

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**INNOCENCE LOST AS A RECURRING MOTIF IN STEPHEN  
KING'S HORROR**

**THESIS**

**Harem Hayder Qader Qader**

**Department of English Language and Literature**

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**Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hacer Esra Almas**

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T.C.  
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

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Not: Öğrencinin Tez savunmasında **Başarılı** olması halinde bu form **imzalanacaktır**. Aksi halde geçersizdir.

*To my late parents, family and whoever appreciates this work*

## **FOREWORD**

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**Harem Hayder Qader**

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## STEPHEN KING'IN ESERLERİNDE TEKRAR EDEN BİR TEMA OLARAK MASUMİYETİN KAYBI

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma Stephen King romanlarında sık sık tekrar edilen masumluk kaybının önemini tartışıyor. Yazarın korku türüne katkıları sırasıyla yazarın köklü standartları dayatmasının önemli rolü ve bu türün özelliklerinin önemini belirtmesidir. King yaygın olarak düz yazının üzerinde durduğu basit korkuların gelişimine ve insanların o korkuları tanımlama kabiliyetlerine odaklanıyor. İlave olarak bu çalışma diğer yazı türlerinin, duyguların ve korku tecrübelerinin ışığında korkunun uygun tanımını sunuyor. Masumluktan ima edilen şey diğer yazarlar ve düşünürler tarafından takdim edilen belli felsefi ve sosyal sanılarla bağlantılı tartışmalardır. IT romanının eksiksiz bir analizine göre yazar, korkunun insanların hayatlarıyla olan ilişkisini en benzersiz şekilde göstermeyi denemiştir. "Needful Things" bu çalışmada ele alınan diğer bir romandır. Bu romanda tez sahibi korku ve masumiyet bileşimine odaklanıyor ki bunlar King tarafından benzersiz bir şekilde harmanlanmıştır. Üçüncü roman -ki tanımlanmış olan bütün unsurları ortaya çıkarmıştır The Long Walk olarak adlandırılmıştır. Bu roman başlıca psikolojik görüşle domine ediliyor bu da yazının yapısı ve ton ile belli ediliyor. King'in düz yazılarındaki tekrar eden motif üç saygın romana dayanır ki bunlar kalıcı gerçeklik bozukluğu olarak kastedilmektedir. Bu bileşim, korkuyla karıştırılıp King'in başlıca yazılarına farklı yorumlar ekliyor. Korku kişilerin en hassas bazı duygularına karıştırıldı ki bu da araştırma yazısında belirtiliyor. Bu yazının her iki kaynağından çıkarılacak başlıca sonuç; insanların bakış açılarını genişletmek ve Stephen King'i önemli bir korku yazarı olarak gösterme fikridir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Kayıp masumiyet, insanların korkuları, Korku turu, Karanlık Unsurlar, Kisi, Çocuklar.*



## INNOCENCE LOST AS A RECURRING MOTIF IN STEPHEN KING'S HORROR

### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of a particular recurring motif in Stephen King's novels, which is identified as innocence lost. The contributions of the writer in the horror genre are analyzed in order to emphasize the important role he plays in dictating essential norms and principles of this type of literature. It is argued that King is extensively focused on the possibilities of developing a prose emphasizing simplistic fears and people's abilities to address those fears. In addition, the paper provides adequate definition of horror in light of other genres, emotions, and experience of fear. The implications of innocence are discussed in relation to particular philosophical and social assumptions introduced by other writers and thinkers. A thorough analysis of King's *It* is provided in an attempt to demonstrate the unique way in which the writer describes the relevance of fears in individuals' lives. Another novel which is extensively discussed in the present paper is *Needful Things*, as the researcher focuses on the combination of horror and innocence which is uniquely blended by King. The third novel in which the mentioned elements emerge is identified as *The Long Walk*. This novel is also dominated by essential psychological aspects contributing to the distinct tone and structure of the text. A recurring motif in King's prose, based on the respective three novels, is referred to as the persistent distortion of reality. This component, mixed with fear, adds to different interpretations of King's major texts. Horror is mixed with some of the most delicate feelings of individuals, as indicated in the respective research paper. The major conclusions presented in the paper are derived from both primary and secondary sources, with the idea to expand people's perspectives on the significance of Stephen King as a horror writer.

**Keywords:** *Lost Innocence, Human fear, Horror fiction, dark elements, Individual, children.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Discussing the Importance of Stephen King as a Horror Writer**

Stephen King is an American author of contemporary horror stories as well as fantasy and science fiction. His books are extensively sold worldwide; a substantial number of them have been adapted into movies. King's early works were mostly science fiction based. Yet his persistent interest in horror developed in the 1950's, as he was influenced by popular horror writers of that time, such as Robert Bloch and Jack Finney (Strinati, 2000, p. 80). In this way, King realized that he possessed a talent for horror writing. The fact that he writes in a manner understandable by both inadequately and highly educated people is indicative of his talent and passion for writing. He has succeeded in engaging young and old readers because of the focus on the process of storytelling. King has repeatedly claimed that the story should be more significant than the author's personality.

Such acknowledgement is essential, especially in presenting King's preference for consumer culture. The level of horror imagination exhibited by the author is quite high, meaning that he has the capacity to influence different generations of readers. King indicates the precise way in which individuals think through particular images and language derived from mainstream consumer culture (Badley, 1996, p. 48). Thus, the characters depicted by King are constrained by language and cultural characteristics. Such tendency is obviously associated with postmodernism. Moreover, King thoroughly acknowledges his sources. Various publishers and critics refer to the author as the master of contemporary horror (Strengell, 2006, p. 40). In fact, King has presented himself as a horror fan in an attempt to identify himself with the respective horror audience (Hoppenstand, 2010, p. 5). Being a part of that audience is a relevant symbol of the sense of belonging promoted by King in his books.

The importance of King as a horror writer mainly reflects in the idea of being a good storyteller that is able to attract the reader and present numerous interesting points. In

this context, he tends to use a wide range of terror and horror techniques to captivate individuals into the stories and characters he depicts. Another aspect that contributes to the popularity of King's horror stories is associated with the creation of the unexpected (Badley, 1996. P. 49). Both youthful and elderly characters are equally important in his stories. Moreover, King is on the right way of providing significant insights into the dark side of human beings (Frazier, 2000, p. 9). Thus, the forces of good and evil are frequently described in parallel in order to create an overall dark impression of King's potential to establish a strong, persistent sense of horror throughout the narrative. Likewise, it appears that the writer is occupied with the idea of presenting that life is dominated by fragility (Bloom, 1994, p. 59). The fact that he writes about subjects like death and destruction obviously relates him to the genre of horror.

Undoubtedly, King often appears in the mass media because of his international recognition as the master of the horror genre. Horror as a specific genre of literature apparently demonstrates a capacity to frighten the reading audience. The creation of a frightening atmosphere, dominated by strange and dark characters, is a main feature of the horror genre. Another important trait of the respective genre is its focus on provoking a response, whether psychological, physical or emotional (Bloom, 1994, p. 63). In this way, the usual response of readers is to react with fear regarding a particular situation described in a horror book. Indeed, the oldest and most persistent human emotion is that of fear, respectively fear of the unknown. Stephen King brilliantly uses this aspect while creating his horror stories.

Yet the definitions of the horror genre differ to a particular extent. Strinati provides a definition of this genre that places importance on presenting "the need for suppression if the horror shown is interpreted as expressing uncomfortable and disturbing desires which need to be contained" (Strinati, 2000, p.82). From this perspective, horror emerges as a varied genre that cannot be simply described by a sole definition. Horror as a genre can be distinguished within the category of the uncanny in the sense of containing supernatural elements as well as unreal or irrational events (Delaney, 1992, p. 2). Horror can be defined as marvelous emphasizing the new laws of nature. Thus, definitions of this genre depend on various external factors as well as on different authors' predispositions to accept or reject a particular reality (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p 28). As a representative

of the horror genre, King has achieved substantial success especially in the process of enhancing simplistic fears.

What is interesting about King is his interest in discussing critical aspects of his works. He takes the time to tell the reading audience how he approaches the writing process in terms of creativity and organization of storytelling. In his analysis of the horror genre, King suggests that readers are attracted to the specific content of the horror story, which is a certain type of entertainment despite the presence of horrifying elements (Badley, 1996, p. 30). Moreover, the writer relates the horror story to the immediate personal experience. Another element of horror fiction according to King is that of its allegorical or symbolic nature. The most appealing aspect about horror is the fact that it says things in a symbolic way. In fact, the symbolic expression of horror indicates two basic fears: cultural fears and personal fears (Hoppenstand and Browne). Cultural fears refer to the persistent fear of invasion, whereas personal fears are linked with the fear of the dark, fear of deformity, fear of snakes, etc.

It is also important to indicate that the dimensions of horror in King do not have anything to do with the actual monsters but with a faulty, irrelevant perception of those monsters. King conveys this message in his book in the form of an extended joke. The basic idea is that readers achieve a high level of surprise, and thus they question the precise approach and techniques utilized by King to present horror in different aspects (Strinati, 2000, p. 87). The insidiousness of the surprise is adequately described in King's fiction, as the author wants the readers to feel for his characters. The writer obviously allows the possibility of horror in his stories. Yet there is no any horror without feeling.

In his role as a horror writer, King has repeatedly demonstrated the existence of good and evil forces beyond the control of human beings. He imposes a distinct view of individuals as being a product of their immediate environment (Strengell, 2006, p. 20). Another relevant view demonstrated in his horror novels is that of human beings found at the mercy of quite indifferent forces. Therefore, King is dedicated to exploring the appealing aspects along with the failures of naturalism. What is interesting about King is his tendency of examining various naturalistic themes through means of horror (Strengell, 2006, p. 13). He has always linked his work with all of his significant experience.

Apart from being perceived as one of the most eminent horror writers, King is considered an adequate interpreter of the postmodern condition in its complex dimensions. His work indicates the main suggestion that predestined inner quality turns out to determine the fate of the main characters depicted in his stories (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 33). Moreover, King's horror novels indicate his concerns with ontology because of his constant reference to multidimensional worlds as well as to the essence of good and evil (Egan, 1989, p. 203). In his distinct type of fiction, King rarely provides final answers to readers especially when it comes to the existential questions posed by his characters. By utilizing specific strategies of the horror genre, the writer succeeds in providing a harsh critique of American politics and society. It is essential to note that King actually characterizes himself as a medium writer in the sense of emphasizing on primary instincts and certain memories.

