, his ex-wife, places Shooter more clearly into some perspective by evoking the image of the Snopes family who "were characters in some novels by William Faulkner. They got their start in business burning barns" (299).

King, however, does not limit his presentation of Shooter in this extremely superficial manner. The many characteristics which Shooter possesses surface in Rainey's dreams, and the reader and Rainey must put all of the parts together in order to develop a complete understanding of John Shooter. A farmer from Perkinsburg or possibly Delecourt, Mississippi, he accuses Rainey of stealing a story he has written, an action Rainey denies or does not remember.

Even though Rainey does not, the reader soon learns that Shooter is a shadowy composite of a collective of people and events which have created Rainey's stress and

psychological trauma. Shooter's first name comes in part from first name of John Kintner, Mort Rainey's classmate in Richard Perkins' writing class at Bates College, whose story "Crowfoot Mile" Mort had submitted under his own name. The name Shooter comes from "Shooter's Knob, Tennessee" (360), the hometown of Ted Milner, Rainey's wife's lover and eventual second husband. These two individuals are the direct and the indirect causes of Mort's mental state.

The classroom settings for the last two dreams directly relate to the plagiarism. In fact, the name printed on the door of the second classroom "HOME TEAM WRITING ROOM--PROF. DELLACOURT" points to the first outside intimations of possible plagiarism. Early in his career, Rainey felt that sure success had finally come his way, but the feeling was short-lived:

> Paramount had optioned the book [The Delacourt Family] for $75,000 on a pick-up price of $750,000--damned big money: And they had turned up an old script in the files, something called The Home Team, which was enough like The Delacourt Family to open up potential legal problems. It was the only time in his career-- before this nightmare, anyway--when he had been exposed to the possibility of a plagiarism charge. (346)

Even with the aberrant spelling of "Dellacourt" on the door, both the professor's name and the name of the room are linked to the two potential screen projects. The connection between Rainey's reality and dream worlds is strengthened by Delacourt being the name of John Shooter's home town.

Shooter's being a Southerner stems from both Kintner and Milner's being Southern. Thus, the dreams and their foundations in the real world combine to create John Shooter. However, the Rainey-Shooter encounters, both when Rainey is awake and when he dreams, have been designed to bring attention to the conception of a story. The question that most often displeases King but which he attempts to clarify, always hopefully for the last time, concerns the source of his story ideas. Rainey similarly suffers from the demands of his fans and speaks for King:

> People sometimes asked him where he got his
> ideas, and although he scoffed at the question,
> it always made him feel vaguely ashamed, vaguely
> spurious. They seemed to feel there was a
> Central Idea Dump somewhere (just as there was
> supposed to be an elephant graveyard somewhere,
> and a fabled lost city of gold somewhere else),
> and he must have a map to get there and back.
> (254)

But like all writers, Rainey understands "that the idea [for a story is] often the result of seeing or sensing some odd

connection between objects or events or people which had never seemed to have the slightest connection before" (254), recalling the imagination's third eye. So, instead of trying to provide a technical explanation of a story's origin, King makes the reader privileged to witness the birth of one.

Like The Shining, Misery, and The Dark Half, "Secret Window, Secret Garden" goes beyond mere philosophical meanderings about the source of creativity. Following the lead of King's earlier writer centered works, this account of Morton Rainey's psychological and artistic trials centers upon the creation of an artifact entitled "Sowing Season" or "Secret Window, Secret Garden," depending upon whether one accepts Shooter's or Rainey's contention that his story is the original and the other has been plagiarized. Rainey says that "a story was a thing, a real thing" (254) which lasts "until this horrible story you've been telling is all finished" (364). "Secret Window, Secret Garden" differs from works such as The Shining, Misery, and The Dark Half because the writer protagonist is never seen in his creative mode. Even though Jack Torrance suffers a writer's block similar to Mort's, he at least attempts to write. Rainey, on the other hand, must meet head on "just about the most serious accusation a man can make against a writer" (272), plagiarism.

