

ABSTRACT

A Dark Mirror: Duality and Reflections in Stephen King's Writers

Alexis Hitchcock

Director: Dr. Lynne Hinojosa, Ph.D.

Stephen King is well known for popular horror fiction but has recently been addressed more thoroughly by literary critics. While most studies focus on horror themes and the relationships between various characters, this thesis explores the importance of the author characters in three works by Stephen King: *Misery*, *The Dark Half*, and *The Shining*.

The introduction gives a background of Stephen King as an author of popular horror fiction and discusses two themes that are connected to his author characters:

doppelgängers and duality, and the idea of the death of the author. The death of the author is the idea that an author's biography should not affect the interpretation of a text.

Implicit in this idea is the notion that the separation of an author from his work makes the text more literary and serious. The second chapter on *Misery* explores the relationship between the author and the readership or fans and discusses Stephen King's divide caused by his split between his talent as an author of popular fiction and a desire to be a writer of literary fiction. The third chapter concerning *The Dark Half* explores Stephen King's use of the pseudonym Richard Bachman and the splitting this created within himself and the main character of his novel. The last chapter includes discussion of *The Shining* and the author character's split in personality caused by alcohol and supernatural sources. Studying the author characters and their doppelgängers reveals the unique stance King takes on the "death of the author" idea and shows how he represents the splitting of the self within his works.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS

Dr. Lynne Hinojosa, Department of Honors

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM

Dr. Andrew Wisely, Director

DATE: _____

A DARK MIRROR: DUALITY AND REFLECTIONS IN STEPHEN KING'S
WRITERS

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By
Alexis Hitchcock

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Modern horror fiction would not be complete without the landmark works and ideas of author Stephen King. Even those who have not read any of his novels and short stories have more than likely viewed one of the many film adaptations produced of his works, including Kubrick's *The Shining*, *Carrie*, and *Misery*. When someone thinks of Stephen King, the most popular horror fiction author of the last century, it is likely that they would imagine the blood, gore, supernatural elements, and suspense for which he is most known. From the classic movies adapted from Stephen King favorites, one might recall the terrifying image of Kathy Bates as the crazy Annie Wilkes from *Misery* or that of a young boy pedaling quickly through the halls of an isolated, haunted hotel in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. However, fans may forget, whether it be those that have just watched his movies or those that have read every novel cover to cover, the image of the typewriter sitting before Paul Sheldon as he sits trapped in the home of his self-titled biggest fan in *Misery* or Mike Enslin traveling from haunted spectacle to spectacle, gathering ideas for his next book in the novella *1408*. Something even the most avid readers of King may fail to notice is that nearly all of his works contain a character who writes, almost always professionally. In almost every case, his characters' careers are essential to the development of the plot of his stories, and are an important aspect of each of their personalities. Though his characters all seem to have different approaches to writing as a career, with some hoping to write popular fiction, others to write more seriously, and some even choosing to write in King's own genre, horror, King's choice to

bring many of his characters into the writing profession connects them together in a way that merely being of the same genre does not. There is so much to be explored within the works of Stephen King, but one of the most interesting and unique is that of his writer characters, who are given little attention in criticism and little thought as to the significance of their presence¹. No matter what the personality of each individual author character, they all share something in common with Stephen King, connecting them to him inescapably.

The main characters of *The Dark Half*, *Misery*, and *The Shining*, the three texts upon which this thesis focuses, have more in common with Stephen King than their occupations. King admits both purposefully and subconsciously to inserting part of his own character into his creations. In *The Dark Half*, this connection between the character Thad Beaumont and Stephen King is that they have both written under a darker pen name and have had their identities discovered. Jack's character in *The Shining* is an alcoholic, a trait unfortunately shared with Stephen King. In what is possibly Stephen King's most introspective and realistic novel of his career, *Misery*, his character Paul Sheldon struggles with substance abuse, the dream to be known as a "literary" author, and a controlling and demanding readership, which have all been known to affect the life of Stephen King. Through these novels and their characters' uncanny similarities to their creator, King plays with the blurred line between fact and fiction and creates the personalities of Thad Beaumont, Paul Sheldon, and Jack Torrance from his own experience. Unlike many authors that are considered "literary," King intentionally places

¹ Some articles that specifically explore King's writer characters are Michael J. Meyer's article "Stephen King's Writers" and Kathleen Margaret Lant's "The Rape of the Constant Reader."

himself within his works to the amusement of himself and others. Rather than attempting to distance himself from his novels, King shamelessly inserts himself into his writer characters and therefore makes himself known to readers through his novels. He is so comfortable with exposing himself to his readership and fans that he even appears in many film or television adaptations of his works, which quite literally expose Stephen King to his audience.

Though one of Stephen King's common themes is the struggle for critical acclaim as an author, direct insertion of an author into his works is often considered to be indicative of a type of art less deserving of praise from literary critics. It is quite a common belief among literary critics that art of any kind can only be serious or "higher" when distanced completely from its creator. This is seen, for example, in the idea of "the death of the author." This idea generally asserts that as a text is interpreted, a divide should be made between the mortal author and the immortal work of art, minimizing the effect and influence of the author on a work that will outlast him (Gomel 76). This idea is most famously explored in Roland Barthes's essay "The Death of the Author" which was published in 1967 and explores how a work should be severed completely from its source (the author) by the interpreter in order to escape the restrictions placed upon it when it is assumed that the only true authority on the work is the author (Hawthorn 65). In the essay "Authority and the Death of the Author," Jeremy Hawthorn explains Barthes's idea "that the death of the author liberates the reader, allows the work properly to come alive, to be enjoyed in all its potentialities" (68). When separated from the authority of the author, a work is open to different interpretations and is not limited to the intentions or

control of the author, giving critical interpretations and theories of a text as well as the text itself an authority beyond the original author of the work. Barthes describes “writing” as “the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin...that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing” (Barthes 221). Barthes’s definition of what writing should be leaves no room for the author’s identity, personality, or life to be included. Though Barthes does not reflect the view of all critics and authors on this topic, he does represent a very common one that has been accepted for decades in many circles.

King’s life and, ironically, his novels represent his struggle with the idea of critical and academic acclaim, as he is considered a commercial success rather than literary. Stephen King is clearly aware of the critical idea of the death of the author, and he challenges this idea with almost everything he writes. Though he knows that, for most critics, the intentional insertion of the author into his works is a sign of “lower” art, he forms his characters with his own personality in mind, making the connections between himself and his writer characters obvious to both his casual readers and critics. King takes Barthes’s idea of what “writing” should be and proceeds to do the exact opposite; he inserts himself into his works so intensely that it cannot be ignored. His direct opposition to Barthes’s idea of the “death of the author” does not show King’s ignorance but rather his ability as a talented and creative author to play with the idea. Instead of merely giving his characters (many of whom are writers) subtle similarities to his own personality, he goes completely in the other direction, giving his characters traits and

experiences that obviously reflect aspects of his character and life as a writer of popular fiction.

In addition to Stephen King expressing himself through his writer characters in his book, King also has an interesting habit of literally showing up in his works, especially screen adaptations. He has appeared, at least briefly, in *Pet Semetary*, *The Stand*, and even on the television show *Sons of Anarchy* as a guest character appropriately named Bachman. Though not necessarily known for his acting skills, Stephen King has placed his image in some film adaptations of his works. In a similar fashion, Stephen King's face and name are often extremely visible on the book jackets of his novels, sometimes even larger than the titles, making a clear association between his personality as an author and the books for which he is famous. In the inside cover of his novel *Misery*, the face of Stephen King appears within the cover art of his character's fictional novel *Misery's Return*. This somewhat amusing placement of Stephen King's own face within the fictional realm of his novel shows his commitment to fully placing himself within his works, particularly through his writer characters like the one that appears in *Misery*. Stephen King has had no problems making his face and name extremely recognizable to the general public or, similarly, revealing himself through the writers in his novels and short stories.

King is known as a master of bloody, horrifying, and disturbing literature and is often seen as an author without literary merit who is enjoyed only by the popular masses. This association causes him to be forgotten as the author of less horrific tales such as "The Body" (later adapted into the film *Stand by Me*) and *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank*

Redemption. These and other works, especially those that appear in his collection *Different Seasons*, show his diversity in writing that is often ignored or plainly overlooked by readers and critics. Despite these obvious successes with readers and viewers, King has struggled to be taken seriously in the literary world. However, in recent years this view has been challenged with continuing criticism and studies of his various works, revealing deep themes, allusions, and literary devices that put Stephen King and the horror genre into a tradition of more serious critical conversation. Stephen King's work has shown the literary world that popular novels can have literary merit. On the other hand, it has also shown that intelligently written literature can still be best-sellers and enjoyed by popular audiences, even in the horror genre, which has often been known for its existence purely to excite a cheap thrill in readers.

In addition to playing with the literary idea of "the death of the author," King is aware of the Gothic literary tradition, and he makes that extremely clear through the references to classic horror and science fiction works throughout his novels and short stories. Throughout his novels are many references to horror and science fiction authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, H. G. Wells, and Aldous Huxley. Before the first chapter of *The Shining* begins, a sizable quote from Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* is given which features "a gigantic clock of ebony..." which is referenced throughout the novel and serves as a basis for some of the novel's plot (*The Shining*). In his science fiction-horror novel *The Stand*, King makes several references to the novels of H.G. Wells, a pioneer of science fiction in the early twentieth century. In an appropriate reference considering *The Stand*'s apocalyptic themes, King compares a fiery scene in his

novel to a scene by H.G. Wells, writing “the night was yellow and orange and feverish with flames...it reminded [The Trashcan Man] of a Classic book he had owned as a child, an adaptation of H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* (*The Stand* 715-6). King also presents the scope of his literary knowledge to his audience by often referencing authors outside of his preferred genres such as William Shakespeare, Lewis Carroll, and the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. When the character Tom Cullen is working his way across the Nevada desert toward Las Vegas, he takes in the cars and buildings he passes that were once filled with people and thinks of what a friend of his would have said at the sight: “look on my works, ye mighty, and despair” (1244). Though King never mentions Shelley or the title of his poem, “Ozymandias,” careful readers will notice this reference to the romantic poet. Stephen King is an extremely learned author who jumps at any opportunity to show his literary prowess and to reference canonical works. King’s literary references to authors show the authors that have influenced Stephen King’s writing and also establish King’s awareness of his place as a continuation of the long traditions of Gothic and horror as well as the tradition of literary and academic fiction.

King’s horror has sprung from the traditions and conventions of Gothic literature.² King not only makes clever references to these works but draws inspiration from them, using classic Gothic themes to enrich his work and place himself within the Gothic and horror tradition. Within *The Dark Half*, *Misery*, and *The Shining*, King presents characteristics of the Gothic convention of the doppelgänger. Perhaps first made famous

² For more background on the history of the Gothic novel and Gothic conventions, see *American Horror Fiction*, ed. Brian Docherty, *A Dark Night’s Dreaming* ed. Tony Magistrale & Michael A. Morrison, *History of the Gothic* by Charles L. Crow, and *The History of Gothic Fiction* by Markman Ellis.

in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and later explored in the Robert Louis Stevenson novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the double or doppelgänger has been part of literary tradition for almost two hundred years at the least. The doppelgänger, or double, is not a recent invention or even one that was birthed in the Gothic period. It can even be traced back as early as one of man's earliest myths, Gilgamesh, in which the protagonist must wrestle with his equal and brother Enkidu (Saavedra 258) and the works of Augustine, who saw doubles as "becoming a metaphor or symbol of a mortal inner struggle" (Fonseca 194). It is often used in horror because the genre is often concerned with the idea of "Otherness," and the double often represents the part of a person that is perhaps unacceptable to society or to themselves (190). The doppelgänger is often the darker side of the original self, and causes confusion about the main character's identity both to himself and to others. Suggesting a supernatural element through the physical manifestation of inner splitting, the idea of the doppelgänger or in some cases the double, works well in the Gothic and horror genres as they are surrounded with mystery. Both parts of the doppelgänger, the double and the original, are essential to the whole, as the destruction of one leads to the loss of meaning and identity for the other (195). The doppelgänger is a literary theme used to represent the splitting of character and the self, and is used directly and indirectly in many works in the Gothic and horror genres.