King's horror is manifested through various generic hybrids (Strengell, 2006, p 22). He is successful in combining Gothic elements with aspects pertinent to other genres such as realism and naturalism. However, King ensures a rather creative approach toward enriching these genres with his unique style and mode of expression. It appears that King considers horror fiction as a strong metaphor for all inappropriate events and wrong acts occurring in people's lives. Therefore, he adequately depicts the deep fears of American people and thus his novels reach many individuals across the world.

The combination of Gothic elements to his horror fiction makes his writing quite appealing to the reading audience. For instance, one such element is vampires, as the writer uses them in order to help people perceive them in a different way. In fact, King thoroughly reinterprets the common Gothic tale in new and appealing ways (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 56). Through his distinct perspective, the conventional turns into unconventional and interesting. This implies that King successfully establishes his own Gothic world and presents it to readers for further interpretation (Jancovich, 1996, p. 125).

At the same time, it may be argued that King adequately combines two essential traditions in American literature, the horror tradition and the melodramatic tradition. The horror tradition implies his extensive interest in interpreting his characters and themes in a primarily horror manner by utilizing a range of horror means to achieve

the sought horror effect (Strengell, 2006, p. 81). The melodramatic tradition present at his fiction shows a clear tendency for providing a psycho-sociological interpretation of the characters and events in his novels. Such fascinating elements are available in all of his novels; in this way, readers sense the true intentions of the writer to describe the dimensions of the real world even it is a fantasy.

The impact of King on the contemporary world is substantial. He sells millions copies of his most celebrated novels, which shows the reading audience's appreciation of his talent (Badley, 1996, p. 18). The writer succeeds in touching a huge segment of the public and thus affects their lives in one way or another. All segments of adult society tend to show a genuine interest in King's novels.

If there is a writer that has turned into a brand name for the last 10 years in modern popular horror narrative, that writer would certainly be Stephen King. Having accomplished such extraordinary position since the release of his first narrative *Carrie* (1974), some critics, doubtful about his popular novel, have frequently accused him of creating broad volumes with great swiftness and alternating to any means to accomplish the planned effect of scaring the readers (Davis, 1994, p. 19). Though, fictional critics, such as Samuel Schuman, have also attempted to recognize the exceptional factors that have changed Stephen King into a bestselling modern author (Barnard, 1998, p. 1). A great capability to visualize effective story plots, a skill to create exceptional characters, as well as a strongly ethical approach comparable to his New England origins, have frequently been considered as extraordinary strengths to his writing style. However, through time, Stephen King has primarily become a fiction author for his deep understanding of his readership as well as his broad understanding about the great characteristics of the genre (Badley, 1996, p. 21).

Stephen King has surpassed in getting his audience through his faith in the need to source a particular consequence on the reader. Understanding well about the emotional requirements of his spectators, he selects an effect and builds a fantasy world by making use of any means to accomplish that focus on end effects. Similarly, King has also revealed his reliable ways as a writer, replicating upon horror as a type in his factual volume *Danse Macabre*, released in 1981, and even the inspired technique of writing can be seen in his poetry, 'On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft,' released in 2000 (Carroll, 1990, p. 21). Stephen King's fanatical care

about the drawing and expertise of telling stories, as he discussed in his volume 'On Writing,' as well as his anxiety about creating a conclusion for the reader, have frequently convinced opponents such as Burton R. Pollin to contrast him with Edgar Allan Poe. This is mainly because Stephen King has recognized his obligation to the nineteenth-century short-story author and master of the horror genre on many events (Sanders, 2006, p. 28).

The subject of Stephen King as a fictional figure certainly leads to a conversation of what literariness involves. It was proposed that the purpose of story is to inform the reader, whether through introducing new ideas or cultures, explanation of events which support vital thinking, or providing suggestions that hint a broad world of understanding and experience. The wordings do not need an explicit reference to previous works of fiction, but such explanations often strengthen the quality of the clarification experienced by the reader (Davis, 1994, p. 50). A transcript with references to previous fictional works gives the sense of narration to the reader and also gives an idea of the capacity of the world of such narrative. Though, it is believed that the most significant situation of literariness is the outcome of the reading; that is, the reader must enhance some new insight into the human situation from the book (Morris, 2001, p. 110). Preferably, a fictional text would also be readable in the sense that new facts, descriptions, and lessons can be obtained from reading additionally, but as long as the reader obtains an idea of a broader world than he or she had previously envisioned, the efforts that stimulated this new viewpoint can be considered fictional.

Stephen King does focus on precise audiences like male, female, young or old, as King's spectators run far ahead of the readers of horror literature, and in the last 10 years, Stephen King has become a celebrity and author of books that can be read anywhere and anytime (Davis, 1994, p. 40). Furthermore, Stephen King has also managed to provide more than simple escape fiction, violence or satanic fiction; he urged his readers to tackle directly and frighteningly the horror or terror in their own lives and the resulting strength bond him to an audience, which focuses on fiction more severe than horror type fiction. Stephen King's model has encouraged sufficient followers to cause horror literature to move to the front of book shops and the top of the bestselling books (Badley, 1996, p. 19). Stephen King's audience challenges the description and purpose of horror literature, as his astonishing effect

manages to influence almost anyone who wonders to change page-turners to read further.

Horror stories strengthen the resistance between good and evil, showing the severe in each. The tremendous conditions frequently result in horrible punishment or horrific death. In the horror type, failure to make ethical choices results in quick and unsympathetic consequences. Horror stories and films focus on emotions, sensuality, and confusion, as different qualities frequently are considered disturbed social standards or unsafe to moral development (Davis, 1994, p. 46). Horror represents the Dionysian impulses that knock over ideas of an organized, reasonable, and efficient world. Although Stephen King focuses on incredible creatures and supernatural events, what makes him relaxed and happy is the main character. For King, then, inside and outside evil or ghosts are unavoidable to connect. Outside evil provides opportunities for internal evil to appear and for character confidence to be experienced. King effortlessly combines inside and outside evil by setting up characters in a severe and mystical environment outside their control (Badley, 1996, p 51). These situations help to focus on their personal beliefs and strengthen them to tackle their own internal weaknesses.

The evil events can be seen in three of Stephen King novels (*Desperation*, *Needful Things* and *Salem's Lot*), as the ethical agency in the features of evil is an important subject throughout King's entire work. His works are occupied with inconsistent, everyday characters that are vulnerable to see the initial fascination of evil. King's reachable characters make it possible for the reader to simply recognize them. This is a key feature of King's achievement (Morris, 2001, p. 29). In their desires for possible good, King's characters appear to be real in life, making it simple for readers to witness themselves in the characters. And, as in everyday life, sometimes people succeed and sometimes they fail, though the outcome in horror is much more instant and stable (generally resulting in a shocking death). For Stephen King, the gravity of the consequence and closeness of the conclusion is what makes a good quality horror story.

Stephen King's world is packed with a range of characters who encounter evil with various levels of success, as many characters are considered children. He himself observes the unique ability of children for tackling with horror. For King, children have the capability to fight against evil and misery, using their fear and vulnerability



to find a specific channel to resolve a problem (Davis, 1994, p. 72). They can recognize the truth of evil without being inspired by it. In *Needful Things* novel, Brian Rusk met with an evil character and surrendered it, starting a series of events that finished in the devastation of Castle Rock and the brutal death of many of its residents. Stephen King frequently draws a consideration to his characters' interests and hobbies to make them reachable and practical, but, more significantly, to demonstrate the influence of the horror types in an unusual instruction (Carroll, 1990, p. 42). Therefore, it is believed that a character's disclosure to and thoughts toward the horror type, reflected through the mysterious side of human character, make individuals more inclined to survive to meet with the evil.

## **1.2 King's Focus on Developing Simplistic Fears**

In his works of horror, King has indicated a persistent focus on developing simplistic fears. As the writer has repeatedly said, individuals often ask what scares them most, and they may reach a conclusion that everything scares them at the end. Therefore, in the process of developing simplistic fears, terror seems to exist on top, as this actually appears the finest emotion induced by King (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 61). Other basic levels associated with simplistic fears as depicted in King's prose refer to horror and the instinct of revulsion. In the ongoing process of writing, King obviously externalizes his own fears in an attempt to convey appealing messages to the reading audience. Thus, the development of simplistic fears in the prose of King goes hand in hand with the idea to induce terror as an important motivating factor to the story.

While interviewed, King presented an interesting view that fear is the emotion that mostly contributes to the 'blindness' of human beings, or in other words, fear prevents people from experiencing intense and true emotions with regards to a particular situation. When individuals start considering the countless things and objects that induce their fear, they become lost in the vicious cycle of terror from the unexpected (Badley, 1996, p. 51). The main reason why King is successful with his horror stories is that he skillfully taps into human simplistic fears. Such fears turn out to exploit human beings and bring them to the most sacred aspect of their inner lives. In this way, the connection between the conscious and the subconscious gradually emerges to present the absurdity of human existence on earth (Strengell, 2006, p. 71).

The development of simplistic fears takes the route of imposing destruction on human lives in the sense of combining various images and allegory expressions.

King's books can relate to the context of simplistic fears because of the focus on different frightening dimensions that make individuals believe in quite irrational and devastating forces. Human beings start demonstrating their inherent willingness to explore such simplistic fears in order to come to particular terms with them (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 49). King is concerned with bridging the gap between the reading audience and the text while trying to convey the importance of the simplistic fears being discussed. In addition, similar fears are closely associated with the notion of flawed humanity in which the poles of good and evil are constantly present (Badley, 1996, p. 120). This obviously causes contradiction in the way the main arguments introduced in King's novels are accepted or rejected by readers.

The books of King indicate not only his immense talent as a horror writer but also his dedication to describe different forms of fear. According to the writer, terror is the highest form of simplistic fear. Terror is mostly associated with extensive tension instead of release, and thus suggests a gradual process of slow build up occurring prior to a moment when a creature appears (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 73). In fact, terror can be identified as an inactive form of fear, pertaining to the lack of action. The extensive durability of tension implies intense emotional responses among the reading audience. Horror is naturally the next form of simplistic fear dominated by a jump scare. The latter indicates the presence of fear induced by the sudden shock occurring as a result of released tension. Unlike terror, horror is an active form of fear because it involves action (Strinati, 2000, p. 39). In an attempt to differentiate the two forms of simplistic fears developed in King's books, it is important to consider that terror reflects one's expectation of action, while horror suggests the action itself.

The last form of simplistic fears incorporated in King's books is that of revulsion. Although terror and horror require the establishment of a particular mood, revulsion is solely linked with a grotesque. Revulsion is also an inactive form of fear due to non-existing requirements of action (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 158). The presence of a revolting sight is enough to create the grotesque, persistent sense of

fear while reading King's stories. Moreover, revulsion seems unaffected by the aspect of duration.