Shooter's accusation is central to Rainey's psychological demise. Rainey says that "in novels, everything has a connection, but my experience has been that in real life, things sometimes just happen" (299). Through Rainey, King clarifies the role of the author by saying that writing is "to make what people think the truth" (322). This dictum is accomplished when the writer delivers a series of images in a way that provides a fictional logic that does not exist in the real world.

As part of the fiction-making process, readers are expected to follow the narrative sequences as they appear, one following the other, and appreciate the orderliness that the author provides. The reader and the writer are members of the same collective unconscious that desires an exactness that often escapes them in the real world. Reader manipulation is the key to a successful fiction-making experience, and King relies heavily upon his ability to lead his readers by providing the fictional logic for which they have been searching. According to Lynn Flewelling, "King strings us along with hints and clues so that when the denouement comes, however farfetched, we have the satisfaction of being able to go back to see how he did it" (n. pag.). Thus, King puts his all into creating a work which will meet the expectations of the implied audience.

From the initial encounter between Rainey and Shooter, King lays the ensuing narrative's foundation for both the

protagonist and the reader. Both approach the text with King's "What if?" strategy to developing an idea. Just what if a writer were accused of stealing the work of another, what, then, would happen? King shows through Morton Rainey's actual predicament and through allusions to other writers that most writing is derivative. When Mort's book The Organ-Grinder's Boy first appeared, Amy, then his wife, reads a particular review which "had first acknowledged the book's pace and readability, and then suggested a certain derivativeness in its plotting" (320). She verbally defends her husband's work: "So what? Don't these people know there are only about five really good stories, and writers just tell them over and over, with different characters" (320). Rainey adds to the validity of his wife's argument:

> [T]here were at least six stories: success;
> failure; love and loss; revenge; mistaken
> identity; the search for a higher power, be it
> God or the devil, . . . [and] "Sowing Season"
> embodied at least three of those ideas. But was
> that plagiarism? If it was, every novelist at
> work in the world would be guilty of the crime.
> (320)

This accusation and reaction is not greatly dissimilar to King's own circumstance, for one of the major criticisms leveled against him is that he tells the same story over and over. But, as Rainey ponders, is this plagiarism?

The actual derivativeness of "Secret Window, Secret
Garden" is not well hidden. There are thematic similarities
between the novella and other King works such as _Misery_, _The
Dark Half_, and _The Shining_. King, however, demonstrates the
derivitiveness of this work in particular and all literary
works in general through his many allusions to other writers
and other works. In addition to mentioning Faulkner, King
alludes to Hemingway's contention that one always returns to
vices such as smoking and drinking (253); to Shakespeare,
recalling that someone had once said that "if four hundred
monkeys banged away on four hundred typewriters for four
million years, one of them would produce the complete works
of Shakespeare" (261); to Poe, by having Rainey fight his
reflection in a mirror in a scene reminiscent of one in
"William Wilson" (312); and to Whitman, by having him
answering "the deadly little voice" (361). However, by
bringing the relevance of these literary forebearers into
play, King demonstrates that a writer must control his
material and must put his own imagination into the finished
product.

The passages credited to Rainey and to Shooter are
clear examples of the stage of writing when a writer chooses
specific images, words and syntax for a particular work. In
both versions of the contested story, the speaker laments
losing his wife and is driven to contemplating the perfect
crime to rid himself of the guilt and rage he feels. These

reactions came at two diverse periods in Rainey's life, the latter after his divorce and his developing terminal writer's block:

> They had summed up his own feelings pretty well. The landscape of "Sowing Season" wasn't one he would care to travel through often, and it was no "Tell-Tale Heart," but he thought he had done a fair job of painting Tom Havelock's homicidal breakdown. (251)

For once Rainey is able to successfully convey his thoughts in his own words: "The editor had asked for more, but Mort had never come up with another story even remotely like 'Sowing Season'" (251).

Rainey appears to have been a one-story writer and, like Jack Torrance in The Shining, is unable to put his own thoughts onto paper. The appearance of the shadowy Shooter suggests that Rainey's one story was not his and that he suffers from both guilt and anger because of his need to steal the work of another writer to get his name into print. More importantly, the Jungian dreams and the concept of the shadow undermine the concept of originality. Like Jack Torrance, Rainey is caught up in uncontrolled dreams and ideas coming from behind his mask and is unable to do anything other than let them come and confuse him.