The idea of the doppelgänger is portrayed cleverly throughout Stephen King's novels. He uses it most literally in *The Dark Half*, where his character Thad Beaumont has an actual doppelgänger, a physical representation of his darker side and one who sets

out to ruin Thad's career as an author of literary fiction. Though *The Shining* and *Misery* do not contain such a literal example of a double or doppelgänger, the idea still persists throughout these novels. In *The Shining*, both the writer character Jack Torrance and his son Danny have doubles that come to life under the evil influence of the hotel their family is watching for the winter which is called The Overlook. It is a little more difficult to apply the idea of the doppelgänger to *Misery*, a suspense and horror novel without the use of supernatural elements. Though the popular image of the doppelgänger as an evil version of the original does not work with *Misery*, a separation of the self is represented through Paul Sheldon's struggle to be recognized as an author of literary fiction and his successful career as an author of popular romantic fiction. This is not the typical supernatural doppelgänger, with one good half and one evil, but the separation within Paul Sheldon's own personality represents this classic Gothic theme within a more realistic context.

As seen in these examples, the doppelgänger is found within Stephen King's novels most commonly in the writer characters themselves. Though they are not evil in every case, the writers in these novels could be seen to represent doubles of King. These authors share many features, characteristics, and, essentially an identity with Stephen King. This places King's doppelgänger characters, as well as the text itself, somewhere between fact and fiction because the original figure that is doubled, Stephen King, exists outside of his novels and is not a character. Stephen King's use of his writer characters as his doppelgängers who share not only his occupation but many of his struggles and

aspects of his personality show his dedication and interest in the idea of the double as well as his clear rejection of the idea of “the death of an author.”

Though Stephen King relies heavily on the Gothic convention of the doppelgänger in his works, he comes from a tradition filled with many other characteristics, many of which he utilizes in his novels and short stories. A brief history of the Gothic genre helps to place King within a literary tradition. The history of the horror novel began with the tradition of the Gothic, which gained popularity in the nineteenth century with authors such as Mary Shelley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe. Though Gothic tales are thought to be a product of the Romantic and Victorian eras, Gothic elements and tales can be seen in British literature long before the term “gothic” was used. Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, written in the late sixteenth century, involves the supernatural in Dr. Faustus’s communication with a demonic figure, and has a hero that, by attempting to override the limits of his humanity, is in reality both the villain and hero of the story. Early in the next century, in one of Shakespeare’s most famous plays, *Macbeth*, Gothic elements can be clearly seen through the characters of his three mysterious witches, who inspire both feelings of horror and mystifying foreboding to his audience (Birkhead 4). Dealings with the supernatural, a common theme in Gothic literature, can be found in many writings before the nineteenth century. Though these works are not considered to be in the Gothic tradition, they are inspiration for Gothic writers, such as those who have influenced Stephen King most heavily.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* deals with humanity’s search for immortality in light of ever-advancing medical technology. In it, the supernatural aspects of this

dangerous attempt are highlighted, making the tale both gruesome and fantastic (158). Shelley claimed that through her novel she hoped to “awaken thrilling horror” within her readers, not as much from the physical form of Frankenstein’s monster than from the mystery and creepiness of her story (164). In *Frankenstein*, the unknown is more terrifying than the monster himself because he is “more awful when he lurks unseen than when he stands actually before us” according to Edith Birkhead (161). Though Shelley is British, her novel influenced much of the American tradition of horror and the Gothic.

The specifically American Gothic tradition was most famously begun by author Washington Irving, perhaps most known for his Gothic short story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” In Irving’s tale, the creepy setting of Sleepy Hollow suggests supernatural happenings in the small town and is extremely Gothic in its conventions. However, Irving suggests a kind of “levity with horror,” presenting a somewhat lighthearted scary story, wishing primarily to entertain rather than fully terrorize (201-202). Nathaniel Hawthorne, following in a similar tradition to Irving, is known for gloomy, mysterious settings that intensify and in some ways predict his Gothic plots, which usually end in some kind of moral allegory. His explorations of the darkness that comes from innocence go much deeper than Irving’s, however. As Nathaniel Hawthorne himself said of his writings, he tells of “gaily dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images of themselves” (203). His focus is one more of mystery than of outright terror and exploring the supernatural, especially the idea of immortality, which, as readers of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* are fully aware, is a typical Gothic idea to investigate.

Another of these characteristics is the typical creepy castle, first popularized by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764 (16). For the early Gothic, pure horror, such as the works of Stephen King often invokes, is not as preferable as what can be described as “a pleasurable fear” that is found throughout the darkness and superstition in early Gothic Romances (37). The supernatural, dreams, ghosts, and gloom are all present within early Gothic literature, but are typically not shown to act or interfere but to exist as contributions to a mood of creepiness and unsettledness (26). This attitude changes with the introduction of Edgar Allan Poe, who still uses these conventions in his writing. Rather than produce a pleasurable fear, however, the intent is to bring horror and terror to his readers through his gloomy settings and uncomfortable encounters with the supernatural. Starting with Poe, the Gothic and horror genres are concerned more with imitating true fear in the experience of reading, especially through encounters with the possibility and reality of death and agony (214). Edgar Allan Poe represents a new and more intense style of the Gothic tale. Rather than exploring dark and mysterious ideas, Poe shows the full, physical realization of terror. Also unlike Hawthorne, whose focus is on immortality and the mysteries of life, Poe’s focus is on death and the pain and misery to which his tales of horror often lead (213-214). Poe does explore psychological terror, especially when related to the conscience as in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” However, he strongly differs from nearly all Gothic writers that have come before him in his detailed description of physical horrors, expressed perhaps most famously in his short story “The Pit and the Pendulum,” which deals with both the psychological and physical horror of bodily torture. Judging both by the amount of direct

references to Poe and the commonality of deep psychological terror, often through imagery of physical violence, within Stephen King's novels and short stories, it is obvious that much of King's influence comes directly from Edgar Allan Poe.

Poe and King share certain themes within their works, and though King is not directly borrowing from Poe, it is interesting to note the resemblances between the two authors. A common element of Poe's stories is live burial, the fear of which is presented in many of Poe's short stories including "The Premature Burial" and "The Cask of Amontillado." Though being buried alive does not appear much in Stephen King's works, the fear of entrapment, very closely related, is a factor in many of King's novels. Paul Sheldon, from *Misery*, is hopelessly trapped within the house of his crazed fan in the dead of winter and has nearly no hope of any escape. Similarly, Jack Torrance from *The Shining* experiences rather severe cabin fever from his entrapment by mountains and snow in the Overlook Hotel. These two characters are seemingly buried alive in buildings covered with snow rather than tombs. Poe's short work "William Wilson," which uses the Gothic idea of the doppelgänger, presents a man who is struggling with his own alter ego, which acts as his conscience, while the first self acts as a kind of primitive id. By the end of the story, Poe's main character ends up stabbing his alter ego, and consequently kills himself (Fonseca 199). Poe's story is strongly echoed by King's own exploration of this common Gothic theme, particularly in his work *The Dark Half*. Though the alter ego is the darker side of the main character rather than his conscience, the theme of struggle against an alternate form of oneself is very relevant.

Insanity is another theme shared by both Poe and King. Many characters in Poe's short stories are driven to madness, usually by their guilty consciences. Perhaps the most well-known example is "The Tell-Tale Heart," in which the main character hears the beating heart of the man he murdered until it drives him insane. Though not always by conscience, many of King's protagonists are driven to insanity. Often the cause is supernatural for King. In *The Shining*, Jack Torrance is spiraled into insanity by the evil nature of the hotel in which he is staying. The conventions of horror utilized and introduced by Poe in his short stories are still important elements in any book in the horror genre, even in the very modern horror fiction of Stephen King.

Though Stephen King follows in the tradition of the authors in the Gothic and Horror genres that have come before him, King adds his own conventions. Along with the setting of Maine and inclusion of psychic characters, one of the most notable are his writers, found in many of his works published throughout his literary career. This tradition started as early as his second published novel, *Salem's Lot*, in 1975. Writers not only appear but are featured as main characters in many of King's most popular and classic texts. Whether the fact that these main characters are authors is central to the plot of the story, as in the case of Paul Sheldon in *Misery*, or not, like Jack Torrance in *The Shining*, King's habit of choosing to explore characters who write is significant. However, in the criticism that has been written about King, most studies focus on the Gothic and horror elements, his treatment of women characters, and the recurring

metaphors and symbolism seen throughout his work.³ Not much is said about King's writers by literary critics despite their prevalence in his novels and the fact that this convention has not been consistently utilized by other authors in the horror genre. In fact, Michael J. Meyer states in one of the very few pieces written on Stephen King's writers that there should be more criticism on this subject, as it "deal[s] with...how the human imagination transforms the fantastic into the real, how it converts auto-biography into fiction and how it merges fiction with fact to create a new reality" (117). Meyer believes that there is more to be said about these characters than that they are merely characters who happen to be writers. Though these could be seen as merely a convenience to Stephen King who would not need to look outside himself to accurately portray an author, Meyer suggests that these characters are significant within King's writing and should not be ignored but rather more carefully explored by critics. Not only can these characters provide insight into the works in which they appear, they can also tell readers more about the author himself as more than just a similar choice of career is reflected in each of his writer characters.

This thesis explores three of King's most interesting explorations of writer characters, those found in *Misery*, *The Shining*, and *The Dark Half*. These novels share different, sometimes conflicting, views on the career of a writer but as discussed earlier, each writer character intriguingly involves a variation of the doppelgänger idea or a form of doubling. Throughout King's novels, the doubling in his characters is caused by

³ For example on Gothic and horror see article "Postmodern Gothic: Stephen King's Pet Sematary" by Jesse W. Nash. For example on women see chapter "Stephen King: Powers of Horror" by Clare Hanson in *Stephen King* ed. Harold Bloom. For example on symbolism see article "On Stephen King's Phallus" by Steven Bruhm.

several different issues. Many of his characters, particularly Paul Sheldon from *Misery* and Thad Beaumont from *The Dark Half*, struggle with the decision whether to write popular bestselling fiction or serious literary fiction which creates two very different versions of each writer. Also explored is the doppelgänger that emerges due to substance and alcohol abuse, which can take a man and turn him into a darker version of himself, resembling himself only in appearance. These issues have all been dealt with by King in his life and are represented fictionally through his characters that become doubles of himself. This thesis explores the nature of the writer characters and their doublings in these novels to see what they reveal about the writing profession, as well as what they say about Stephen King, the splitting of the self, and the “death of the author” idea.