Such aspects suggest that King's name as a writer is synonymous with horror and fear that appears at various levels. In this way, various simplistic fears have been extensively discussed by King who demonstrated his gift as a horror writer, respectively capturing the essence of real people through simplistic fears (Badley, 1996, p. 27). The characters depicted by King are usually honest and quite complicated and often find themselves in fearful, horrifying situations. In other words, the development of simplistic fears is related to the idea of demonstrating the struggle of real people who need to solve real problems. The fact that readers may find characters that mirror themselves or close friends is indicative of the undisputable talent of King to expose different fears of human beings.

### **1.3 Contradictions in Society Regarding Perceptions of Innocence**

As long as the motif of innocence is present in much of King's writing, it is important to explore innocence implications in the broad societal context. Perceptions of innocence in society are marked by certain contradictions in terms of ensuring protection and violation at the same time. Individuals need to go beyond specific perceptions of good and bad in order to enhance their potential to understand the essence of innocence (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 77). In fact, the consciousness of innocence allows human beings to create particular worlds of their own and grow. Recognizing people's innocence is the path to real spiritual growth. The process of experiencing innocence is ongoing because it is closely associated with ensuring adequate protection to innocent and vulnerable individuals.

Furthermore, the partial acceptance of innocence is linked with creating separation. The common belief is that only certain individuals give their best in terms of innocence and ensuring protection. Yet it is important to note that people tend to hold various contradicting beliefs about personality and innocence (El Saadawi, 1998, p. 20). Hence, particular contradictions exist in society regarding perceptions of innocence. In general, human beings demonstrate a strong belief that they are innocent and inherently right. In addition, they are more likely to believe that they need to learn more in order to know everything (Badley, 1996, p. 16). This means

that the dogmas of society, in particular culture, are quite confusing and devastating at the same time.

Contradictions in society regarding perceptions of innocence usually prompt mixed feelings about insecurity and anger. Moreover, the sense of innocence inherently present in human beings indicates a tendency of being defensive. Knowing the parameters of innocence is associated with the freedom of being responsible and empathic for other individuals' pain and suffering. It has been indicated that the process of returning to the state of innocence implies the ability to forgive one's past and future (El Saadawi, 1998, p. 41). In this way, individuals can free themselves from the burdensome expectation of something to be changed over time. Undoubtedly, the social dimensions of innocence suggest focus on justice. The latter may be challenging to achieve within the boundaries of the physical world. Yet from a broad social perspective, human beings are always aligned with all aspects that are perceived as best for all individuals in society.

In such complex context, forgiveness emerges as a specific function of the mind that tends to divide everything as possessing good and bad characteristics. Forgiveness also enables individuals with an opportunity to reconnect with the whole and thus achieve a particular state of innocence (Shattuck, 2003, p. 30). This aspect implies that innocence is directly associated with ensuring protection. However, the major contradictions in society regarding perceptions of innocence relate to violation. Indeed, there are numerous cases when innocence is persistently violated (Hoppenstand and Browne 1987, p. 29). Therefore, the consciousness of innocence allows human beings to demonstrate more powerful and authentic characteristics. Innocence can be used for the highest good of all individuals.

Even though some people may be in life-threatening situations, they need to exhibit the belief that they can be always connected to the power of love and hope. At the same time, it is essential to note that human beings who are completely conscious of their innocence may be quite naïve. Different perceptions of innocence reflect in gaining a complete knowledge of certain aspects that are relevant in society (Shattuck, 2003, p. 81). When individuals start seeing innocence in themselves and others, they are on the right way of considering certain ways of ensuring protection. Such contradictory perceptions of innocence are evident in the prose of Stephen

King. Innocence is seen as a main regulatory tool in the sense of regulating human emotions.

#### **1.4 Defining Horror**

In order to understand the context by which Stephen King uses the motif of innocence in his writing, it is important to first comprehend the genre of horror. Yet defining the respective genre may be a challenging task. In general, category fiction adheres to a clearly set formula that readers easily tend to identify. In this context, different genres use different techniques to convey particular messages to the reading audience. Romance as a genre basically employs a specific technique of presenting the love between two individuals, regardless of any obstacles occurring. Mystery focuses on a central character or characters solving an important puzzle or seeking out some truth that is difficult to find. As Noel Carroll notes in *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, suspense, mystery and horror novels demonstrate the aim to have a particular affect (14). This affect is noted in their respective names. How this affect is reached is virtually limitless. Horror differs from all other category fiction in that its central purpose is to incite the feeling of horror or fear in the reader (Carroll, 1990, p. 14).

In the process of defining horror, individuals should consider the precise effects of the horror genre. In fact, readers of King's prose are invited to differentiate between actual experience and the aesthetic parameters of literary representation of particular ideas. In addition, the ability to frighten the reader represents the identifying mark of a horror novel. In fact, such definition based on an emotion requires an adequate explanation of that particular emotion. The word 'horror' and its variations are used in everyday language, but individuals should explore the word's meaning within the context of the genre (Carroll, 1990, p. 16). Only in this way it would be possible to understand the implications associated with the horror genre, and thus individuals may illustrate a relevant, broad perspective into the explored topic in this paper.

The emotion of horror is virtually synonymous with fear and is defined by *Dictionary.com* as "an overwhelming and painful feeling caused by something frightfully shocking, terrifying, or revolting." Less dramatically, it is also defined as "a strong aversion." Both definitions are useful and important to the understanding of horror and Stephen King's cannon, as much of what King writes relies on the

reader's experience of these or comparable emotions while simultaneously enjoying his books. However, it is not just the reader that experiences these emotions but the characters within the confines of King's novels. In this way, both reader and fictional character alike share a fearful experience brought on in a number of ways. The relationship between the reader, the reader's emotions and the contents of a horror novel is extremely important to the horror reading experience.

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, author Noel Carroll explores the fear both character and reader share during the course of a novel, using *Dracula* as his example. After sharing a scene where one character experiences the need to "repress a shudder" and a "horrible feeling of nausea" as the result of an encounter with the famous vampire, Carroll argues that the reader likewise experiences the need to recoil while reading this (17). In this way, horror becomes the means by which a reader might live a life of vicarious thrills and chills, borrowing the fear of fictional characters and wearing it as their own until the story ends. As Noel Carroll puts it, "the emotional reactions of characters, then, provide a set of instructions or, rather, examples about the way in which the audience is to respond" (17). Horror therefore, is aptly named for the emotion it invokes in its central characters and its readers.

Therefore, horror extensively refers to the aspects of the unknown. Given that the unknown is as limitless as the human imagination, the material that horror draws upon for inspiration is both wide and varied. In keeping with its gothic roots, the genre traditionally explores "powers and forces outside the accepted physical human realm" (Davis, 1994, p. 13). The gothic appeal is mostly about the dark elements prevailing in one's personality. Monsters, psychopaths, boogey men, and those with supernatural powers are just a few of those that have made repeat appearances in a great variety of horror novels, Stephen King or otherwise. At the genre's core, however, is the simplest and perhaps most compelling of human stories, that of good versus evil (Davis, 1994, p. 14). According to Jonathan P. Davis, this theme of good versus evil strikes at the heart of every horror novel's true purpose:

The function of horror fiction is to allow the reader to see real life evils become distorted and then sorted out. It also allows the reader to find a safe medium to explore the dark side of his or her own personality and to come out of the experience being grateful that he or she, like the protagonist of the horror novel, has the choice to choose the correct path (14).

The relationship between the reader, the reader's emotions and the contents of a horror novel is extremely important especially through the dichotomous prism of good versus evil.

No discussion of a seasoned horror novelist is complete without considering the methods that writer uses in exacting this feeling of fear. Perhaps, as a reflection of his background, Stephen King relies heavily on small northeastern communities in the United States as a primary setting. Secrecy, gossip, isolation and feelings of claustrophobia are found and experienced within the pages of many King novels, including *It*, *Pet Sematary*, *Needful Things* and *Carrie*. Much has been written on the symbolism and significance of small towns in a Stephen King novel. Suffice it to say that small town settings are a 'King-ism,' or rather, a mainstay that fans come to expect. Michael D. Sharp calls these King-isms "King ingredients" and lists them as the love of childhood, a disdain for small town prejudice, a love for small town life and a disdain for small-minded religiosity (852). Arguably, another King-ism is the loss of innocence within the pages of his novel. As Jonathan P. Davis notes in *Stephen King's America*:

*Anyone who has read Stephen King extensively will find that he spends a large amount of time exploring childhood. Childhood to King is a magical time, a time when the world seems magnificent in its literal beauty, a time when a human being is most splendid because of ignorance of worldly evil (48).*

Indeed, this time of splendor that Davis references is crucial in many of King's novels, as it helps set the stage for the horrors to follow.

Like Tolkien before Stephen King, he works within a horror type that has been usually ignored in the past; even the typical Holman and Harmon book to fiction did not have the capability to influence his position in horror writing (Holman and Harmon, 1991, p. 38). Although Tolkien's type was considered a kind of ignored fantasy, King decided to start his career by writing horror novels, and many opponents are still working hard to leave him behind in that genre (Sanders, 2006, p. 41). Nowadays, horror has frequently been connected with escape, a requirement for

the reader to abandon the real world in favor of knife, wounds, satanic and killing stories. This statement is proper, but only to a certain level. After all, even opponents agree that there are few parts more horrifying, which are hard to find in normal horror in the real world, and this incorporation is precisely what Stephen King does in his novels (Davis, 1994, p. 14).

He selects a normal American condition, small towns like Maine in particular, forgotten scenery in general, and characters with familiar American faces. The horror aspect arrives not in the shape of a big, shocking monster, though definitely those do disturb the writing of King's novels, or in supernatural horror situation, though he has been branded to focus on old ghost or phantom or spirit now and then, but in the face of one character who is likely to be a neighbor (Carroll, 1990, p. 56). King has strengthened this viewpoint into reality. The true horror of his fiction is that his novels start and end with normal, authentic characters, and readers are incapable to disregard the reflection that has been forward to them. King would not be virtually as successful without his weakness to show blood and murder scenes; it is in his ability to combine such disturbing scenes with the ordinary element that enables him to get away from horror scenes in front of a classic readership. Readers are so astonished by the appearance of the horrifying aspects in the middle of their usual world, in which they are doomed to live in (Morris, 2001, p. 31).

In Stephen King's novels, readers prefer to avoid events like car accidents, but they cannot, and they read ahead, trapped by their requirements to find out what occurs to everyone else. The possibility for such events in the current world, however isolated, manages to catch readers' thoughts because after all, this may actually occur in reality (Badleym 1996, p. 86). King's strange ability to mix the crucial world with his created fantasy world guides readers to believe in his narrative; therefore, it is enough for him to entirely scare them. It is this fascinating madness that readers overwhelm, and the reality is that the writer they read so selfishly is characterized in the horror part of bookshops. The horror scenes in King's work are well-known for walking the narrow line between fantasy and truth, as ghosts appear in usual living rooms, and spirits appear from familiar backyards (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p 53).