"Secret Window, Secret Garden," as did The Shining,

Misery, and The Dark Half, permits readers to enter the
world which created the work lying before them and to
witness the trials and tribulations a writer suffers before
a completed text is placed between two covers. In addition,
"Secret Window, Secret Garden" draws the reader's attention
to the novella itself as being fiction and coming from the
imagination of a writer. Mort Rainey and John Shooter serve
as the two sides of King's artistic psyche. Like King's
other writer works, "Secret window, Secret Garden" becomes
metafictionally significant when it instructs the reader on
how a text is created and tells the story of Mort Rainey's
mental deterioration caused by artistic and family problems.
As King writes, "[S]ometimes windows break. I think that,
more than anything else, is the concern of this story: what
happens to the wide-eyed observer when the window between
reality and unreality breaks" ("Two Past" 239). Again,
instead of personally experiencing the flying glass and the
wounds it causes, King allows his shadows Mort Rainey and
John Shooter to stand in his stead.

   In spite of his indicating that "Secret Window, Secret
Garden" brings his fictional consideration of the writing
life to a close, King returns to the story line with which
he began this consideration. Morton Rainey, like Jack
Torrance, suffers writer's block caused by emotional
distress. When King completes Mort's story, he indirectly
says two things--writer's block can happen to any author,

but he is fortunate that he has escaped it; inferior writers

might need to resort to plagiarism for successful texts, but

he does not. King, in fact, indicates that he has

confronted the artistic shadow shared by all writers and has

emerged victorious.

Conclusion:

A Few Parting Words

Since the 1974 publication of <u>Carrie</u>, his first novel, Stephen King's name has appeared on almost every best seller list. Fans continue to eagerly await each offering bearing his name. Scholars continue to debate the quality of his fiction. For many of these works, King has created protagonists who are professional writers. Through them, he shows the masks that writers must remove and the shadows with which they must deal in order to survive. In fact, these writers represent the shadows that King, himself, has had to confront.

It is interesting to note, however, that of all of King's writer protagonists, only Bill Denbrough of <u>It</u> writes in the horror genre. The others find success in different fields of genre literature: westerns, suspense, and gothic romances. Quite often, like King, these characters learn that they are not appreciated for their literary merits because their creations do not fit the accepted concept of "serious" literature. That they pride themselves in their craftsmanship and dedicate their lives to their art means little to their critics.

Although acceptance by the literary hierarchy would be nice, King realizes that any writer can be a professional instead of a pretender if enough of his life and efforts are

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expended in creating texts. This contention is key to King's attempts at validating his works. In <u>The Stephen King Story</u>, George Beahm observes that "King, even at the beginning of his career, realized that what separated the amateur writer from the professional was the quantity and quality of the writing itself" (27). To King, all writing is serious; therefore, he refuses to accept the argument that genre fiction is not literary and that genre writers are those who will not or cannot write quality fiction. In defense of genre writing, King asserts that "it seems to me that any genre can produce fine literature. It depends if somebody wants to take it seriously on its own terms" (qtd. in Robertson 234).

However, King sees more in his works than just stories to share with readers: his fiction allows him to confront the shadows which plague him. Referring to Charles Whitman's 1966 sniping rampage from the bell tower at the University of Texas in Austin, King says, "My writing has kept me out of the tower" (qtd. in Norden 36), reminiscent of the situations of Paul Sheldon and Thad Beaumont who are kept out of their own towers by writing away what poses the most danger to them. Sheldon and Beaumont fully realize their shadows and successfully deal with them through their writing as King himself does.