CHAPTER TWO

Misery

So what was the truth? The *truth*, should you insist, was that the increasing dismissal of his work in the critical press as that of a “popular writer” (which was, as he understood it, one step—a small one—above that of a “hack”) had hurt him quite badly. It didn’t jibe with his self-image as a Serious Writer who was only churning out these shitty romances in order to subsidize his (flourish of trumpets, please!) REAL WORK! Had he hated Misery? Had he really? If so, why had it been so easy to slip back into her world? No, more than easy; blissful, like slipping into a warm bath with a good book by one hand and a cold beer by the other. Perhaps all he had hated was the fact that her face on the dust jackets had overshadowed his in his author photographs, not allowing the critics to see that they were dealing with a young Mailer or Cheever here—that they were dealing with a *heavyweight* here. As a result, hadn’t his “serious fiction” become steadily more self-conscious, a sort of scream?

-*Misery*, 286

Misery is Stephen King’s most in-depth and introspective look at the writing process. Originally intended to be released as a Richard Bachman book, *Misery* was released under Stephen King’s real name after his pseudonym was discovered. Many critics claim that *Misery* is a direct insult to his fans as Annie, the crazed fan who essentially takes her favorite author hostage, is clearly meant to represent Stephen King’s readership and their control over his writing (Lant 94). Annie’s control over Paul Sheldon represents his fear of control by his readership, especially those that merely consume without having any interest in the mechanics of writing. With her literal entrapment of

Paul Sheldon within her Colorado home, she keeps him from escaping her grasp, but she also prevents his escape from the dreaded world of popular and romantic fiction into what he believes to be the nobler field of literary fiction. His plans are thwarted by his number one fan, a fat, manic-depressive representative of his readership. *Misery* was originally planned as a Richard Bachman book, and considering the insulting image that King presents of his readers, perhaps it would have been safer to release it without the name “Stephen King” plastered on it.

Before his encounter with the crazed fan Annie Wilkes, Paul Sheldon is a writer of popular fiction who hates what he does. He is tired of never being taken seriously by critics and only receiving recognition of his talent from the bored housewives who are obsessed with his tales of Misery Chastain. The only way Sheldon feels he can escape the chokehold that Misery and her fans have on him is to kill Misery for good as he does in his last planned novel in the series, *Misery's Child*. He describes the writing of this last book and his move to more serious literature through his new novel *Fast Cars* as “liberation from a state of whoredom” (*Misery* 72). Sheldon believed himself to be involuntarily chained to the merciless series, selling his own talent for popularity and profit. Ironically, Paul Sheldon discovers late in the novel that it was in fact his fiction written as a more serious work of art, *Fast Cars*, that represents the selling out of his writing abilities. Feeling personally overshadowed by the success of his own novel series, Paul realizes he had allowed “his ‘serious fiction’ [to] become steadily more self-conscious, a sort of scream...” (286). Though Paul Sheldon suggests that it is his fiction screaming, in reality it is him that is emitting a cry for attention. Paul’s admittance that

his more “serious” work is self-aware and only exists to serve the critics completely contradicts the typical characteristics of literary fiction. An author’s complete separation from the work is often considered crucial to the creation of a higher form of literature, at least according to the metaphorical “death of the author” idea. Sheldon’s attempt at serious literature, *Fast Cars*, is so connected to him and his desire for literary immortalization that his novel is ironically a failure before it is ever read by a literary critic.

Paul doesn’t naturally write literary fiction; his talent and his audience lie within the genre of romantic fiction. His romantic fiction is written legitimately, making money and popularity from his readership based on its appeal, but Paul cannot produce that same natural talent in *Fast Cars*. His writing beyond *Misery* was not written for its own sake, or even for the sake of art. It was written for the sake of Paul Sheldon’s own reputation and his ego that refused to be known as merely an author of popular fiction. At one point, Sheldon remembers his attempts as only a cry for attention, seeming to wave his arms and shout at the critics, “*Look at me! Look how good this is! Hey guys! This stuff has got a sliding perspective! This stuff has got stream-of-consciousness interludes! This is my REAL WORK...Don’t you DARE turn away from me...*” (286). At this point, Paul realizes that *Fast Cars* was extremely intentional, written only as a cry for attention, trying to place himself in a genre to which he does not belong. Paul was desperate for acclaim from critics, when he already had the loyal support of fans and a successful career as an author of popular fiction. Though the claim at the beginning of the novel is that Sheldon “wrote novels of two kinds, good ones and best-sellers,” perhaps both of these kinds

could be used to describe the *Misery* series (7). Just because the novel Sheldon writes after the conclusion of his *Misery* books is serious fiction does not make it good fiction. In his book *On Writing*, Stephen King speaks specifically on this subject, claiming that it is pointless to attempt to write in a genre for which you have no interest or talent. When it comes to composition, he says it “would be very wrong...to turn away from what you know and like in favor of things you believe will impress your friends, relatives, and writing-circle colleagues” (*On Writing* 159). No matter how much a critical and financial success Paul’s book might have been had it ever been published, his abandonment of himself and his genre eliminates the possibility of any real success from his novel. Paul experiences a split in himself between what he believes is his talent, writing for a critical audience, and what is really his purpose, writing popular fiction, causing him to feel distress and confusion concerning his identity.

Annie Wilkes leads Paul Sheldon to realization of his identity in the most violent of ways and keeps the famed writer Sheldon in her clutches any way she can. Though Paul was crippled by his car crash, Annie keeps him trapped with the influence of the drug Novril, cutting off all communication with the outside world, and even going as far as amputating his thumb and “hobbling” him to weaken his healing body. She does the same to his writing, preventing him from escaping the *Misery* series and moving on to more serious literature. She makes Paul Sheldon burn his own manuscript of his first literary fiction novel and resurrect an already dead character to satisfy her hunger as a reader to see the series continue. Though Paul hopes that with his last *Misery* novel he has ended the series for good, Annie, who represents Stephen King’s readership, does

everything within her power to keep Paul from pursuing his dream of literary fame and to keep him within the genre she believes he belongs. According to the criticism of Natalie Schroeder, Annie's attempts to restrain Sheldon from physically escaping, particularly the amputation of his foot and thumb, represent a kind of castration that both keeps him from leaving and takes away his creative power (Schroeder 141). For Stephen King, Annie is meant to represent his typical reader, or what Kathleen Lant calls the "Constant Reader," a depressed, consuming, binge-eating woman, who makes it impossible for him to write outside of this Constant Reader's expectations. Analogous to the way Annie takes away both Paul Sheldon's physical and creative freedom, Stephen King believes that his audience controls his creativity. Paul Sheldon feels trapped by Annie is and only able to write the *Misery* novels he claims to hate. According to King's public claims, he and Sheldon seem to differ on this aspect of Paul Sheldon's personality, however.

Stephen King has never claimed to hate the horror genre, for which he is known best. He has in fact stated the opposite, saying that he has always felt drawn toward the horror genre, as proved by his first attempts at publication (*On Writing* 158). However, through Paul Sheldon's character it is easy to sense the pressure an author feels to please his or her audience. For popular authors such as Paul Sheldon and Stephen King, a decision needs to be made whether to satisfy their own literary desire or their desire to please their audience, causing a split within the self.

However, Paul Sheldon has more control over his situation under Annie than he first believed. Proven by his eventual clever revenge and escape from Annie that occurs at the end of the novel, Paul does have the ability to be in control of Annie, or his

readership, and therefore his writing. Though Sheldon keeps his claim that writing about Misery is, in fact, misery throughout the majority of the novel, it is actually his engagement with the typewriter and eventually writing longhand that distract him from the real misery as a captive of Annie Wilkes. He finds that it not only distracts him from the pain caused by his car accident and Annie's rage, but that he actually enjoys writing about Misery much more than he did the car thief in *Fast Cars*. Even before his crash, Sheldon hesitantly narrates that it was not an easy task for him to dispose of Misery Chastain after all the time he spent composing her life (*Misery* 35). Through insisted hatred for the novels and the characters he created, a close reader can see, even from the beginning, an undeniable affection for Misery and her books. Paul Sheldon constantly claims he hates the character he created, even admitting to crying of hysterical laughter when writing her death (14). However, his thoughts when Annie later accuses him of murdering Misery through his novel show a different side of the author's feelings toward his character. He realizes that though it may have been easy for him to write Misery's death through childbirth, her death was unplanned, and the word "murder" does not seem to fit. He thinks this when Annie accuses him: "He might have murdered her...but he hadn't. In the end, in spite of his having grown to despise her, Misery's death had been something of a surprise to him...She had died a mostly unexpected death. His cheerful capering had in no way changed the fact" (35). Though Paul Sheldon was not unhappy with his character's death, it was not forced or violent, but came naturally with his storyline. He did not kill her to be rid of her, but as a continuation of the plot. Annie's accusation that he is "not good" strikes him as untrue because despite what he says about

his series, he cannot translate the hate he says he feels into action to kill his character violently.

His ease at writing in Annie's house further solidifies this. For Paul Sheldon, returning to novels about Misery Chastain had been "more than easy; blissful, like slipping into a warm bath" (286). Though he detests his image as a writer of popular fiction, he can't deny the momentum he gains while writing this "lower" form of fiction, even at what he believes to be a cost to his own reputation. Despite his aspirations, writing this kind of fiction is where his talent lies and his only escape from the world of Annie Wilkes. Just as he is addicted to the Novril that Annie gives him for his constant pain, he is addicted to writing to keep the pain at bay, always engaged with the story and its unknowable outcome. Paul Sheldon's description of writing the *Misery* series again sounds strikingly similar to the return to a drug addiction, and it seems to inspire similar results. Though he is resistant to returning to *Misery*, he is "surprised, really, at how easy it had been to slip back into Misery's world...it had been, in fact, rather comforting, like putting on a pair of old slippers" (105) or "into a warm bath" (286). Though Sheldon often refers to the misery that his famed series has caused him, the familiarity he experiences is a stronger force, giving him the same comfort and relaxation that he experiences from the fictional painkiller Novril. The image of slipping into the writing suggests that Sheldon is in the passive role, as he is when under the influence of Novril, which he compares to a tide overtaking him (8). Writing what is familiar to Paul Sheldon acts as an addiction, both overwhelming and irresistible.

What causes Sheldon to continue onward with Misery's story despite his situation is what he refers to as "the gotta," the same force that keeps Annie curious, begging for more of Misery's tale (242). This, according to Sheldon's thoughts, is what makes the kind of series he writes so successful and keeps his audience always wanting, and therefore always buying, more. Annie compares this concept to serial films, or chapter plays, that she viewed in theaters as a child. These short-length films always ended on a cheesy, unlikely cliffhanger that put the protagonist in considerable danger and kept the audience in suspense until the dilemma was quickly solved in the beginning of the next episode. Paul refers to the suspense Annie felt as "the gotta," or the desire to know what happens next in a story at all costs, and recognizes that this is Annie's motivation for his captivity and, more importantly, what drives him to write day and night to complete his novel that he knows may never be seen by eyes other than his own. He, like his readers, doesn't always know what happens next, and he has to continue on to the end in order to find out. Sheldon, at all costs, has to finish his novel, but not for the sake or sanity of Annie Wilkes. Instead, he must finish because it has been essentially what has kept him alive (both physically and metaphorically) during his captivity, and he realizes that he cannot die without finishing his novel. Despite the mental, physical, and emotional torment he has endured at Annie's hands, he has persisted. Paul refuses to give up until his novel is finished, even though he describes the writing as a kind of torture knowing that "finishing it was going to mean the end of his life" (257). Until the moment he finishes his novel, Paul knows he has almost total control over Annie, who treats every chapter she allows him to read like the end of a chapter play. The control he gains while

acting as Annie's Scheherazade, who keeps herself alive by telling stories, lasts beyond his role as an author and into his situation as a captive. Paul exerts control over his situation, eventually allowing him to escape his entrapment from her by hitting her over the head with his typewriter and killing her, making for a symbolic death that presents poetic justice. Though Annie certainly has power over Paul, he, the writer, realizes that he has the ultimate control over his work and life. By choosing the "real" part of himself, the part that writes popular fiction and taking control of his writing, Paul finds more agency and control of his situation within himself than when he had embraced his half that believed he was destined to be an author of literary fiction.