Horror literature recommends that logic and order are covered-up, and simple fantasy of control is forced upon a reality of confusion. The readers are clothed with the slight surface of civilization, under which a strange creature waits to emerge.

Furthermore, it has been argued that along with its clear healing value, horror narrative has a cognitive importance, helping readers to recognize themselves and the existing real world situation (Morris, 2001, p. 142). An important horror scene in King's novels is the fight between ordinary life and a strange, illogical and supernatural universe. Despite his classification as a horror or Gothic author, Stephen King has managed to exceed traditional-type limitations, thus earning much respect and recognition from various sectors of American culture (Culler, 1997, p. 45). King's work has definitely combined horror and Gothic elements, but generally, it is the practicality of his novels that have earned dedicated supporters or fans (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 61). Whether he is pointing out the demanding scene of a graveyard, or writing about the internal monologue of irritated parents, King's ability to portray truth and fantasy is considered a fundamental part of his narrative capabilities.

## 2. THE INITIAL PRESENTATION OF INNOCENCE IN KING'S CANON

### 2.1 Innocence Within The Context Of King

When considering innocence lost as a King-ism, or recurring motif, it is essential to define not just innocence itself, but the importance of innocence, both in reality and Stephen King's fiction. Only in understanding the role that innocence plays within the reader's psyche is it possible to understand its function in Stephen King's version of horror. The most basic definition of innocence is provided by *Dictionary.com*. While the entry on innocence provides several uses for the word, one definition is particularly relevant. *Dictionary.com* indicates the following definition of innocence, "the quality or state of being innocent; freedom from sin or moral wrong." Additionally, "simplicity; absence of guile or cunning; naiveté," "lack of knowledge or understanding" and "harmless; innocuousness" are all offered as alternate meanings.

Taken at its simplest, innocence refers to an absence of information or knowledge. This absence of information or knowledge may be specific and relevant to a given circumstance or nonspecific and sweeping. For example, a child fits the definition of innocent because of his youth, inexperience in the world, and general lack of knowhow. An individual may be determined innocent of a specific crime after it has been determined that he has no knowledge of its sequence of events (Blue, 1992, p. 102). Therefore innocence is a universal concept familiar to all people. For the sake of this examination of Stephen King's work, the innocence referred to is nonspecific and sweeping. It is the innocence that all humans are perceived to be born with or have experienced. This innocence has the capacity to remain through lack of experience or mental deficiency.

Throughout society and as far back as antiquity, the argument has been made that a child's innocence, or a childlike innocence, is something to protect and cherish. In keeping with this, this innocence has the capacity to be ruined or otherwise fractured, thereby harming a particular child. Plato argued in his *Republic* concerning the frailty of a child's mind:

*For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts.*

Here, Plato argues that a child's innocence is so thorough that he cannot tell what is fictional from what is true. Indeed, anyone who has heard of Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, or the Tooth Fairy can attest to a child's inherent gullibility. Such a line of thought however begs the question of whether innocence and gullibility are synonymous or distinct. Whereas innocence in this context is used to describe a sense of harmlessness derived from youth and inexperience, gullibility or gullible, according to *Dictionary.com*, is defined as an individual who is "easily cheated or deceived." The distinction here is great. A gullible individual is perceived to lack common knowledge. Within the context of fiction, a gullible character would not be perceived as youthful and innocent. They would be perceived by the reader as less intelligent and easily duped. Therefore, King gullible King characters are not the subject of this study. Instead, only those who are actually children or child-like are the focus.

It has been argued that at the heart of horror is the simplest of human stories, that of good versus evil. Life is often simplistic for children and childhood is a time when these attributes of good and bad, right and wrong are clearest and starkest. Children are often entertained with stories of magical, mythical creatures and objects (Shattuck, 2003, p. 57). They are told of fairy tales where witches and stepmothers are wholly wicked or evil. Likewise, they are told folk tales like Cinderella, where goodhearted children are mistreated but nonetheless persevere. Undoubtedly, it is the inherent innocence children have that makes the embracing of these stories possible. Given this, children are seen as particularly delicate.

Innocence has long been a fixture in literature and culture. It is generally seen as an asset of value with a loss to be mourned, as noted by Plato. Symbolically, children are often used to denote innocence in literature, leaving the coming-of-age stage as a particularly ripe choice for many novels. Stephen King is no different. In many of his novels, a child or group of children pass from a place of youthfulness and innocence

into maturity, usually because of a series of events that have forced maturity onto them (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 23). As previously noted, Jonathan P. Davis argues that Stephen King has a particular preoccupation with childhood and rites of passage into adulthood. It is a time in life prior to the corruption of real world responsibilities and later ambiguities. To some, this preoccupation might seem exploitative, or an attempt to ratchet up the kill list with easy, sympathetic prey. While it should seem that a child in possession of this innocence would be put at a distinct disadvantage within the pages of a King novel, this is not necessarily so (Collings, 1987, p. 78). Instead, a childlike perspective can equip a King character for a proactive role. These characters have no skeptical preconceived notions to abandon. They already believe in the world's capacity for bogeymen. They already believe in magic. Stephen King's novel *It*, is one such example.

## **2.2 Sullied Innocence as a Starting Point for It**

An audience member at the 1984 International Conference on the Fantastic in Arts asked novelist Stephen King what terrified him most. He replied with immediate certainty that the sight of his dead child was the worst fear he could imagine (Magistrale, 1996, p. 73). Two years later, he released *It*. Stephen King's 1986 novel, *It*, features seven children in a small Maine town. Faced with a series of murders within their community, the children eventually realize that an eternal evil is to blame. This eternal evil preys on local children, materializes in the form of a clown with the ability to shape shift for these children, and is invisible to adults' altogether. This invisibility, in particular, is symbolically synonymous with the child's transition to adulthood and the parent's inability to protect the child from the dangers that lurk in the world. In many of King's works, including *It*, American children are juxtaposed against their adult counterparts while facing adversity against evil. Ironically, these children are dependent on adults for food and shelter in a practical context but are unable to depend on adults for the protection they ultimately need.

The premise for *It* is both frightening and shocking to readers and characters alike. The novel takes the concept of murder and applies it to children. The 'scary clown story' introduced by King in this novel mostly appeals to children and the tendency they demonstrate that evil, in all of its dimensions, exists. For instance, some children illustrate persistent feelings of terror associated with the perceptions of the

‘scary clown’. Thus, the starting point for *It* is definitely sullied innocence (Magistrale, 1996, p. 61). In fact, the notion of the clown is directly linked with a high level of perceived innocence of children. Despite the aspects of innocence inherently prescribed to children, King makes the point that being a child is actually not quite fun and exciting. Most of the children depicted in the novel clearly present signs of unhappy childhoods. In this way, the writer intends to demonstrate the argument that children’s innocence is choked or prevented to a substantial degree. The home lives of the child characters are highly unfavorable that makes readers question the decision of King to use children as major characters in the story.

Even though the characters in *It* encounter unbearable and quite fearful experiences, they show adequate bravery in facing their childhoods. King discusses the implications of child innocence through personifying the childhood evils. Later during their adulthood, the grown children remember those evils and try their best to view them from a different perspective. The boundaries of child innocence are completely destroyed in the novel because of the writer’s focus on the power of the evil force (Badley, 1996, p. 38). Innocence is an essential motif used in King’s stories as the writer is interested in exploring the powerful dimensions of the evil through the eyes of children who are more spontaneous and sensible than adults.

The author of *It* clearly interrelates the aspects of innocence, horror and supernatural forces dominant in life. Yet the novel shows concerns with the reality of contemporary life. There is a solid aspect of ambivalence throughout the story considering how the writer describes childhood versus adulthood. These are two distinct periods in life and demonstrate the emergence as well as the destruction of innocence (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 61). Showing children in danger is a clear representation of the idea of how their innocence is lost. In fact, the notion of innocence as outlined in *It* is more impressively introduced to readers because of its contrast to horror and evil. A persistent feeling of inevitability comes from the novel in the sense that all events are doomed to happen in children’s lives and thus they would be able to grow up faster and understand the complexity of life (Bloom, 1994, p. 118). Such a complex novel refers to the fears exhibited by both children and adults. Nonetheless, young and older individuals tend to view life through different lenses which constitute the spontaneous nature of children’s experiences. The

intensive and innocent experiences of children are what mostly drive the writer's exploration of events in the book.

While readers might have been desensitized through news coverage and everyday life to the death of adults, premature deaths still register with surprise to many. In *It* children are the intended victims and their manner of death is often grotesque. They are without the benefit of adults for refuge and instead are left entirely to their own devices. Though this may seem like a detriment, within the context of a King novel, it is a form of strength instead. Perhaps Jonathan P. Davis says it best:

*While adults claim to be wise, they are ignorant to the fact that the imaginative atrophy often resulting from an inability to adapt to innocence's corruption actually limits them. Adults often can no longer discover the beauty in a sunset; they cannot remember the golden moments of childhood bonding, a period when same-sex friends seemed the most important aspect of being alive, and it is this incapacity to recollect these times that often leads to an increasingly burdensome adult life in King's fiction. Unless the adults in King's world can escape into the realm of imagination first experienced and shared with others in childhood, unless they can approach oncoming evil with a child's mentality, they are doomed to adult reasoning (49).*

The "burdensome adult life" Davis references manifests itself in a number of ways. In *It*, the adults are helpless bystanders with a child murderer on the loose. They are left to mourn their children and are, in fact, more defenseless than the victimized children within the novel because they are unable to even see the eponymous murderer referred to simply as "It" or "Pennywise." Indeed, the children in *It* are unable to tell the adults about the timeless evil for fear of being rejected as irrational. *It* begins with an act King refers to as the beginning of "the terror" (3). In customary horror fashion, he eludes to the timelessness and mysteriousness of evil at the novel's opening: "The terror, which would not end for another twenty eight years—if it ever did end—began, so far as I know or can tell, with a boat made from a sheet of newspaper floating down a gutter swollen with rain" (3). The symbolism King

invokes here is essential to the novel. He tells the reader that a six-year-old in a yellow slicker and red galoshes, a seemingly ordinary child, is engaged in a seemingly ordinary act. He is sailing a paper boat of his own creation, happily, on an otherwise rainy day. He attends the local elementary school. He has an older brother that stutters. This older brother is home with the flu (3). Both little Georgie Denbrough and his ten-year-old brother, known as Stuttering Bill in their small town of Derry, are painfully ordinary. They are painfully ordinary until the moment the clown in the storm drain rips through Georgie's body on page 17.