King's place in the horror genre seems to be guaranteed. Richard Bleiler wrote in 1985 that "it is

likely that he will be recognized and remembered as a man who wrote his way out of clichés and sensationalism and brought new life into the terror-horror field" (1043). In a similar fashion, The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural (1986) contends that "King certainly is meeting the needs of his public, and he seems likely to remain without any serious challengers in the horror genre as master of the good read" (Sullivan 256). However, it is Tony Magistrale who brings King's potential into focus, predicting in 1992 that King's influence will move beyond mere readership:

> As King's career heads into its third decade, there is no doubt that he has earned the title "America's storyteller" as the most popular writer this country has ever produced [,and] critics, English teachers, and school boards must now address seriously [Leslie] Fiedler's call for the creation of a new kind of criticism, one that will result in a more broadly based canon and curriculum. (Second Decade 159)

If Magistrale is correct, fans will continue to read King's fiction, and this readership will lead to a new, or at least a newly applied, critical modus operandi in which King's "popular" fiction will demand serious literary consideration that focuses upon the characteristics and components unique to the horror genre instead of slighting them. As of yet,

King and his works have not completely reconciled the worlds of the fans and the literary critics.

King continues trying to explain his art. In his most metafictional works, The Shining, Misery, The Dark Half, and "Secret Window Secret Garden," he shows the surrogates he has created for himself confronting shadows which hinder their artistic abilities and threaten their psychological well-beings. King seeks to validate his own writing by making his readers privileged to the artistic and psychological investments required by the fictionalizing process. In this fashion, he creates a defensive us-against-them, aligning his readers with "the writer" and against "the critics." He indicates that he has successfully confronted his shadows and continues to write the fiction with which he feels most comfortable instead of attempting to meet the expectations of the critical establishment.

King utilizes the Jungian collective unconscious to relate his validating quest to his readers. However, he does not limit himself to the readily available collective unconscious of his audience. He recreates this collective unconscious to fit his needs for validation through a body of fiction that leads his readers to interpret future works from the expectations he has led them toward developing. King teases his readers into following the artistic quests of his writer protagonists just as he teases his writer

protagonists into believing that they can achieve literary prominance, although this faith is often shattered. Above all else, he teases his reader into accepting these fictionalized writers as voices for King himself and as validations for the seriousness of his writing.

Based upon sales figures alone, one cannot deny that Stephen King has become an extremely successful writer. In a 1991 interview, Richard Matheson, perhaps best known for his Twilight Zone scripts, contends that King "would always have become a successful writer because of his talent" (16). King's story telling abilities and his fiction's effectiveness have been validated by the readership that he has developed, but by writing about artists who confront artistic shadows, he pursues a personal validation. The fear of not being able to write or of not having what he writes taken seriously are the shadows which plague King much as they plague his writer protagonists. He has been able to write away their shadows, but he continues trying to write away his own.

Appendix:

An Introduction to Stephen King Criticism

When King began achieving prominence and his fiction began hitting best seller lists, many critics approached each successive offering as just another work by Stephen King. However, from January 1985 through December 1989, King's defenders found a forum in Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter, which "operated on the assumption that its readers were not only interested in information about Stephen King's life, but that they also wanted informed criticism and analysis of his work as well" (Spignesi, "Introduction" 95). Writing for the now-defunct "fanzine," Christopher Spruce, King's brother-in-law and the last publisher/editor of Castle Rock, maintained that "It has been Stephen King's misfortune, if one should call it that, to have become the world's best-selling fiction writer" (1), while, in another issue of Castle Rock, Pat Chase contends that "Stephen King is an extremely popular writer, but has yet to be considered a literary artist" (4).

The demand for a constant flow of King-related material did not cease with Castle Rock's demise. Stephen Spignesi has helped fuel the fires with his The Shape Under the Sheet: The Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia (1991), The Stephen King Quiz Book (1990) and The Second Stephen King Quiz Book (1992). However, serious Stephen King readers

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require more than quiz books and encyclopedias pandering to fans' need for trivia. To meet this need, publishers such as Starmont House, the Popular Press, and Underwood and Miller have produced serious studies of King's works. The commentaries gathered by these publishers have done much to bring the King fanatics and the literary critics closer together.