More than just Sheldon's (and King's) relationship to serious and popular fiction are explored within the novel. Sheldon mentions so many quirks and kinks to a writer's brain and thinking process that are extremely relevant to Sheldon's capture as well as to his writing. For example, Sheldon's game of "Can you," which he uses to see if he could get his character to the next stage of his plot, is applied to determine if he can get himself out whatever situation that Annie currently has him in (203). With dramatic irony, Paul often stresses that the solutions for his problems aren't possible and that he needs to think more realistically, as his situation is real life and not a novel. Paul uses the "Can you?" game in real life to address his situation and to think of a possible solution for escaping Annie's entrapment, but comes to the conclusion that none of his clever plans will be successful. He says about his idea to poison Annie with a Novril overdose that "in a story it would have been a pretty good idea. In real life, however, it simply did not make it" (204). The irony that Paul does in fact exist within the confines of a story of course

escapes him, creating a blurred line between the reader's and the character's perception of reality. By intentionally drawing attention to the difference between fiction and reality, Stephen King calls into question the amount of *Misery* that is pure fiction and the amount that reflects true struggles in Stephen King's life as a writer of popular fiction. Not only is the writer split between the types of fiction he wants to write, but the author is also split between the two realms that often blur together- "fiction" and reality."

The literary technique *deus ex machina* is also discussed, in reference to Sheldon's first, and in Annie's opinion feeble, attempt to bring *Misery* back to life through a new novel. Though Annie is unaware of this specific phrase, she knows a "cheat" when she sees it; she relates it to the chapter-plays of her childhood, expressing her rage when a character miraculously escaped a situation in quite an impossible manner (108). Sure enough, in the novel of *Misery* itself, no *deus ex machina* is ever used and all of Paul Sheldon's actions are at least possible, if not probable, under his circumstances. No convenient, unlikely savior swoops into Annie's house and discovers Paul to rescue him, and no tools are at Paul's disposal that would be unlikely to exist in Annie's household. Through Stephen King's usage of suspenseful yet realistic situations, he creates a different atmosphere for his story than his typical novels and highlights the similarity Paul bears to a real person, the author himself. Unlike many other Stephen King works, this novel has absolutely no supernatural content and is meant to be entirely realistic; the novel is so realistic in contrast to his others that it constantly feels the need to announce itself as a novel by having Sheldon state firmly and ironically that his experiences are taking place within real life, not a novel.

Though this novel is in no way autobiographical, the passages concerning Sheldon's feelings about his own writing and the different aspects of the writing process clearly reveal much about Stephen King, whom Paul Sheldon represents. Though King has attempted somewhat to shift gears for critical approval and to prove his own legitimacy as an author, King has always been known for only horror fiction, a less recognized genre of literature that is much like Sheldon's relationship with the romance genre. Though King has written extremely popular works outside of the realm of pure horror fiction such as *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Stand*, he has had trouble being recognized as a critically acclaimed author, even after being given the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters Award. In his book *On Writing*, King claimed that his struggle to be taken seriously has existed since he first began writing. After attempting to tell a short story version of the movie *The Pit and the Pendulum*, his principal Miss Hisler told him she didn't understand why he would "write junk like this in the first place," telling him he was too talented to waste his abilities on useless horror fiction (49). Later, his attempts at different types of fiction were successful, and in the Afterword of one of these works, *Different Seasons*, King defensively claims that horror isn't the only type of fiction he is able to write (Lant 91). But like Paul Sheldon's character, whose attempt at literary fiction with his book *Fast Cars* was in no way shabby, Stephen King's real talent lies in his horror fiction, which unfortunately falls under the category of "popular fiction."

Like Sheldon, Stephen King writes in other genres, but he will always be known for his best-selling genre, which his readers crave and, arguably, he has the most talent

for. Even Stephen King admits that, his readership notwithstanding, he couldn't escape the horror genre even if he wanted to; he says, "I was built with a love of the night and the unquiet coffin, that's all" (*On Writing*, 158). Despite assured claims that horror is the genre that he has always been drawn to both reading and writing, Stephen King's reach for critical acclaim alongside his mass popularity slightly challenges this claim. This shows a split within himself, one side that strives for greatness and recognition, and one that follows his and his fans' desires. This doubling of himself both as a literary and a popular author is clearly reflected in Paul Sheldon, whose struggles with this dilemma are only solved with the forceful help of his captor, Annie. In another level that also serves as doubling, Paul serves as a reflection of Stephen King, a fictional version of the author who is struggling with the same conflict of interest. This point is so obviously stressed throughout the novel that one critic describes Paul Sheldon as "the stand-in for Stephen King" (Lant 93). Throughout *Misery*, Stephen King shows several examples of doubling that relate both within and out of the novel.

Stephen King is clearly represented within the novel by Paul Sheldon's character. His struggle with popular and literary fiction is shown through Sheldon's entrapment by Annie Wilkes and her control over his writing and creativity. Just as Stephen King's struggles are reflected within his novel *Misery*, Paul Sheldon's struggle with Annie Wilkes's entrapment is reflected within his novel written while in captivity, *Misery's Return*. Small excerpts from Paul Sheldon's novel are placed often throughout *Misery* to show his progress on the novel, but these sections are more than just something different for the reader. If read closely, the chapters of *Misery's Return* are a window into the mind

of Paul Sheldon that expresses his fears and emotions while trapped by Annie Wilkes. In one of these excerpts, the first line of dialogue of a character is, “Let me go!” spoken by his character Ian (*Misery* 230). The line shows that Paul’s first concern is getting out of his situation, so much that the line is then repeated. The scene ahead further reflects his situation. His main character, Misery, is trapped in a very bizarre situation. She is covered in bees and is deathly allergic, and her comrades, Ian and Geoffrey, must come up with some safe method to carefully rescue her from her very delicate situation. She is trapped there in the African wilderness by an all-powerful Bee-Goddess who wants possession of his main character for reasons unknown. Paul, when writing this section of his novel, is dealing with a similar situation; he is trying to escape from Annie Wilkes’s clutches without getting himself killed, a seemingly impossible task. His imagined Bee-Goddess is clearly inspired by Annie, his own all-powerful captor. He sees her so clearly within his character that he even confuses them in real life. While under the influence of Novril for his pain, he is speaking with Annie and about to accidentally tell her he had gone out of his bedroom without her permission. He is afraid of spilling the beans, but thinks confusedly, “*Of course she knows—the Bourka Bee-Goddess knows everything*” (211). Whether or not he does so intentionally, Paul Sheldon writes his horrible entrapment into his new novel, working through his situation by presenting his main characters with terrible situations that they also cannot escape. He then takes out his internal frustration on Annie, his captor, by putting her as the possessive figure in his novel and plotting his characters’ escape from her. Paul Sheldon deals with the life-threatening struggle in his own life through fictionally having his characters make it out

of a similar situation, giving him the strength and agency to eventually escape his own Bourka Bee-Goddess. Paul's confusion between the indistinct realms of fiction and reality and his completely unintentional representation of his current situation within his novel clearly argue against the idea of "the death of the author," as Paul's life and his fiction seem to be inseparable. King's fiction, like Paul Sheldon's, works in much the same way.

Though romantic and horror fiction are completely different genres, King's commentary through Paul Sheldon on the *Misery* series reveals his feelings and frustrations with his life as an author of horror. Despite the aggravation King expresses with his readership through Annie's character, Paul's revelation that the *Misery* novels are what he really prefers writing and in reality what he has talent for. Though he should hate this genre, particularly after he is tortured mentally and physically into writing it by Annie, Sheldon finds a deep appreciation for his novels that are only recognized for their merit by lonely middle-aged women. King suggests through the character of Paul Sheldon that despite critical opinions, or lack thereof, an author will only feel right when writing what they are good at, and most importantly, what they actually enjoy. Though King's frustration is shown through this novel, King seems to have gladly accepted his role as an author of horror fiction, despite mass readership and the lack of a critical audience. Stephen King is certainly trapped by his own reputation and those who read his books from delving into a completely new genre (he couldn't even completely manage this under another name). Paul Sheldon is a representation of what pressure from fans and editors can do to these kinds of writers. Annie, his "number one fan," represents this

pressure and “is the embodiment of King’s worst fantasies about fans out of control or readers run amok” (Lant 93). Though in the end she is unsuccessful, Annie does everything in her power to attempt to control every aspect of Paul Sheldon’s writing and more importantly, the writer’s life. Acting in the role of the editor, she constrains his creativity as a writer, represented by her physical acts of restriction and violence, even literally cutting him apart (93). In the same way that she takes Paul Sheldon apart, both by cutting off his foot and later amputating his thumb for disobedience, she picks his writing apart, and therefore attempts to keep Paul under his complete control.

One of the most important connections between Stephen King and Paul Sheldon is, unfortunately, their substance abuse. Though Paul’s addiction to Novril is almost inescapable, as he is started on the pain medication by Annie before he is even fully conscious, his need for the fictional codeine-based drug persists throughout the entire novel, even after his escape from Annie’s captivity. Stephen King’s struggle with substance abuse around this time period is as relevant to the novel’s theme of entrapment as being trapped into writing for a fanbase rather than for oneself is. Paul Sheldon’s struggle with substance strongly resembles Stephen King’s own experience with addiction, particularly alcohol though after years of alcoholism, around 1985 King added drug abuse to his addiction (*On Writing* 96). On the surface level, this is a very realistic portrayal of a struggle very personal to Stephen King that further shows the connection between Stephen King and his writer character and the doubling that is taking place. However, if explored deeper, Paul’s (and Stephen King’s) entrapment through substance abuse is a metaphor for the entrapment that they both feel as writers of popular fiction.

Paul Sheldon is addicted to and under the control of the Novril tablets that Annie gives him for pain and therefore under their control, so much that he would risk his life for them (*Misery* 77). In the same way, he is trapped by Annie's and his readership's demands to write what he believes to be mindless popular fiction. Just as the drugs have him hooked and unable to escape, Annie and Paul's readership have him trapped and under their complete control. Though many of his writer characters of his other novels have struggled with substance abuse, most often with alcohol, this may be the most relevant to Stephen King, and the most cathartic novel he has so far written. With the novel's violence specifically placed to make the reader as uncomfortable as possible and with the absence of the supernatural, the realism of the struggle to overcome substance abuse is meant to be striking, and in a way, more horrible than the violence in many of his other works. It is more horrible, perhaps, because with the absence of ghosts or demons, the readers are left with the feeling that this could happen to anyone.