Georgie Denbrough is indeed the sacrificial lamb of *It*. He is the first child within the context of the novel to be killed by the timeless murderer Pennywise the clown. Unlike when his brother faces him later, Georgie is unarmed because he has no knowledge of the monster. He likewise faces him alone. In these first pages, readers are made to see the infinite capacity of Pennywise, as he is able to convince young Georgie that he has an entire circus in the sewer. Georgie believes that he smell the traditional scents of a circus, including peanuts, cotton candy, and fried doughboys (16). Though Georgie has early apprehensions, such as suspecting the clown's eyes were once yellow and believing he shouldn't talk to strangers, Pennywise is nonetheless able to literally rob Georgie of any misgivings (14). "He got up and walked over to the storm drain. He dropped to his knees and peered in. The water made a dank hollow sound as it fell into darkness. It was a spook sound. It reminded him of—

*'Huh!' The sound was jerked out of him as if on a string, and he recoiled.*"

The enormity of power facing the children in *It* is immediately made clear with the death of Georgie Denbrough. The eponymous shape shifter has the capacity to invade and manipulate his victim's thoughts. Eventually, the reader discovers that Pennywise has the ability to become what his victim fears most. In *It* Stephen King takes the ordinary child and magnifies the ordinary child's fears with the addition of a murderer.

### **2.3 Home Dysfunction, Minority Status, and Other Issues Lead to Bullying by Henry Bowers**

The ordinariness of the children in *It* is essential to the tale. Ordinariness is, in fact, essential to many Stephen King tales. Indeed, the central characters of Stuttering Bill Denbrough, Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak, Michael Hanlon, Richard Tozier, and Stanley Uris form their friendship and what they call the “Losers Club” because of the bullying they endure from schoolmate Henry Bowers, a common problem that children across America unfortunately face. The children of the Losers Club meet in a natural outdoor setting akin to where any child might play (18). They have common or widely recognizable ailments or concerns that serve as the reason they are teased by Henry Bowers. In addition to Bill Denbrough’s stutter, Ben Hanscom’s obesity and Richard Tozier’s thick eyeglasses are reasons for torment. Likewise, Eddie Kaspbrak’s questionable asthma, Michael Hanlon and Stanley Uris’ minority statuses, and Beverly Marsh’s poverty earn a fair degree of abuse from Henry Bowers and his clan, as well. Arguably, few have attended school without encountering or being the asthmatic student, the minority student, the impoverished one, or the one in need of glasses.

Though Stephen King’s name is synonymous with horror and therefore monsters, he writes more than horror and writes about more than the traditional horror monster. The everyday casualness of King’s characters captures the essence of middle class America, and in many ways, his work is seen as a celebration of traditional middle class values (Sharp, 2006, p. 854). However, King’s embrace of everyday life looks beyond the sidewalk and white picket fences to what takes place inside the home. In *It*, the children have an innocence that is not all-consuming. Rather, they are not the helpless, blank slates, waiting to be influenced by the appearance of supernatural evil. One girl, Beverly Marsh, lives alone with a father who physically abuses her. Alternatively, Eddie Kaspbrak suffers from a mother with an ever-tightening pair of apron strings. Eddie’s mother smothers her son and stunts his emotional growth. Michael Hanlon is an African American boy tormented because of his race in their 1950s suburban town. Though he is young, he is confronted by the reality of racial injustice and inequality. Even without the inclusion of Pennywise, it is impossible for the innocence of these children to have remained uncorrupted. Life has already intruded on the purity they once possessed.



*"I worry about you, Bevvie," he said. "Sometimes I worry a lot."*

*"Daddy, what—"...*

*WHAP!*

His hand rocketed down in a wide sweeping orbit and struck her face. Her head thudded back against the wall. He hooked his thumbs in his belt and looked at her with that expression of deadly disconnected curiosity. She felt a trickle of blood running warmly from the left corner of her lower lip" (1092).

In *It*, King focuses on children who have experienced corruption, abuse, and manipulation at the hands of adults. With the inclusion of Pennywise in a world already fractured by the misgivings of life, *It* transforms partly into a harsh and dangerous coming-of-age tale.

In *It*, the question becomes one of how children in such difficult circumstances can suffer the loss of their innocence. Indeed, some would argue that children in the aforementioned conditions will have had their innocence compromised through a series of unfortunate events. Beverly Marsh would be the most obvious example of this, as she suffers severe forms of child abuse throughout the novel. Mike Hanlon and Stanley Uris are tormented because of their minority status (Sharp, 2006, p. 840). This too might serve as evidence that the children in Stephen King's *It* have been forced to mature prematurely without any influence from Pennywise. However, there is still a great deal of innocence in these children and the reason for it lies in the essence of childhood. "What is it about kids," King asks, "that they can look at the most outrageous thing and just see it and, unless there's a reaction they can play off, just deal with it? If a kid sees a dead guy in the street...he'll just look at the dead guy...but if a lot of people are standing around crying, then the kid will cry, too" (Davis, 1994, p. 50). What King hints at is an incredible resilience built into children. This innate resilience gives them the coping mechanism to deal in a way that adults are unable, to cope when others cannot. So, at the opening of *It* the children of the novel demonstrate an early capacity for resilience. This capacity can be seen with Beverly Marsh's ability to endure her father and Mike Hanlon's ability to endure bigotry. It does not, however, mean that they are no longer children. They are not

suddenly all knowledgeable about all things. They therefore still wield a great deal of innocence. It is an innocence that is lost during the course of the novel.

#### **2.4 Bill Denbrough Visits His Dead Brother's Room**

The Losers Club is formed in the novel *It*, as a result of mutual torment at the hands of Henry Bowers. After it has formed, however, one member, Bill Denbrough, has a particularly frightening experience that serves to change what might have been the natural course of events. Several months after the death of his six-year-old brother Georgie, Bill is filled with memories as he looks at family pictures, some of which contain his brother George (Davis, 2010, p. 51). The very last picture he turns to is a school portrait of Georgie taken just ten days before he dies looking at Georgie's picture. Georgie winks at him, before promising to see him soon. Perhaps even that night, in his closet (294).

The thought process that young Bill undergoes, first in seeking out the photo album, second after confirming that it interacts with him repeatedly in this way, is fascinating and horrific for character and reader alike. Multiple occurrences are happening in Bill's life while he contends with this supernatural event. Just a few pages earlier, the reader discovers alongside Bill that his parents, while grieving, have begun to do so in an unsettling way. "Why are they crying so far apart?" Bill asks himself (292). Eventually, his grief brings him to his deceased brother's room, where he grapples with a sense of "haunting" even as he misses him (292). Here, Bill is truly frightened and imagines that Georgie will turn up armless and in the yellow rain slicker he wore on the day of his demise. He imagines that his eyes will be "blank and terrible," that of a "zombie in a horror movie" (293). Bill is a lonely ten-year-old who has been forgotten. He is grieving alone after his younger brother's murder. He is frightened and has contrary feelings to work through. Undoubtedly, he needs counseling. Instead, he is left alone in the shadows of this bedroom, where his fortunes are about to get worse. Here, the reader discovers that King has a talent for ratcheting up the sense of vulnerability and isolation experienced in the very young.

Even George is hyper-aware of his vulnerability at the moment. He notes that he'd have a heart attack, "probably fatal" if the power had gone out while he was in Georgie's room (293). Still, he is determined to find a way to cope with his brother's death and move on, as he is particularly struck by how gruesome it is. Likewise, Bill

recognizes that his parents are not coping with Georgie's death in a healthy way (293). This introspection and ability to reflect on the grieving mechanisms of his parents shows a forced maturity that has occurred over a few short months. Earlier, Georgie and Bill have a whimsical, immature nature as they tease about fecal matter and boyish things that are more in keeping with their age (11). Over the course of several months, Bill has had maturity forced on him through the violent death of his brother and through his parents' inability to grieve in a healthy way. These issues would have already been cause for concern; however, Bill is a character in a Stephen King novel. Bill is a young character on the edge of vulnerability, about to be pushed to question his own sanity by the ageless evil known as Pennywise.

When Bill looks at the picture of his brother and it rolls its eyes at him, his first reaction is to hurl the book across the room and clap his hands over his mouth (295). This is an understandable reaction of horror that anyone would have. Unfortunately for George, his troubles are not done as the picture rests against the wall and begins to flow with blood. Bill's fear is immediate and overwhelming. He flees the room. Bill's attempts to rationalize the situation are as weak as an adult's might have been. He suggests that perhaps something was "wrong" with the picture, or that his head "played tricks on him" (294). However, it is his childlike imagination that allows him to get past the assumption of psychological damage and onward to the belief that what he saw was what actually happened.

Within the context of *It*, King juxtaposes the adult world's interpretation of Pennywise's antics with what the reader knows to be true. The adult world comes to a rushed and forced assessment where justice is reached again and again in the case of missing and injured children. The reader and those in The Losers Club know the true culprit to be the ageless evil known as Pennywise; however, the adult community in Derry comes to a different conclusion. In what King tells the reader is a "Tale from the Summer of '58," adults took matters into their own hands and reached their own conclusions when Eddie Corcoran went missing. Soon after, in what news reporters called a "bizarre twist" the body of Eddie's deceased younger brother was exhumed (298). He was said to have died an accidental death after multiple fractures. When questioned by police as to whether parents were under suspicion, Derry police declined to comment (298). Shortly thereafter, Derry police arrested Eddie Corcoran's stepfather, who incidentally, had admitted his younger

brother to hospital after he had “played on a step ladder in a garage and fallen” (299). County Medical Examiner’s concluded that the younger brother’s wounds were consistent with blunt force trauma sustained by “severe beating,” such as that which could be sustained by a hammer (299). When asked follow up questions about how these latest developments might bear on the disappearance of Eddie Corcoran, the police chief stated: “I think it looks much more serious than we first supposed, don’t you?” (299).

In the case of Eddie Corcoran, the reader is able to compare and contrast the child’s ability to cope versus the adult’s world. In the adult world, alternatives are rejected, imagination excluded, and the only acceptable conclusions are the most obvious. In the case of Eddie Corcoran, other adults begin to contribute to the narrative, as a teacher explains that he was “often bruised” (300). Other stories emerge, such as the sprained thumbs on the youngest Corcoran boy (302).

Eventually, the tension became such that Eddie Corcoran’s stepfather confessed to the murder of his youngest son and committed suicide. The body of Eddie however, was not found. Suspicion for the people of Derry, nonetheless, lay with the stepfather as culprit (304). However, the true murderer is certain. The children of The Losers Club are eventually able to ascertain that Pennywise was the murderer of Eddie Corcoran and others. It is this ability to seek truth and face it that is another mark of their shedding childlike garments.