George Stade, however, sets the stage for those critics who see King in a different light than Spruce and Chase do when he writes in a 1987 The Nation review article of popular fiction that "the genre most condescended to is the chiller. People read horror fiction as they used to read pornography, on the sly. Reviewers with intellectual pretensions titter in print" (259). Stade argues that King will not be taken seriously because the horror genre is not taken seriously by many reviewers and critics. Some writers who have made names for themselves in the field of King criticism originally showed little confidence in his staying power. For instance, Tim Underwood, who with Chuck Miller produced some of the best collections of King criticism, once observed that "King may well know obscurity in his own lifetime" ("The Skull" 296).

Many of the early critics designed clever descriptors that are still brought up in discussions of King and his works. Paul Gray wrote in 1982 that King was the "Master of Post-literate Prose," one who showed "how writing can appeal

to people who do not ordinarily read" (87). In the same vein, Stefan Kanfer, in 1986, called King "The Master of Pop Dread" (74). Many of the early critics, according to Don Herron, did nothing "more than perhaps mention King's name in passing, in much the same way a serious historian might mention a popular figure such as Davy Crockett" (153). However, as King's fandom became more extensive, as his canon became more varied, and as his place in "popular" American literature became more insured, an ever-increasing critical press began to appear. Critics such as Michael Collings, Tony Magistrale, Joseph Reino, and Douglas Winter began basing their analyses of King's works whole upon textual matters such as character development, thematic continuity, and allegorical presentation instead of their popularity with readers of popular or genre fiction.

In addition, many of the newer King critics attempted to place him into some literary context. In 1985, Gary Crawford wrote that "King is the heir to the American Gothic tradition in that he has placed his horrors in contemporary settings and has depicted the struggle of an American culture to face the horrors within it" (45). In a more precise vein, Ben Indick draws direct parallels between such King works as 'Salem's Lot, The Shining, and to some extent even Misery and traditional "haunted house" pieces like Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898), Shirley Jackson's The Haunting of Hill House (1959), and Ira Levin's

<u>Rosemary's Baby</u> (1967) ("Literary Tradition" 155). Indick
further discerns similarities between King and Edgar Allan
Poe, in whose works "the grotesque behavior actually
represents the normal distorted by emotion to the extreme"
(156), and between King and Ambrose Bierce, who gives his
stories psychological authority because of "the eternal hope
of his characters, who eventually discover it to be a futile
snare" (157).

King's kinship to writers in genres other than horror
has also been noted. James Egan contends, in a 1984 essay,
that "King shows an awareness, by means of allusions to and
citations of other modern Gothicists, that he writes in a
Gothic mode" (131) and that "[d]etectives of every sort are
present in his novels: state and federal investigators,
physical scientists, psychologists, literary and historical
sleuths, amateurs and professionals" (144). Joseph
Patrouch, in 1983, moved King into still another literary
context when he classified him as a "fantasist," one "who
makes us face, in a variety of disguises, but still
unmistakably and unavoidably, what each of us sees as the
ultimate irrationality of the universe: our own deaths" (9)
and who "exploits the irrational side of modern science" (8)
to accomplish this. Yet other critics, such as Bernard
Gallagher, in 1984, saw more in King's fiction than mere
character representation or genre characteristics:

King's characters function as allegorical

everymen who must overcome the psychic and

physical pressures of "predestinate" evil rather

than an internal force of conscious will" (60).

This indicates that King perceives "that works of horror and

of popular fiction also have a therapeutic value because

they present stories which help us return to more stable and

constructive mental states" (59).

Much has been written about King and his works in

newspaper and magazine reviews, general publication

articles, and scholarly essays. This general and scholarly

attention has led to critical anthologies, book-length

studies, and one biography of King. Among the best of these

larger works are George Beahm's The Stephen King Story;

Michael Collings' The Many Faces of Stephen King (1985) and

The Stephen King Phenomenon (1986); Tony Magistrale's The

Dark Descent (1992), Landscape of Fear (1988), The Moral

Voyages of Stephen King (1989), and Stephen King: The Second

Decade (1992); Joseph Reino's Stephen King: The First Decade

(1988); Darrel Schweitzer's Discovering Stephen King (1985);

Stephen J. Spignesi's The Shape Under the Sheet: the

Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia; and Tim Underwood and

Chuck Miller's Bare Bones (1988), Fear Itself (1982), Feast

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