Misery is Stephen King's most introspective novel, symbolically exploring the life of a writer of "popular fiction" and a victim of substance abuse. More than anything else, *Misery* is about Stephen King's fears of the loss of creative power through the power of his audience (Lant 93). Stephen King's novel also explores his own duality through the character of Paul Sheldon, a character who bears an extremely close resemblance to King in both the aspects of his popular writing and drug addiction. Through his fictional writer character, Stephen King expresses his struggle with entrapment by his role as an author of popular horror fiction and feelings of enslavement to his consumerist readership. The writer, Paul, bears an uncanny resemblance to Stephen

King, acting as a reflection of King's own character. Stephen King says of his character that "it would be fair enough to ask, I suppose, if Paul Sheldon is me. Certainly parts of him are...but...every character you create is partly you" (*On Writing* 191). Paul's struggle with Annie is the same struggle for control that King has with his readership, and this novel is his way of working through the struggle. Annie completely eliminates Paul Sheldon's ability to freely create, understanding only what she wants from him and never considering his own needs as a writer. Though Stephen King loves horror fiction and it is undoubtedly his talent, *Misery* underhandedly expresses his frustration with his entrapment as a writer of bestsellers by the Constant Reader and the loss of control he feels. This novel deals with entrapment in both Stephen King's writing career and through the substance abuse that King was entrapped by for much of his life. Though there is a split within both Sheldon and King concerning the choice of serious or popular fiction, the biggest way the double is used in the novel is between the character Paul Sheldon and author Stephen King. Paul Sheldon acts as a fictional double to the real Stephen King, whose biography is linked to Sheldon in a way that intentionally and effectively defies the idea of the "death of the author."

CHAPTER THREE

The Dark Half

Question: Who brought George Stark back to life?

Answer: The owner. The knower.

But was that true? Was it really? Hadn't there always been a part of him in love with George Stark's simple, violent nature? Hadn't part of him always admired George, a man who didn't stumble over things or bumps into things, a man who never looked weak or silly, a man who would never have to fear the demons locked away in the liquor cabinet? A man with no wife or children to consider, with no loves to bind him or slow him down? A man who had never waded through a shitty student essay or agonized over a Budget Committee meeting? A man who had a sharp, straight answer to all of life's more difficult questions?

A man who was not afraid of the dark because he *owned* the dark?

-The Dark Half, 328

Authors choose to write under a name that is different from the birth name for various reasons. Authors as famous as Mark Twain, Dr. Seuss, and Lewis Carroll are known for their pseudonyms rather than their given names. Though he was already known for his given name, Stephen King also has tried out the use of a pseudonym as an experiment and as an opportunity to release more books at one time without overwhelming his audience. He also was extremely interested to see how well he could sell novels without depending on his name, which by 1977 was growing rapidly in popularity (Rogak 83). The pseudonym came in the form of Richard Bachman, who published his first book in 1977, *Rage*. King's earliest novels under Bachman, *Rage*, *The Long Walk*, *Roadwork*, and *The Running Man* were written between the years of 1977 and 1982 and were indeed successful. They were also noted by fans for similarities in style to the works of Stephen King, though they included less supernatural elements. Stephen King did not let many in on his experiment, but he left clues in his novels to alert

attentive readers to Bachman's connection with King, including references to his own other works. One of these is from *The Running Man*, which mentions Derry, Maine, a fictional town used in other works by Stephen King (*The Running Man* 97). By the time his novel *Thinner* was published in 1985, fans recognized these similarities, but instead of connecting the dots, many fans began berating "Richard Bachman" with letters accusing the author of shamelessly copying Stephen King (Rogak 137). Readers had recognized the connection, but had come to the wrong result. Eventually, a young man named Stephen P. Brown discovered proof that Richard Bachman and Stephen King were in fact the same person. Stephen King was then revealed to the public as Richard Bachman, and he claimed that Bachman "died of cancer of the pseudonym" (138). Stephen King had not planned for this information to come out, but he embraced it anyway, releasing his next planned Richard Bachman book, *Misery*, under his own name. The revelation of Richard Bachman's real identity was not exactly what Stephen King had planned for his pseudonym. However, his interesting experiment with a pseudonym gave King the source material to write *The Dark Half*, which tells a story parallel to his time as Richard Bachman, yet with quite a few supernatural twists.

The novel begins with an introduction to Thad Beaumont, an author known for his literary fiction. He, like Stephen King, has written under a pseudonym to experiment writing in another genre and to see how it would be received by the public. The novel begins after the real identity of George Stark, Thad Beaumont's pseudonym, has been discovered by a law student in Washington D.C. In a comical article featured in *People* magazine, Beaumont and his wife stand beside a gravestone labeled George Stark,

symbolic of the end of Beaumont's time writing under the pseudonym. However, George Stark does not wish to be discontinued. Though George Stark is Thad Beaumont's own creation, he escapes from his "grave" and goes on a violent killing spree of everyone he believes contributed to Thad Beaumont discontinuing his role as George Stark. The police of Castle Rock, Maine, particularly Alan Pangborn, believe that Beaumont is responsible because his fingerprints have been found at the scene of every murder despite Thad's clear alibi. Through observation of his own set of twins, William and Wendy, who feel each other's pain, Thad realizes the type of connection he and George Stark share. He later discovers why the connection between his twins is so similar to his connection with George Stark. After finally tracking down the doctor that performed brain surgery on him as a child, Beaumont discovers that underdeveloped body parts were found in his brain during surgery, suggesting that he had killed his potential twin in utero. George Stark is the manifestation of the twin that never received a chance at life. They are connected physically as identical figures, but they are also connected mentally, just like his son and daughter. Thad finally determines to destroy Stark once and for all and uses his recognition of their unique connection to take him down for good.

Stephen King's novel *The Dark Half* is filled with inspiration from King's life and experiences. As made obvious by Stephen King's dedication of the novel to his alter ego Richard Bachman, this novel is a direct reference to Stephen King's own experience with writing under a pen name in the mid 80's. Though Stephen King doesn't turn into his "dark half" while writing under his pseudonym but instead prefers to write more serious literature, there are many elements of Beaumont's story that come directly from

King's experience as the writer Richard Bachman. Just as "George Stark" was exposed through a law student/bookstore clerk in Washington D.C., it was a bookstore clerk from the nation's capital that found the connections between the books of Stephen King and Richard Bachman. Unlike his character Thad Beaumont, King was not threatened with blackmail from the man who discovered Richard Bachman's identity through study and observation of Bachman's and King's similar literary style and themes. Similar to the author in his book, though, his pseudonym was revealed in an article announcing the "death" of King's pseudonym. Also similar to George Stark, who returns after Thad Beaumont has at last decided to put Stark's Alexis Machine novels away in favor of Beaumont's more serious literature, Richard Bachman returned eleven years after his exposure as King as the author of *The Regulators* in 1996 followed by *Blaze* in 2007, both of which were claimed to be recently discovered manuscripts of Bachman books written earlier. As it was never Stephen King's intention for his pseudonym to be revealed despite the clues he gave his readers, King's dissolution of Richard Bachman was reluctant, inspiring him to bring back Bachman as the author of these later published novels. Both Beaumont's and King's pseudonyms refuse to really die even after the announcements of their deaths. However, Thad Beaumont differs from Stephen King and from *Misery's* character Paul Sheldon in a very crucial way. While Stephen King hopes to escape from his identity as an author of only horror fiction and explore his talents as an author of serious fiction under the name Richard Bachman, his character Thad Beaumont wishes the opposite. Through George Stark, Beaumont wants to escape the restraints he feels while writing for critics by writing violent horror fiction. Though their genres of

choice are different, what Beaumont and King each hope to accomplish with their pseudonyms is the same. Each of these authors hopes to explore a darker and different side of themselves that is only possible while writing as a completely other person, causing a split within the self in order to accomplish this.

Stephen King draws from the Gothic tradition of the doppelgänger, or Gothic double, to create his character George Stark. In his essay on the doppelgänger in literature, Tony Fonseca describes the doppelgänger as a “physical manifestation, or result, of an inner being existing without,” describing both the idea of Richard Bachman and the fictional character of George Stark with accuracy (188). King gets most of his inspiration from Gothic tales that include the idea of the double, starting with Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* (Fonseca 194). The best early representation of the modern double, though, is found in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. This classic tale shows Dr. Jekyll separating his two selves, the self that is acceptable to society and the self that is not (190). George Stark, the murderous and violent part of Thad Beaumont, is clearly the part of himself not acceptable to society, which is why he only allows him to thrive under a pseudonym. Like Thad, Dr. Jekyll cannot suppress the “other” that is inside of him, which is made to exist as an outer manifestation, proving that “good and evil can and do exist within a single person (Strengell 11). This idea, first articulated clearly within Stevenson’s novella, has laid the framework for many stories written by Stephen King, but is particularly prominent in *The Dark Half*. Though George Stark exists in a separate body from Beaumont, he is a part of him, the evil that exists within the family man and literary fiction writer. Before the start

of the novel, Beaumont's evil manifested itself within a pseudonym, but after the pseudonym's "death," his other evil half is contained within its own body rather than within Thad Beaumont's.

Classic conventions of the double are used within *The Dark Half*, placing King very easily within the Gothic tradition. A doppelgänger is extremely dependent on the original, and cannot survive without him or her (Fonseca 189). Realistically, a pseudonym cannot survive without the original writer keeping him alive; Richard Bachman books could not exist without the real author, Stephen King, behind them. This dependence takes on even greater meaning in his novel, as George Stark cannot survive without Thad Beaumont writing him into existence through the trashy but best-selling Alexis Machine novels. George Stark is unable to actually write the books he is credited with; he is dependent on Thad to perform the actual act of writing. This is solidified when George Stark calls Beaumont, threatening him into writing a new George Stark novel. When Beaumont refuses, Stark yells at him, but Beaumont senses something in his voice other than fury, asking himself, "but was there something more? Was there fear? Pain? Both?" (*The Dark Half* 220). Despite the threats that Stark gives Beaumont, the fear in his voice shows his awareness that he is not ultimately in control of his fate and that his survival is fully dependent on Beaumont writing Stark novels. However, Thad is also dependent on Stark and cannot fully exist without the alter ego, and further, does not want to exist without it. His own wife makes it clear that had Beaumont not been forced to expose his pseudonym, and metaphorically bury it, he never would have done so at all (120). Though Beaumont claims that he had no intention of bringing George Stark back

from the grave, he finds himself questioning this. He wonders, though he swears he wants to be rid of Stark, “Hadn’t there always been a part of him in love with George Stark’s simple, violent nature? Hadn’t part of him always admired George, a man who didn’t stumble... a man with no wife or children to consider, with no loves to bind him or slow him down,” (328). Though everyone including Beaumont is better off without the violent George Stark, Beaumont finds himself unable to let go of the dark nature of his other half.