In this way, Corcoran emerges as the latest victim of Pennywise. Similarly to the deaths of other children, Corcoran’s death occurs at a time when the child’s parents are not looking. This brings back the perception of a nameless evil, but its actual form can never be completely understood. The numerous child victims depicted in the novel come to show the simple idea that adults are unable to comprehend the evil surrounding them. Even though adults see certain signs of evil, they tend to ignore them (Gresh and Weinberg, 1993, p 229). On the other hand, children are illustrated with their capacity not only to see evil but also to believe in its existence. The latest victim of Pennywise serves as an adequate example of how children are weak, vulnerable and incapable of destroying the evil force that suddenly appeared in their lives. Manifestations of evil, fear, and obsession overlap with children’s perceived state of innocence in the novel.

Considering the victims in the novel, including the latest one, is important in discussing the implications of the novel as well as its recurring motifs. One of those motifs is death. The majority of the children described in *It* present a strong belief that they are immortal. This only shows how young individuals usually have insignificant understanding of the complexity and unpredictability of human life (304). Nonetheless, the death of Bill's brother indicates the exact moment when Bill starts comprehending the vulnerability of life and children's lost innocence. Bill encounters the repeated visits by the clown in a mature way.

Furthermore, the concept of sullied innocence in *It* emerges through the prism of magic. King shows how strange things take place in the novel. For instance, Ben is a witness of a mummy's walking across the canal during winter. Another instance of such strange occurrences is associated with the episode when King describes the fear of Richie emerging upon seeing how the Paul Bunyan statue moves (305). The writer of the novel points out that all those children who have died or disappeared have witnessed similar things. Even though children's innocence is partially lost in *It*, they are ready to stand against their prevailing fears and overcome them. This may not result in restoring their initial point of innocence, but they may feel better after directly facing their fears.

Likewise, the horror and innocence implied by King in this novel are directly linked with the perception of the town in a lively manner. In other words, readers may feel that Derry, Maine is a real place rather than a fictional town (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p 32). There is a strong sense of intimacy ascribed to the novel because of the complexity of each character and the extensive consideration provided to their back story (Punter, 1765, p. 20). Readers are virtually transported into Derry, Main in order to share the horrific events demonstrating the loss of innocence and horror in children's and adults' lives.

### 3. KING'S FOCUS ON HORROR AND INNOCENCE IN NEEDFUL THINGS

#### 3.1 Alluring People to Buy Things They Mostly Desire at a Store in the Maine Town of Castle Rock

The novel starts with a description of the opening of a new shop on the town square of Castle Rock, Maine. Yet the opening statement of the novel is quite ambiguous because Castle Rock is identified as a town of crucial importance to other stories and novels by King. For instance, the same town represents the setting of *The Dead Zone*, *Cujo* and *Bag of Bones*. Associations with a town's setting are important in determining the writer's focus on describing essential elements throughout the text (Collings 1987, p 40). There are different antiques exposed in the window of the shop with a title that reads, 'Needful Things.' King writes:

*They were across the street from the new shop, and he saw that during the day someone had put up a dark-green awning. Written across the front in white letters were the words NEEDFUL THINGS. Polly Chalmers, the lady who ran the sewing shop, as standing out on the sidewalk, hands on her admirably slim hips, looking at the awning with an expression that seemed to be equally puzzled and admiring (16).*

Other characters in the novel also expressed their excitement about the way the new shop was introduced to them. They believed that such awning gave the store a quite special look even though it would not be possible to explain in detail what was so special about it. The selection of such name for a shop is indicative of the writer's intention to provide a catchy title in order to allure people to buy things they mostly need or desire (16). King depicts the shop's proprietor, Leland Gaunt, as a handsome man having the ability to comfort individuals almost instantly. There is something odd about the person related to his ability to provide each town resident with some object they secretly wish to possess.

This novel adheres to the classic tradition of a stranger coming to town. In this way, Gaunt appears a supernatural being having the goal to confuse and divide people in Castle Rock. In fact, the objective is to reach out to the souls of these people who somehow end up killing themselves. King uses a quite extended allegory of consumerism in *Needful Things* in the sense of exposing the corruption of human desire (17). In fact, people's satisfaction becomes deceptive when they find out they are allured into the shop. A significant concern demonstrated by the writer is that individual quest for gratification can eventually destroy society. King shows a genuine interest in the specific actions of individuals and the structure of the community (18). What the writer tries to indicate is that certain societal codes gradually break down in *Needful Things*. The social structure of Castle Rock is represented as falling apart, but what King actually means is that the traditional support shown to a community can be identified as quite insufficient.

### **3.2 Targeting Individuals' Innocence and Vulnerability**

Gaunt emerges as the all-knowingly man in terms of being able to supply everything desired by the shop's visitors. This aspect clearly shows King's idea to focus on innocence and horror at the same time. Innocence implications are evident in the act of alluring people, meaning a deliberate action of targeting their innocent thinking and vulnerability especially when exposed to the outside world (19). The aspect of horror is apparent upon comprehending the real intentions and goals of Gaunt. *Needful Things* is definitely a complex novel with appealing themes. The touch of the supernatural can be felt throughout the book, as King carefully sets up town residents for their fall. In terms of following the tempo of characterization, readers may observe how characters could let certain events to take place. King indicates his ability to create realistic characters in order to achieve optimal effects among his readers.

It can be argued that the characters described in the novel actually never receive what they need despite the alluring title of the book. Gaunt sells things that make the characters forget their needs. In the role of a supernatural presence, Gaunt makes the vulnerable townspeople forget the love and affection of their families as well as their decency. The idea is to show how some people are ready to sacrifice themselves for things they mostly want. Such aspect has solid connotations in the sense of touching

psychological and emotional dimensions of human existence (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 45). Gaunt is the character which actually shows the townspeople of Castle Rock how they can be controlled by extremely negative emotions such as hatred, power and desire. This makes the book's themes appealing to our social reality.

Moreover, the idea of controlling humans is linked with a certain aspect of innocence. Upon reading the novel, readers may start asking the question: who can be actually controlled? Although the question may appear vague at first, it shows focus on the depths of human conscience lost in the struggle with oneself. An answer to the respective question could be that those individuals who allow to be controlled are the ones most prone to vulnerability and manifesting their innocence through irrational or illusionary thinking (Badley, 1996, p. 30). In fact, some individuals may be identified as naive enough to believe Gaunt and his odd approach towards all townspeople of Castle Rock. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that King introduces a supernatural force in order to associate it directly with the idea of controlling human beings. Such force confuses and misleads people showing them a different world which has nothing to do with reality. Gaunt makes individuals believe that they really need or want particular things.

Yet the destructive power of desire is a significant motif of the novel. Destruction does not suggest the presence of innocence by any means. In this way, the perceived innocence of King's characters in *Needful Things* is lost because of the impact of the depicted supernatural force. The writer indicates that horror and innocence are interrelated in a unique way to imply the horrifying influence of Gaunt on each character (40). Although the novel is not King's best effort in horror writing, it is worthy of reading considering its unique blend of surreal and horrific elements, as the author emphasized the period of the eighties in America.

Subtitled 'The Last Castle Rock Story,' the novel:

*Was a deliberate attempt by King to draw a line under a lot of the themes which he had been writing about in recent times, just as it had been his way of providing closure to his monster tales. He saw it as a satire on the Reagan/Bush era, and the economic policies that led to the concept that 'greed is good' (Simpson 2014, p.5).*



Even Stephen King himself shared his intentions to describe the dimensions of a black comedy with this novel. This shows that the book has broad and complex implications than horror itself. King harshly criticizes the capitalist society of America by discussing the concept of greed. Such greed usually destroys people, and this aspect is adequately shown in *Needful Things* (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 65). The novel continues a long tradition in American fiction about the importance of stranger who emerges with something powerful to reveal (Strengell, 2006, p. 61). Yet King persistently implies the loss of the characters' innocence through addiction, obsession and horror. Such ideas represent a unique mixture of content making the book quite appealing to different generations of readers.

The story in *Needful Things* describes Gaunt's first customer, Brian Rusk. He is an 11-year-old boy who prefers to buy Sandy Koufax baseball trading card which becomes the valuable treasure for his collection. Shortly, though, something strange and weird started to happen to Brian: he becomes jealous and doubtful; he was suspicious about viewing his new purchase or collection by his father and his small brother (31). However, it is important to mention that this fear or experience becomes the common problem for all Gaunt's customers. King apparently touches the point about customers' lost or violated innocence. The events experienced by the characters point out that the attractive, thoughtful, caring and smooth-talking retailer (Gaunt) is certainly the Devil in cover. He intends to spread conflicts by gratifying to the selfish, greedy, competitive, brutal and violent characters of Castle Rock's citizens.

Yet Gaunt's customers rapidly discover that the cheap prices on his stock are misleading and false, because the Devil's shopkeeper makes each consumer assured that as part of the purchased value he will play a safe and practical joke to other townspeople. Gaunt handled to convince his customers to believe and recognize his weird terms by overpowering them with his dizzying fascinating stare and establishing suggestions deep in their unaware minds that make it impracticable for them to disobey or refuse (Collings, 1985, p. 61). Such extensive manipulation of their minds reveals their huge weakness.

For instance, young Brian Rusk should throw mud at the clean white piece hanging on a neighbour's line and shortly must go back and throw stones through her windows. A neighbour discovered that the vandal is a woman with whom she has

been having a dispute over a barking dog. Gaunt sees to it that the dispute is increased by sending another shopper to the dog-owner's home to kill the sweet-natured little dog in a brutal manner. This is the first of many murders to come and reminding that no one is safe and secure in a Stephen King's story. The aspect of safety has completely gone, similarly to the innocence of the characters (Strengell, 2006, p. 40). The dog's death guides to a bloody confrontation and argument with kitchen crockery at a peaceful residential junction, and both of the deceived women are taken to the funeral home. When Brian Rusk discovers that he has been the cause/source of their deaths, he commits suicide by killing himself with his father's rifle.

Brian Rusk's experience demonstrates the dual character of humanity. Humans are capable to become good and evil which Brian realized through a personal incident rather than vicariously through horror tales. While Mark has revealed about evil and how to oppose it, Brian's baseball cards have only indicated to him an imprecise and imperfect view of life, good and evil characters. In trading for the card of his dreams, Brian accepted to throw mud on Wilma Jerzyck's newly laundered clothes (King, 1992, p. 35). Furthermore, Brian realized that what he is doing is a mistake or wrong things. He disconnected his own card desires above the interests of others. In Stephen King's novel, putting one's desire before others leads to moral humiliation and death. As Brian becomes more concerned with Gaunt and spoiled by his evil power, Brian's sexuality becomes a sign of evil's control in his life. Before Gaunt appeared in Castle Rock, Brian's daydreams were innocent, faithful and sweet involving holding friendship (Davis, 1994, p. 43). After making an arrangement with Gaunt, Brian's daydreams transformed to erotic dreams of sex and violence.