Through Thad’s ability to understand Stark’s thoughts and true intentions, he discovers that he and his doppelgänger are connected beyond their physical similarities. When Thad realizes he can predict Stark’s clever movements without knowing how, he realizes “the two of them were tied together by the same invisible but undeniable bond that connected twins. They *were* twins, halves of the same whole” (200). This realization makes Thad Beaumont’s duty of getting rid of George Stark all the more difficult as he now knows that Stark is a part of him. Somewhat like King’s writer character in *Misery*, Paul Sheldon, Beaumont finds enjoyment in writing his popular bestsellers, and finds it difficult to willingly give this up along with the associated alter ego. Peter Schwenger compares the writer, and the dark half, to the night that contributes to the whole and “opposes and completes our daylight world,” suggesting that one cannot exist without the other (11). Beaumont finds it nearly impossible to separate from that which completes him, though it brings havoc to his daily life and relationships. Even after George Stark frames him for the murders of the man who discovered his pseudonym’s identity and his

editor and causes extreme distress to his wife, Thad Beaumont still finds that a part of him cannot seem to let George Stark go.

At the end of the novel it is proven that Thad Beaumont can exist without his doppelgänger as George Stark is eradicated and taken away from the Beaumont household by sparrows, leaving Thad Beaumont and his family essentially unharmed. However, the ending of Beaumont's story is not as positive as it may seem. King, who has a habit of mentioning his past works within his other novels, reveals in his 1991 horror novel *Needful Things* that Beaumont's wife, unable to cope with her husband's desire for darkness, left him and took his twins with her (62). In Stephen King's later novel *Bag of Bones*, it is revealed that Beaumont has committed suicide (Strengell 8). The ending of *The Dark Half*, which is left ambiguous, makes this news of Thad Beaumont's fate quite unsurprising. Alan Pangborn, the Castle Rock police officer who witnesses Thad's vanquishing of Stark, thinks to Beaumont, "You don't understand what you are...your wife might...although I wonder if things will ever be right between the two of you after this, if she'll ever want to understand, or dare to love you again" (*The Dark Half* 428). Pangborn is suggesting that now that Elizabeth Beaumont knows of his attraction to darkness and that things will never be the same between them. Though Beaumont is not immediately killed by the loss of George Stark from his personality, Stark's effects do eventually reach him outside the time limits of *The Dark Half*, showing George Stark's power over him.

Though the classic Gothic idea of the doppelgänger is prevalent throughout the entire work, King's own experience with a real-life double, his pseudonym, was the

primary inspiration and basis for the novel. Stephen King's character Thad Beaumont is bored with his writings that have given him much critical acclaim but no real popularity or financial security. Writing under his pseudonym, Thad can enjoy the best benefits of writing professionally including freedom from critics in association with the two novels under his real name, money, and the ability to write different types of novels than before. In his interview with *People* where he comes clean about his pseudonym, Beaumont explains what drove him to write these violent novels under a different name and says, "The idea of a pseudonym had this funny *draw* for me. It felt *free* somehow..." and later says, "The more I played with the idea, the more I felt that I would be...well...reinventing myself" (23). Rather than having to play to the expectations of fans and critics who would be hoping for rich, literary fiction, Beaumont can write what he wants. After the unveiling of King as Richard Bachman, King made a similar statement, saying, "it's like a hypnotic suggestion that frees me to be somebody who is a little bit different...it was fun to be someone else for a while" (Rogak 138). Considering the similarities already established between King and Beaumont, it is easy to assume that at least some of the benefits that inspire Beaumont to adopt a pseudonym may have played a part in King's decision to write under another name. Though the novels written under the name Richard Bachman were similar enough to King's other works to excite curiosity and suspicion among critics and avid readers, King's style while writing as Bachman did not match his own exactly. King's decision to write under Bachman's name was probably not one caused by feelings of restriction to a certain genre as an author or the need for more income, as King was well compensated for his novels and his Bachman

books did not venture too far from King's other novels. Though Stephen King claims that Richard Bachman is the darker and more violent side of his own personality (Strengell 7), the Bachman books are at least similar in their level of graphic violence to King's other works. Though King's works almost all contain some level of horror and violence, Thad Beaumont's novels are nothing at all like the works of his alter ego, making Stark's true identity more difficult to spot and more of an opposition to his own personality than a complement. In his own opportunity to explore a different side of his writing through Richard Bachman, King made only slight changes in his style, primarily, according to Stephen Brown, in his endings which were sad and more downbeat instead of positive (Rogak 138). King avoids such similarity between Beaumont's and Stark's writing to show a clearer difference between the two writers/halves and to more clearly show Stark as a doppelgänger within *The Dark Half*. In the novel, Stark clearly represents the classic Gothic idea of the doppelgänger: an evil and supernatural manifestation of the part of a person that they consider to be unacceptable to society. The creation of a pseudonym, whether or not it is used to write dark literature, causes a splitting of the self so extreme that within the context of King's novel the double is even given a different body and name.

Another form of doubling is seen in how Stephen King is also comparable to Beaumont's alter ego, Stark. The excerpts from the Alexis Machine novels by Stark that appear throughout *The Dark Half* may be outside the expected genre of a critically acclaimed author like Thad Beaumont. However, the excerpts could have easily been taken out of almost any given Stephen King novel as they often contain, at least to some

degree, violence and gore, and are meant to evoke repulsion and horror in his audience. In a quote from the fictional George Stark's novel *Riding to Babylon* placed before the beginning of the first chapter, this violence and terror that is familiar to all fans of Stephen King novels is unmistakable: "I'm back," Machine said. Halstead squeezed his eyes shut, but it did no good. The small steel rod slid effortlessly through the left lid and punctured the eyeball beneath with a faint popping sound" (*The Dark Half* 13). What is meant to be the work of the clearly darker side of the author in the novel, Thad Beaumont, is more of a normality for Stephen King, containing no more gore or violence than a typical King novel. Beyond being just an evil, darker half of Beaumont, George Stark also is the doppelgänger to Stephen King. They are similar in occupation and writing style, but George Stark is physically violent and maniacal, clearly the Hyde to King's Jekyll. This is most clearly represented in Stark's treatment of Frederick Clawson, the man who blackmailed Beaumont into revealing himself as the writer behind George Stark. Frederick Clawson is eerily similar to real-life Steve Brown, who, like Clawson, was a bookstore clerk from Washington D.C. and discovered the link between Richard Bachman and Stephen King. Though he did not blackmail King in any form, King was disappointed in the discovery, and stated that he had never wanted the identity of Richard Bachman to be revealed (Rogak 138). In *The Dark Half*, Clawson, the crueler version of the real Stephen Brown, is murdered violently by George Stark for revealing his identity. Though Stephen King responds to Brown's allegations with respect, Stark's killing of Clawson reveals some underlying bitterness about the situation. George Stark does to Clawson what Stephen King's darker, animalistic side probably wanted to do to Brown

after his unwelcome discovery: punish him. As King's doppelgänger, Stark handles the same situation King handles in a very different and evil way.

Though a reader may hope that King's personality is more similar to Beaumont's than Stark's, his dark half, it is obvious that Stark's writing abilities are meant to resemble those of Stephen King. Stephen King faced a similar situation concerning pseudonyms and exposure as the author Thad Beaumont, but King is also extremely comparable to George Stark in terms of writing style, genre, and content. When he is accused of murder by Alan Pangborn of killing an innocent citizen of the town of Castle Rock, Thad Beaumont, speaking as the writer of both his own and the George Stark novels, claims to the Castle Rock sheriff that "except in books, I've never killed anyone" (*The Dark Half* 87). Ironically, it is his dark half, George Stark, who has actually killed the man. This is another clear connection between the fictional Stark and King. As a writer, King has killed dozens of people within his works. Though Stephen King's writer characters are certainly doppelgängers of himself, Stephen King also has his own personal doppelgänger and dark half, his occupation as a writer. As a writer, Stephen King can kill, play out violent fantasies, and explore the darker side of his own humanity. Represented most clearly by his killing of Frederick Clawson, the fictional version of bookstore clerk Stephen Brown, Stephen King can play out evil acts in his writing, like murder, that are not socially acceptable in the real world and not suffer consequences for them. Though the primary double that is shown in King's novel is that of Beaumont and his pseudonym Stark, there are many other doubles at work within the novel. Outside the context of the novel, this particularly exists within the relationships of King and

Beaumont and King and Stark. Though King is an author who chose to adopt a pseudonym, like Beaumont, his work most resembles that of Stark, and both characters can in many ways be interpreted as reflections of King. King is split on the decision whether to represent himself with Beaumont, the well-to-do family man who writes under a pseudonym or Stark, the madman who writes wildly popular horror fiction as both seem to describe him. Inside King, there is a half that identifies with Beaumont and a half that identifies with Stark, and the ambiguous ending leaves the reader unsure if these halves can ever be separated or compromised.

Another form of doubling in *The Dark Half* is in the form of substance abuse. Thad Beaumont is one of many writer characters who suffer from addiction, much like Paul Sheldon from *Misery* and Jack Torrance from *The Shining*. Though he is presented as a recovering alcoholic in the beginning of King's novel, it is clear that because of George Stark's influence, he has not fully recovered. It is apparent that Stephen King is presenting a pattern in the personalities of his writers that shows them to often be prone to depression and addiction. It is highly suggested in *The Dark Half* that Beaumont's alcoholism is at its worst when he is writing as himself, for the critics rather than for the popular audience as he does while writing as George Stark (117). The type of writing that Beaumont is doing and the personality (Beaumont or Stark) that currently has control over his writing seem to determine his satisfaction with his life and his ability to keep from the temptation of alcohol. However, beyond addiction to substance, Thad Beaumont is also addicted to his alter ego and the writing that George Stark produces. As it is certainly represented in his earlier novel, *Misery*, Stephen King often relates an addiction

to writing to drug use, having much experience with both. He says at the end of his book *On Writing* that though he does make money from his writing, “I have written because it fulfilled me...I did it for the buzz” (249). His description of writing sounds strangely like the feelings that one gets from drugs and alcohol, clearly showing its addictive qualities.

Thad experiences writing as George Stark in much the same way. The image King presents of Beaumont returning to his desk to write as Stark sounds much like an alcoholic returning to the bottle: “twice he had found himself up in his study, actually holding one of those damned Berol pencils he had promised never to use again...” (*The Dark Half* 230). Though he claims to be done writing as George Stark, he is strongly tempted by his old habits, picking up the pencils he only uses while writing as Stark. As he sits at his desk, he thinks “part of him really wanted to write it. That itch was there, like that one place on your back you can’t quite reach when you need to scratch” (230). The image of the itch, which is also used in *Misery* in association with writing, parallels Beaumont’s and King’s struggles with alcoholism, and the difficulty they faced while trying to escape it. Beaumont faces about as much trouble trying to escape Stark as he does alcohol. Only when faced with blackmail does Beaumont even consider “killing off” the alter ego, despite the fact that it often encourages his other vices and tension within his relationships. Beaumont is addicted to the way the writing makes him feel and how it allows him to escape from the ordinary, just as alcohol does. Especially because of the connection between Beaumont and Stark that began before birth, “George constitutes an integral part of Thad’s psyche” that Thad finds it extremely difficult to dispose of, making his feelings toward Stark akin to those of an addiction (Strengell 7). In Stephen

King's novels, addiction can come in many forms, and be equally damaging. Just as writing under a pseudonym and even writing itself can produce another version of one's self, addiction does the same, and to the worst degree. While Thad Beaumont is a recovering alcoholic, a family man ashamed of the man he becomes under the influence of alcohol, he finds refuge in another addiction that is even more devastating to friends and family: George Stark. In the same way that George Stark is created through his writing addiction, an evil, inhuman version of man is brought out through addiction to alcohol. King shows that just as addiction to alcohol can create a monster and evil version of oneself, addiction to writing can produce a double that is just as dark and dangerous.