Brian thinks about Miss Ratcliffe in the character of dominatrix, keeping him away from school and getting punishment for being a very bad child. Brian demonstrates the relationship between internal and external evil wherein an external force like Gaunt can raise and strengthen the character's limitations and vulnerability to a certain extent (King, 1992, p. 42). Evil can visit anyone without respect for age, gender, or kindness. Yet the force of the night can only increase power according to a character's options to embrace it. Brian's option endorsed Gaunt to clear his power and demolish the town of Castle Rock. Gaunt plays a significant role in determining character weaknesses and egoism to forward his malicious plot.

Yet Brian is not the only character manipulated by Gaunt, and youth is not the only cause of helplessness (Badley, 1996, p. 60). Most of the town residents in Castle Rock, through their egoism and ethical immaturity, ultimately become involved in evil's designs.

Each client who enters Gaunt's shop experiences an ethical decision that will influence the remainder of their lives. They can refuse themselves the thing they desperately need and reject the risk to injure their neighbors, or they can take Gaunt's trade deal, discard any concern for others for the purpose of personal achievement. Stephen King utilized Pangborn as a technique to Brian. Youth and purity cannot be considered a character's only safety against evil (Morris, 2001, p. 96). Brian's early age, in fact, becomes a disadvantage in the confrontation with Gaunt. It is knowledge, relatively, that is the solution, and this is why Pangborn, along with Salem's Lot's Mark Petrie, saved from the cruel evil act when experienced with catastrophe and horror (Schweitzer, 1985, p. 82). The important factor for survival in Stephen King's horror novels is the exposure to terror and understanding of human darkness.

King considers that the horror-type novels are well-resourced to tackle with modern societal fear as well as global concerns about the character of life and death.

King wrote over 400 pages in *Danse Macabre* theoretically dividing the horror type and its role in society. He believes that in the rescue power of horror, there is a requirement for character lives. The horror narrative, King believes, is at its source a narrative of ethics (Carrollm 1985, p. 35). The real catastrophe in King's novels is not the characters who are murdered, but those who do not know the importance of performing morally and decide, instead, to embrace the evil character. In King's world, evil role is to allow characters to transform themselves ethically. Characters either embrace the evil force or make a conscious selection to use self-control, willpower and resistance (Davis, 1994, p. 80). Characters' decisions, then, either weaken the evil or let it to develop stronger. Just as the characters in Stephen King's novels find rescue or escape ideas through their concentration in horror, King's supporters always return to read his novels and understand the underlying motifs used by the writer.

Moreover, Andy Pangborn is a town sheriff who realizes and senses that something very evil is happening in Castle Rock but he is unable to understand and recognize

the causes. Whenever Andy attempts to visit Gaunt's shop, he always discovers that the shop is closed. Gaunt is intentionally avoiding Andy: he identifies that Andy is the one in this town who cannot be trapped with his sham and fake merchandise (55). However, all the other citizens of Castle Rock visit Gaunt's store and find out they should have a jug, a meadow grass, a piece of horrified wood evidently from the Holy Land, or, in the case of the violent ex-convict Ace Merrill, a useless treasure map. One woman purchased an Elvis Presley photograph which paranormally allows her to believe that she is having sexual intercourse with the famous rock star himself and she further started experiencing other sexual related feelings.

Buster Keeton is a Castle Rock head selectman, who has been steadily stealing money from the town reserves. He purchased a toy horseracing game which actually facilitates him to select winners at the Lewiston Horse Raceway (72). Buster becomes one of Gaunt's most hopeless victims, an obsessive gambler in imminent risk of exposure for stealing public money to support his practice. Finally Buster is required to order large quantities of dynamites (explosives) for a grand finale of death and devastation which can be experienced in many Steven King books.

### **3.3 King's Description of People Getting Trapped and the Horror Associated with This**

In every case, possessions bring out the worst and horrible in people. It is evident that such possessions mark the end of innocence in individuals. They cannot be the same anymore; instead they are depicted as troubled and evil people. They believe that purchasing different things will make them happy and they are paying for useless things with their valuable humanity: They can only experience unhappiness and lonelier in their misery (Badley, 1996, p. 70). By considering the novel at a deeper level, it appears that *Needful Things* is a reflection of the American consumer culture. There is incredibly little love in Castle Rock and the book highlights that the depicted reality could be a true little world of American society. The only real and actual display of this nearly forgotten feeling (love) is between Sheriff Pangborn and Polly Chalmers, a woman who owns a little sewing shop. The couple always tends to hate or fear one another; parents and children in the novel disregard one another and many citizens basically live alone without even sharing

love (Johnson, 1988, p. 231). This shows the devastating power of terror in the lives of townspeople who feel hopeless and vulnerable.

Stephen King writes with a great deal of reassurance, moving unavoidably toward his apocalyptic conclusion. Throughout the story, King skipped from one character's point of view to another, with most chapters lasting only a few pages in his books. Such aspect is considered a distinct narrative style indicative of experimental works of the early 20th century such as John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928). The rapid changes of scenes can be disturbing but are possibly obligatory to Stephen King's grand design of presenting a whole town in action, as another writer James Joyce also did in his once highly controversial novel *Ulysses* (1922). The depiction of the whole town in action points out the writer's intention to describe a wide range of personal characteristics applicable to many people (Badley, 1996, p. 86). In this way, readers may start experiencing a strong sense of interrelated events targeting their innocence.

Stephen King drafts the characters efficiently and successfully but never worries to put more colors. This too is possibly obligatory, since King always intends to kill many characters as part of the horror tradition in literature he follows. By presenting many characters of both sexes and all ages, and by appealing well to cover all social groups, including business individuals, public officers, lecturers, workers, retired senior citizens, and criminals, Stephen King succeeds in developing the illusion or fantasy of a living community highlighting its daily routines. Such community is tormented by various fears and stereotypes that lead to massive destruction and death (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 54). As indicated in a metaphorical way, the death of characters' innocence is the initial point of considering the substantial reflections of the impact of manipulation on people's lives. It would not be too complicated to witness Leland Gaunt as a sign of middle class capitalism. The writer gradually reveals that the circumstances Gaunt has developed reach a steaming point because Gaunt started selling automatic pistols to all the citizens. This can be interpreted as the style of a profit-motivated entrepreneurial manufacturer selling military hardware to opposing nations. Maturity, financial safety, and displeased ambition appear to have given Stephen King a social ethics concern in his middle age: He appears to be looking outside his personal problems by trying to demonstrate what is incorrect with society as a whole (Strengell, 2006, p. 56). Stephen King

clearly experiences, as the New England philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson also experienced that things in his reality are definitely in the saddle.

Typically, Stephen King prefers to take a simple truth and expand it into horrible proportions in order to create the sought effect of horror in his readers. He falls short of suggesting a political or religious clarification to the problems that tend to destroy the society and damage the family relationships (Strinati, 2000, p. 71). In fact, the writer points out that such destruction is closely associated with the lost innocence in human beings. They are depicted as naive and greedy; similar characteristics have eventually led to their tragic end. This is something that may lie in his expectations, now that King has carried out his legendary community of Castle Rock to a kingdom approach.

Stephen King is a fairly young man, as writing careers are considered experiencing the journey of the peak of popularity. He lives a simple life in his native Maine and undoubtedly has no need to add more fortune; he has already earned from his books and film rights. Stephen King may feel disheartened with fame, reputation and fortune (Strinati, 2000, p. 21). He may have reached a situation in his career where he desires to exercise his spectacular imagination for more productive purposes, something he achieved with *Needful Things*. What will appear next from the productive imagination of this latter-day Edgar Allan Poe is unfeasible to predict. Stephen King has frequently been accused of overwriting. His latest novel includes nearly 700 pages and may appear a little long to anyone but the most extreme and fanatical King fan. Stephen King uses a great deal of time structuring up a disagreement between his town's Baptist and Catholic worshippers, which might recommend that Stephen does not consider that traditional religion have the answers to modern problems (Badley, 1987. P. 16). Gaunt has customer plant proof leading the Catholics to think and believe that the Baptists are out to get them. When horrible and dangerous bombs are set off in the United Baptist Church and the Knights of Columbus Hall, a full-scale riot developed.

At the same time, collection of explosives started exploding all over Castle Rock, damaging the public buildings, many of the business institutions, and even the Castle Rock town bridge. Finally there is a predictable confrontation taking place between the sheriff (Andy) and the mysterious Mr. Gaunt. Andy manages to convince Gaunt to expose himself in his entire shocking true character. In the end, this devilish figure

is only moderately successful in executing out his objectives (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 193). He is powerless to escape with the energetic hyena-hide suitcase full of the ruined souls he had intended to take down to hell. The comment makes it obvious however, that, like many another unsuccessful entrepreneurs, Gaunt has only established itself in a new location under another name and will go on creating chaos and devastation as long as jealous mortals surrender to his devilish objectives.

Needful Things is not the kind of book that one can enthusiastically recommend to the amateur or to someone with a reasonable-sized and emotional personality due to the author's emphasis on horror and humans' lost innocence (Badley, 1996, p. 118). However, this kind of books is really popular among representatives of the heavy metal movement, and it is understood that Stephen King books are literary and fictionally equivalent to heavy metal. From a simply logistical point of view, this builds a problem for someone interpreting a Stephen King book for the first time. Reading through a 690-page novel, in which the only distantly appealing and attractive characters are a hero who happens to be fake and a heroine who represents a complete stupid persona, may indicate persistent challenges to readers. The script itself is not considered a pleasant experience because it consists of hundreds of pages with confused, affected thoughts mixed out in Stephen King's trademark dark, rainy and stormy-night style. Through many words and expressions, Stephen King is considered a quite energetic writer who exercises his own brand of prefabricated images and actions to portray events he himself is or else incapable of describing (Strengell, 2006, p. 39). This brings out the thought of the writer's extensive imagination while trying to portray the dimensions of horror and perceived innocence in people's lives.

As a result, the book is overloaded with fill-in-the-blank descriptions that obstruct the flow of reading. For instance, the author refers to Harrison Ford in 'The Mosquito Coast' as well as to the teasing initiated by Sheila Brigham who mentioned Deputy Andy. Such descriptions appear irrelevant to the main objectives of the author manifested in this novel. However, individuals may go deeper while trying to interpret the function of such fill-in-the-blank descriptions (Badley, 1996, p. 37). They may indicate that King actually includes such text to divert the minds of

readers, even for a moment, from the gruesome reality experienced by his characters in Castle Rock.