In *The Dark Half*, King produces an excellent example of the Gothic double through Thad Beaumont and his pseudonym. However, perhaps more importantly, King's writer characters act as doubles to himself. King intentionally connects himself with both Beaumont and Stark, showing a split within himself much like the split within Beaumont because of the creation of his pseudonym. While King wishes to write seriously and respectfully like Beaumont, his instincts lead him to write more like Stark, who tends to be violent and bloody in his writing but extremely popular. Through his novel, King shows the split that occurs within the writer that uses a pseudonym and abuses alcohol, but he also shows the doubling that occurs between the realms of fiction and reality. Both Beaumont and Stark act as doubles for King, representing his struggles as a writer who deals with identity issues concerning his love for horror fiction but his need to be academically recognized. King uses the doppelgänger within his work to show the

motivations behind using a pseudonym but also to show two very different reflections of himself through Beaumont and Stark.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Shining

(Come out)

(This inhuman place)

(and take your medicine!)

(makes inhuman monsters.)...

“This inhuman place,” he said gutturally. “Tony told me...this inhuman place...”

-The Shining 143

The Shining, Stephen King's third published novel and second with an author as a main character, features a writer by the name of Jack Torrance. Although he was previously employed by a prep school called Stovington, Torrance's occupation in the novel is now the wintertime caretaker of the famed Overlook Hotel. Jack is a loving father and husband at heart, shown by his constant concern for his son's health and well-being throughout the book and his hope to obtain a stable job to provide for his family. Unfortunately, Jack's real personality is twisted and deformed both by alcohol and the ghostly Overlook. Jack's identity as a writer and his struggles with alcoholism make him susceptible to the horrors at work within the Overlook and a clear comparison to Jack Torrance's creator, though Stephen King was not fully aware of it until years after *The Shining's* release. While Stephen King's later novels *Misery* and *The Dark Half* are much more self-aware, the *Shining*, Stephen King's third novel, contains less intentional biographical information. Despite the fact that it was not King's aim to represent his life through this novel, Jack Torrance is a clear mirror of King's own character as a family man, writer, and alcoholic.

Jack Torrance, like the writer character Paul Sheldon in King's *Misery*, is held hostage in the Colorado winter, but willingly. After losing his previous job as an English teacher due to abuse of a student, Jack, a recovering alcoholic takes a job as caretaker of the Overlook Hotel. This job requires him to be out of contact with all humanity other than his wife and son Danny and to be trapped by the Colorado snow. Though he is literally trapped, he is also trapped by his need for alcohol; even though he has been sober for some time, his need for alcohol grows stronger as the novel progresses. However, Jack faces more than just the human temptation to do wrong. The Overlook Hotel is an evil and supernatural building that presents visions and thoughts that tempt Jack Torrance to drink-and even provides alcohol that was not in the building before. With the help of copious amounts of alcohol, the Overlook takes over Jack's body, turning the struggling family man into a raging and murderous maniac. Under the influence of the Overlook's evilness and alcohol, Jack literally becomes a different person, a man in Jack's body that is only evil. By the end of the novel, this writer character is taken hostage irreversibly by both the Overlook and alcoholism and has become just a shadow of his former self.

Primarily through flashbacks, the novel explores Jack's previous disastrous relationship with alcohol and its effects on both his writing and his family. Alcohol creates both violence and distance within the Torrance household, and has the potential to completely tear the family apart. One incident in particular stands out and is referred to many times throughout the novel. Danny, as a very small child, had spilled beer on the manuscript of his father's play. For Jack, the alcohol clouded his mind, and "it was all

hard to remember through the fog of anger” and his voice was “weak and drunk, slurry” (*The Shining* 17). In his fog, Jack became violent, “his big adult fingers digging into the scant meat of the boy’s forearm, meeting around it in a close fist, and the snap of the breaking bone had not been loud, not loud, not loud but it had been *very* loud, *HUGE*, but not loud” (17). Though some discipline for Danny may have been needed, Jack lost control of himself, breaking his small son’s arm easily as if it were a twig, and hardly remembering the experience because of his alcohol abuse. Though Danny is forgiving of his father after his arm is broken, the alcohol, amplified by this act of violence, severely strains Jack’s and Wendy’s marriage. Although dialogue in the novel shows that their relationship is tense, the effect of alcohol on the family is best seen through Danny’s eyes. Danny, who has the ability to sense and read thoughts, senses discord in his parents’ relationship, thinking “the most terrifying thing about DIVORCE was that he had sensed the word...floating around in his own parents’ heads, sometimes diffuse and relatively distant, sometimes as thick and obscuring and frightening as thunderheads” (27). For Danny, this is more concerning than the injury his father gave him. Though Jack’s wife and Danny both love Jack, alcohol clearly turns him into another person, one that ruins relationships and becomes violent toward his family.

Alcohol not only ruins Jack’s ability to be a good man and father, it also greatly affects his writing abilities. Though artists like Fitzgerald and Hemingway glamorized the combination of artistry and alcohol, for Jack Torrance these two clearly could not mix. While he was a struggling alcoholic, he could neither teach nor write, and “he was producing nothing at his Underwood but balls of mostly blank paper that ended up in the

wastebasket” (38). Though in the later novels *Misery* and *The Dark Half* substance abuse does not necessarily hurt the quality of writing, Jack’s writing suffers horribly. Ironically, *The Shining*, an in-depth, popular, and critically acclaimed novel, was written under the influence of alcohol. Stephen King also claims that the novel *Cujo* was written under the cover of so much drugs and alcohol that he doesn’t even remember writing any of it (*On Writing* 99). However, King never claims the drugs and alcohol affected the quality his writing, just the experience of writing. Although alcohol is normally associated with creative genius, King adamantly argues against any drug abuse in his novels and in his book *On Writing*, though his past with substance abuse may not reflect this view that drugs are in fact detrimental to a writer’s creativity. Reflecting King’s negative view of drugs and alcohol, Jack cannot write while under the influence of alcohol, and both his performance at his workplace and his relationships with his family suffer.

Although there is no alcohol within the Overlook to tempt Jack when he is left there for the winter, the Hotel provides the same creative block for writing and distance from his family that alcohol gives him. When Jack first arrives at the Hotel, both Jack and Wendy believe that the Overlook inspires Jack and his writing abilities, helping to clear his mind. Soon after arriving, Wendy hears Jack writing and thinks to herself that she has not heard him writing so diligently for a very long time. She is calmed by this revelation, thinking “her husband seemed to be slowly closing a huge door on a roomful of monsters” (*The Shining* 121). Without any real concern for what he is actually writing, Wendy is just happy to see him working again, a sign of triumph over writer’s block caused by alcohol. However, no one in the family believes when they arrive that the

Hotel could potentially create the same effect. Long before the end of the winter, Wendy recognizes “that all of Jack’s drinking symptoms had come back, one by one...all but the drink itself...Long pauses at the typewrite, more ball of paper in the wastebasket” (191). Though at the beginning of their stay Jack’s situation looks hopeful, the Overlook stifles his writing abilities and creates the same problems as alcohol. Under the influence of the Hotel, Jack is trapped in the form of the alcoholic version of himself without ever taking a drink. Unlike Paul Sheldon, who uses writing to help him escape his entrapment with Annie Wilkes, Jack does not manage to gather agency from his writing to escape the hold of the Overlook. In contrast, the Overlook manages to completely overtake Jack and his writing.

Even before the Overlook provides Jack with alcohol, the Hotel mimics alcohol’s ability to block creativity in the writer and to tear families apart. While in the Hotel, Jack is extremely irritable and on edge, and this affects both his writing and his relationship with his family. The Hotel, which hopes to drive its inhabitants mad, always turn Jack’s thoughts toward the worst experiences in his life, putting him on edge (110) and uses visual trickery, such as slightly moving topiary, to make him even more distressed. The first sign that the Hotel is finally getting a rise out of Jack is his early treatment of Danny when Jack is attempting to work on his writing, and Danny accidentally locks himself in the family bathroom. Influenced strongly by the evil of the Hotel and some cabin fever, Jack becomes quickly irritated with Danny, and his wife takes notice. Wendy thinks in fear, “*He’s losing his temper...*He had not touched Danny in anger since that evening two years ago, but at this moment he sounded angry enough to do it” (124). Though there is

clearly no alcohol involved, Jack's wife Wendy is quick to connect this particular instance with her past experiences with Jack's alcohol addiction. Just as alcohol made Jack quick to anger and violence in the past, the Overlook is now creating the same effect. When the evil effects of the Overlook finally fully take over Jack with the assistance of some well-placed alcohol, Jack is no longer in control of his actions. After spirits in the Hotel tell Jack that his family has turned against him, they convince him to kill his family with a roque mallet with shockingly little argument. When the effects of the evil of the Overlook, alcohol, and cabin fever later combine to send Jack on his murderous rampage, his relationship with his family is clearly destroyed by the Hotel, just as he, unfortunately, is literally and figuratively destroyed as well.

While under the influence of either alcohol and/or the Overlook, Jack becomes a completely different person, recognizable only by his physical features. The idea of the doppelgänger is clearly at play within this novel, but not nearly to the extent that it is covered within King's novel *The Dark Half*. King makes a clear distinction between the loving father, husband, and teacher Jack Torrance and the Jack Torrance affected by alcohol or the Overlook Hotel. Almost to the extent of *Jekyll and Hyde* with alcohol as the offending potion, Jack the professional writer becomes a hideous monster. Though not within the timeline of the novel, flashbacks to Jack's life show him teaching classes hung over, driving his wife to refuse sleeping in the same bed with him, and accidentally (or on purpose?) breaking his son's arm. King directly references the doppelgänger when Jack unexpectedly returns sober from a usual bout of drinking with his friend Al Shockley. Jack's wife Wendy cannot even seem to recognize her husband not drunk;

King writes that “it was almost as though the Jack she had lived with for six years had never come back last night-as if he had been replaced by some unearthly doppelgänger that she would never know or be quite sure of” (51). Wendy’s thoughts make it clear that there are almost no similarities between drunk Jack Torrance and sober Jack Torrance other than their appearances.

The same kind of doppelgänger of Jack Torrance is later created by the deadly combination of the Overlook Hotel and alcohol, which makes him into a murderous and psychopathic monster. Somehow, two very different personalities can exist within Jack, inspiring “easily one of the most dichotomous and terrifying characters King brings to life. He is at one and the same time a devoted father and husband and an alcoholic homicidal maniac” (Holland-Toll 134). However, Holland-Toll suggests that there are hints to Jack’s potential for dichotomy as early as the beginning of the novel in his conversations with the owner of the Overlook, Mr. Ullman (135). Though Jack sits calmly while Ullman discusses the reasons he wishes not to hire him, his inner monologue shows completely different emotions than his expression reveals as he nastily insults Ullman within his thoughts (*The Shining* 5). This splitting of the self is later demonstrated through the descent into madness caused by the Overlook and the alcohol it provides. Although the madman running around the hotel with a roque mallet appears to be the same loving father and husband that Wendy and his son Danny know, Danny is wise enough to recognize the difference between his father and the man attempting to murder him in the Hotel. Although the word “doppelgänger” is never used in this passage, Danny equates the confusion of his father’s identity with a masquerade. When

describing the change that has come over his father, Danny thinks that “it wore many masks, but it was all one...it was hiding behind Daddy’s face, it was imitating Daddy’s voice, it was wearing Daddy’s clothes. But it was not his daddy. *It was not his daddy*” (420). Jack does not just become like another person under the influence of alcohol and the hotel. Danny’s insight shows Jack’s complete transformation into a man that looks and sounds like his father but has nothing else in common with him.

The doppelgänger idea is also explored through Danny, who has an “imaginary friend” named Tony. When Danny goes into trances that allow him to see what could possibly be in his future, Tony appears as a dark and faraway figure that leads him to these visions. It is later revealed that Danny’s middle name is Anthony, suggesting that his friend has been a part of himself all along. Though Tony is not the Hyde to Danny’s Jekyll, the idea of the doppelgänger is present even within Danny, a secondary character. King uses not one but two characters with doppelgängers in *The Shining*, showing that he uses this idea intentionally. Jack, an alcoholic, becomes an unrecognizable monster while under the influence of alcohol and the Hotel. The darker side of himself needs a disturbingly low amount of persuasion to agree to murder, however much the “real” Jack Torrance would have never considered it. Alcohol and the Overlook cause a doppelgänger of Jack Torrance to emerge, showing the “inhuman monsters” that alcohol can produce. While Jack’s double is clearly evil, Danny’s double is much more ambiguous and mysterious, but always helpful to Danny. Danny has a split within himself like his father, but Danny’s doppelgänger proves that one’s double does not

necessarily have to be evil, and that it is his father's choices that have led him to have his double.

Jack is unable to gain agency from his writing, but, like Paul Sheldon, parts of Jack's life seep into his writing, causing confusion between fiction and reality. The play called *The Little School* that Jack is attempting to write involves a teacher, Denker, and a student, Gary Benson. This is clearly somehow inspired by Jack's real-life experience, as he previously worked as a teacher. However, his career ended after he violently beat a student, George Hatfield for slashing his tires. Interestingly, this happened without the influence of alcohol (115). Although Jack does not see the connection between himself and the teacher character in his play, it is obvious to any reader that the purpose of this play is to explore Jack's unresolved emotions about the student that caused him to lose his job. However, he does not even seem to identify with the character of Denker, originally his antagonist, until late in his time at the Overlook. Jack realizes part of his writer's block is caused by his inability to correctly identify his own protagonist, thinking of the student Gary Benson as a brat who was:

outwardly straight-faced while the Gary Benson inside was mugging and leering at Denker. Denker, who had never had any of the things Gary had. Denker, who had had to work all his life just to become head of a single little school. Who was now faced with ruin over this handsome, innocent-seeming rich boy ... the tragedy was not the intellectual racking of Gary Benson but rather the destruction of a kindly old teacher (259).

Even with these thoughts, Torrance does not recognize the amount of his own life that is influencing his work. Unintentionally, Jack has created a double of himself within his work, letting his own biography shape his characters in ways that he never intended. The character Denker represents Jack's feelings of resentment toward his former student

George Hatfield and shows how an author's biography can strongly affect their writings even without their awareness or consent. Despite Jack's intentions, Denker has become a reflection of Jack's character and frustrations.

In almost exactly the same way that Jack is reflected through his character Denker without being fully aware, Stephen King has much in common with the writer character Jack Torrance. King's character Jack cannot sense the similarities between himself and Denker, and, ironically, King cannot seem to see that the same phenomenon is happening within his own writing. Although this is one of Stephen King's earlier characters, autobiographical reflection is clearly evident within Jack Torrance whether or not King was fully aware of this at the time of writing. Like Torrance, King taught English, though at a University rather than a prep school, and he was very unfortunately a struggling alcoholic. Though King admits that he did not understand the significance of these similarities at the time of the book's publication, he later claims, "I was...the guy who had written *The Shining* without even realizing...that I was writing about myself" (*On Writing* 95). Stephen King has been known to make his novels autobiographical intentionally, creating characters who reflect himself or who are placed in situations that King himself has faced. Details from King's life are placed strategically throughout the plot, such as with the bookstore clerk who revealed George Stark's identity in *The Dark Half*. However, in *The Shining*, most similarities between Jack and Stephen King are unintentional, suggesting that the author could not avoid putting himself into his work even if he wanted to. This is further proved by Jack's unintentional insertion of himself into his character Denker. Jack only realizes late in *The Shining* that he identifies with a

character that is clearly so similar to him, and he only realizes this partially. Though King now recognizes *The Shining* to be extremely self-referential, it was a long time before he understood Jack's problems to be his own. Jack accepts that he has a drinking problem and attempts to correct it, understanding that alcoholism negatively affected every aspect of his life. Though Jack discovers that both the Overlook Hotel and his drinking problem severely affected his writing, King held the opposite view and excused his alcoholism, afraid that he would be unable to write creatively unless under the influence of drugs or alcohol (98). However, through Jack's character, the reader can see that, on a subconscious level, Stephen King believed the opposite to be true. Clearly Jack's struggle with substance abuse and alcohol is representative of King's own, and though he wanted to pretend that his substance abuse helped his creativity rather than hurt it, he said in his book *On Writing*, "the part of me that writes the stories, the deep part that knew I was an alcoholic as early as 1975, when I wrote *The Shining*, wouldn't accept that" (96). Though Stephen King may not have been consciously aware of the potential consequences of his substance abuse, the fate of his character Jack Torrance due to his alcoholism suggests that at least on a subconscious level, King was expressing both his awareness and his fears of what can happen to a writer under the influence of alcohol. Despite King's claims of ignorance, Jack Torrance is clearly a double of Stephen King, similar to him in too many aspects to be coincidence. Jack represents the dark side of the alcoholic writer, showing how a normal man can turn into a monster, and, unfortunately, how Stephen King could become this monster.

Through Jack's interactions with alcohol and the Overlook, it is clear that Jack is capable of being two very different people, both a loving father and a murderous maniac. However, the main duality in the novel is between the character Jack Torrance and the author Stephen King. Whether or not Stephen King intended it or not, Jack is a clear representation of the subconscious struggles of King as he attempts to control his alcoholism in the hope of being the ideal father, husband, and writer. Though he suggests the evils of alcoholism and the extremely negative effects it has on the family and the ability to write, at the time the novel was released he denied these truths to himself, making excuses for his substance abuse and the ways his relationships and writing both suffered because of it. Jack represents the part of Stephen King who recognizes the evils of alcohol and how it can turn a good person into another version of oneself who does not even resemble the original. Although the idea of the doppelgänger is referred to directly within the novel, Stephen King claims that he never planned for Jack Torrance to become a doppelgänger of himself who represents the darkness within the real author. Ironically, he has his character unintentionally write himself into his work of fiction, but is unable to realize when he does the same with his own work of fiction, *The Shining*. This seems to suggest that much of what writers put into their fiction comes from the subconscious and is unintentional. Despite the fact that Jack Torrance serves as a reflection to King in many obvious ways, King never catches on that his double's alcoholism could be indicative of a problem within himself. For both Torrance and King, the ways that their characters reflect them most accurately are lost on them. King's doppelgänger Torrance reflects his

own inner struggle in a way that at the time of the book's publishing, he was unable to face.

Conclusion

Despite the idea that the meaning of any serious literary fiction exists in a realm beyond an author's biography, that a multitude of meanings might be generated for the text that have nothing to do with the author's own intentions, Stephen King is notorious for intentionally placing his personality and his experiences into his novels. Defying Barthes's ideas expressed in his essay "The Death of the Author," King sees his own biography and his work as inseparable, giving his texts important and deeper meaning when knowledge of King's life and experiences is applied by the reader. By making the choice to create so many writer characters, King crosses this line and makes it nearly impossible to understand his characters completely without relating them to the author. In *Misery*, the author character Paul Sheldon's struggle with critical and popular fiction can only be truly understood when one looks at the way this struggle exists within Stephen King's life and the way that he has addressed the struggle. The work not only gains meaning when King's life is applied, but actually loses meaning without the context of King's biographical experience. Rather than separate himself from his fiction, King takes the exact opposite approach and manages to place himself so deeply within his novels that even with extreme supernatural elements, they appear to be autobiographical. He plays with the idea of the death of the author consciously and in unique ways, having his writer characters represent himself to an extreme extent and without apology. Not only

does King attempt to disprove this theory intentionally through his fiction, he also does so unintentionally, shown best by Jack Torrance in his novel *The Shining*. Though Stephen King intentionally makes Jack a writer and teacher, like himself, he unintentionally connects them with the struggle with alcohol, placing his biography within the story. These additions of parts of Stephen King's biography through his writer characters, whether they are done intentionally or unintentionally, not only work against the death of the author idea, but also say something about writing itself. King shows through his novels that it is nearly impossible to separate fiction and reality and that they often intertwine. Whether intentional or not, King's novels suggest that reality will always seep into the world of fiction, revealing truths about the author and his life of which he or she may not even be fully aware. A text cannot stand completely on its own, as a writer pours himself into his work because it is written by him.

Stephen King also uses the idea of the doppelgänger to represent the difference between the half of the writer that functions in society and the half of the author who writes. This is best shown in the novel that directly addresses the idea of a literal double, *The Dark Half*. Thad Beaumont is literally made of two different people, Thad, who writes normal and serious fiction, and the mass murderer George Stark, who writes violent and popular fiction. In *The Shining*, the character Jack Torrance does not become another person while writing, but expresses an evil and uncontrollable version of himself while under the influence of alcohol and the evil of the hotel, representing the idea of the doppelgänger with the evil being that shares his body when triggered. Though in *Misery* the doppelgänger is represented less directly, it is still an important part of the plot as

there are also two distinct sides to the author Paul Sheldon. The struggle between the side of Paul Sheldon that wants to write popular fiction and the side that longs for critical attention may not be as violent as the supernatural struggle in *The Dark Half*, but it is just as representative of the Gothic idea. The internal struggles of the characters in *The Dark Half* and *The Shining* are both represented with external doppelgängers. King uses his writer characters to show the split within the self, and he does so effectively within each novel. The writer characters are also doubles of Stephen King, representing the idea of the doppelgänger within his works. His writer characters act as mirrors of Stephen King, sharing characteristics and experiences with their creator. Though the doppelgänger is not a new concept, King utilizes it in a very different way, making a double of himself rather than just within the context of the story. King changes this classic idea by not only including doppelgängers within his stories, but intentionally creating personal doppelgängers to himself, something which Gothic writers like Poe may have done but without the intention. By placing himself as a character within his stories, King blurs fiction and reality with the idea of the doppelgänger that previous authors of Gothic and horror fiction have never yet attempted. King's writer characters, which exist as reflections of his own character, show it can never be assumed that there is a clear separation between fiction and reality in life, particularly in the life of the writer.

Stephen King is an extremely popular author primarily known for his contribution to the field of horror fiction. Though it is often recognized that many of his characters happen to be authors, this fact receives less discussion than it should. Cleverly playing with the idea of the death of the author and the Gothic double, Stephen King creates

characters so realistic and so deeply connected to him that they are almost more non-fiction than fiction. The characterization of the writers from *Misery*, *The Dark Half*, and *The Shining* make reading Stephen King novels an experience unlike any other, one that no other author of popular fiction has yet been able to duplicate. King's unique use of the Gothic double connects his characters to him in ways not previously attempted by former authors. Stephen King shows that the life, rather than the death, of the author, is an important component to interpreting any work of fiction and asserts that the author's texts can never fully be separated from inspiration from his own life.

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