This aspect is clear in other Stephen King books. Evidently, it is not required to mention about Stephen King book Dawn of the Dead. It is also not essential to witness Dawn of the Dead to interpret sense and wisdom of such actions as the scene in which the hero, Alan Pangborn, experiences a refreshing wave and signal of sanity sweep over him. As mentioned above, Stephen King is considered the master of horror and in his book, Needful Things, King illustrates enough frightening scenes and terrifying situations that can be only expected from Stephen King (Ingebretsen 66). There are several characters with different skills introduced in his book Needful Things. One such character is Polly Chalmers, a woman who has severe arthritis (disease) and is well-known as a weird lady in the Castle Rock town (16). Other characters include Alan Pangborn, the town sheriff who is considered to play an important role in the story; Buster Keeton who is absorbed in his gambling addiction; Norris Ridgwick who is considered to be right-hand man of Buster and his close friend, Ace Merrill, a person who is supposedly Stephen King's most hated opponent (103). Such opponent is famous for his trouble in other novels by King such as The Body.

### **3.4 The Motif of the Demon in Disguise (the Owner of the Shop); Glare and Hypnotic Speech and Shaking the Whole Town and Playing the Characters like Puppets**

As previously indicated, the main character is Leland Gaunt, the retailer and the owner of the desired shop named as "Needful Things". It is understood that the starting parts of the book as well as the action were relatively slow to construct up (21). Thus, it is important to consider the impact of each character, major and minor, in the process of describing the implications of their simple desires and subsequently, their susceptible nature. At first, it is assumed that every character was playing harmless and safe pranks on each other, but Leland Gaunt has bigger and advanced devilish plans which eventually turn out harmful and dangerous. In fact, the introduction of the element of pranks is seen as King's unique approach to describing the characters' innocence. The aspect of play intuitively connects the characters with children.



However, what is most striking in this novel is that no one of the characters has seriously considered the exact meaning of the sign of Gaunt's shop. It can be argued that Gaunt ensured a fair amount of warning but no one took it seriously. Instead they are depicted as obsessed with their greedy passion; when someone is obsessed with particular feelings or ideas, and then there is no room for logic, reasonable thinking and innocence in actions (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 65). In this way, the sign of the store has a symbolic importance to understanding the complex structure of the story focused on evil in its various forms. Although King refers to 'needful things' in the characters' lives, it seems that the characters are those who are actually needful. Yet the problem is that they are needful of destructive things and emotions (Beahm, 1998, p. 48). They are no more innocent but highly corrupt and detached human beings whose morality and integrity are questioned by readers.

What is interesting to mention about this book is its prologue, respectively the single sentence placed on the first page that says that individuals had been there before. After reading the prologue, people may refer to the story as an event being told by some old resident who decided to inform a newcomer about the town and its population. King adequately introduces the readers to the backgrounds of some of the town's residents (18). The focus on their rivalries promises to reveal interesting personalities that only a writer from the range of Stephen King can describe in a distinctly horrifying manner. Yet it is essential to note that *Needful Things* actually implies that individuals are same everywhere considering the importance of the prologue to the novel. Anyone can steal people's souls especially if they are depicted as vulnerable, weak and controlled by their impulses or desires rather than reason and logic (Badley, 1996, p. 26). The characters depicted in the novel are in constant confrontation with one another, as the idea of the writer is to show how triviality wins over innocence. Later on, such triviality, which is based on greed and revenge, is mixed with horror. Such emotions are rather complex and require sufficient time to be decoded and understood by readers.

Despite the lost innocence of the characters described in *Needful Things*, one thing is clear-they are unique even with their flaws and negative aspects. The book introduces a substantial number of characters with the idea to expose human diversity in different shapes and colors (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 64). However, an element which is common to all characters is their predisposition to

being manipulated and cheated. This prompts them to behave inappropriately and quite strangely at times. Furthermore, the originality of the story comes to show King's unique talent in creating appealing horror characters that are at different stages of losing their innocence (Strengell, 2006, p. 76).

King's description of people getting trapped is apparently associated with horror. This aspect can be observed in contemporary horror movies that are mainly based on the idea of getting individuals trapped. The idea is to show the horror of impossibility to find an exit from such trap (Badley 1996, p. 71). This in turn leads to the formation of quite intense feelings based on people's helplessness and inability to cope with their reality. Moreover, the writer implies that when individuals are trapped they reveal their true personality because of the strong influence of extraordinary and horrifying circumstances (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 75). Being in a similar state unlocks people's hidden fears and emotions.

Furthermore, *Needful Things* is full of scenes that describe the motif of the demon in disguise. He is the owner of the shop and he possesses the charm alluring townspeople's souls into the world of revenge and hatred (Strinati, 2000, p. 27). These individuals have completely lost their humanity and innocence, and thus King shows that the demon in disguise is extremely powerful. The reading audience may argue that the author of the novel clearly indicates the dichotomous relationship between good and evil in everyone (Bennett and Royle, 2004, p. 62). In addition, such aspect brings out certain religious connotations in the sense of considering the power of God and that of the demon in disguise (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987, p. 83). Such demon is capable of doing everything, and some weak individuals may even think that the demon can win over God. This would be a clear manifestation of the most gruesome horror which is typical to any of the novels by Stephen King. *Needful Things* is a novel which shows King's capacity to go deeply into the souls of human beings and describe their inner fights, fears and prejudice accordingly.

## **4. ELEMENTS OF HORROR AND INNOCENCE IN THE LONG WALK**

### **4.1 Distorted and Twisted Version of the Surrounding World**

Stephen King wrote the initial summary of *The Long Walk* in late 1966-67, when he was a first-year student at the University of Maine at Orono. Burt Hatlen was his English professor and was considered one of the first people to read and examine his novel. The English professor was impressed with Stephen King and it was clear to him that he was a natural and extraordinary writer (Davis, 1994, p. 13). The teacher emphasized that *The Long Walk* was an impressive performance from him. Stephen King responded in the passion of the narrative speed, as he was unaware that something about writing can be taught but he evidently had it.

Stephen King, from the innovative opening to *The Bachman Books* (1985), wrote five different novels before *Carrie*. Two of his novels were considered bad, one was unresponsive, and however King thought two of his novels were pretty good (Badley, 1996, p. 42). The two excellent novels were *Getting It On* (which became *Rage* when it was ultimately released) and *The Long Walk*.

Stephen King revealed that when he submitted *The Long Walk* novel to the first novel competition arranged by Bennet Cerf/Random House in 1967. It was quickly rejected with a form letter and he received no remarks of any kind for this novel. Stephen King was upset and depressed; he thought that the book must really be awful; although King fixed it into the storybook, which all writers do, printing, releasing and aspiring (Carroll, 1990, p. 123). Stephen King further revealed that he would never submit this novel again until Elaine Geiger at the New American Library asked him if he was going to pursue *Rage* and *The Long Walk*.

One of the famous film directors, screenwriters and producers, Frank Darabont, who adopted most of Stephen King novels like, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Green Mile*, and *The Mist* to the cinema screen, had wanted to make a film based on *The Long Walk* many years ago. He was impressed from this novel and argued that it has a strong collection of character pieces, and stressed on his abilities to put people in a

pressure 'cooker' situation in his novels, as Steven King considered being an expert to do it well seems because of his talent (Cherry, 2009, p. 34). He further stressed that the novel is an existential symbol for the senseless fascination with war, as young boys are being used for this content only to die for no reason other than to create a scary event (Bruce, 2008, p. 96).

One hundred young boys participate in the Long Walk arranged 1st May of every year, a survival contest that started at the Maine near Canada's border and carries on for hundreds of miles to the south, along the countryside routes through small towns, and onto main east coast highway called Interstate 95 (King, 1999, p. 41). The number of the participants in this unusual event indicates the formation of a quite massive event which emerges with typical features of horror (Edmundson, 1997, p. 114). As it is mentioned above, every year, thousands of young boys apply to participate in the Long Walk competition. Yet such extensive willingness for participation can be hardly explained, as with many other occurrences indicating the strong presence of horror in the novel. Applicants are placed through a chain of tests, including a thesis/essay in which they describe and clarify why they believe or consider themselves competent to participate (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 28). Even though such aspect evokes ironic elements introduced in the book, it is apparent that the writer aims at revealing the internal world of the participants by focusing on their thoughts, reasons, emotions etc. In this way, the big group of characters presented by King indicates a significant objective of providing psychological profiles that could reveal interesting details about the personality of each character. Considering that these are teenage boys is important in referring to the motif of innocence, which has become a preferable mode of structuring a strong thesis by King.

It has been presented that those boys who pass are selected into a lottery drawing which is broadcasted nationally on television, few months before the walk commences. Such great publicity of the event is unexplainable especially when the readers consider its negative outcomes-the death of many young individuals (Davis and Santos, 2010, p. 105). Two hundred contestants are selected, with 100 to be selected and considered as Prime Walkers (Russell, 1996, p. 58). At the same time, the remaining 100 young boys are placed as backups; however, no statement and announcement are made to broadcast the status about 100 remaining boys. Such main

principle of lottery is evident in the precise structure of the event who keeps the whole city occupied with the absurdity of this event (King, 1999, p. 35). It seems that the event's attendees have lost their humanity and ability to demonstrate any sign of sympathy simply because they have decided to witness such inhuman and horrible occurrence (Cherry, 2009, p. 44). People may go further to interpret the way in which King brings out many relevant topics that are applicable in contemporary society as well to include trial and error situations, hatred, bravery, etc. The writer focuses on a whole range of social issues that redefine human beings' position in such limiting society.

There are numerous chances to remove from the application process, broadened out the time that applicants discover whether they have passed the tests and can start the walk. The presence of similar tests is indicative of the writer's inclusion of trial and error situations which could be related to real-life scenarios. However, the young participants in the event have been introduced to such harsh reality quite early in their lives (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 80). This implies the recurrent motif used in King's novels, in particular lost innocence especially when it is presented through the perspective of children. It appears that the writer favors the idea of depicting various child characters in an attempt to convey deep messages to the readers. Indeed, children are different from adults in terms of thinking and reacting to particular events (Douthat, 2007, p. 15). In *The Long Walk*, the readers may be absorbed in exploring the distinct features of such child characters (Sanders, 2006, p. 130). The author emphasizes that if someone does remove or withdraw from participating in the event, the first accessible backup young boy (based on the number in which names are selected) will take his place. Announcement of Prime or backup position are not forwarded out until the final removal deadline, which is the day before the walk commences (King, 1999, p. 120). Even though such aspects show focus on social order and rules, the reality is quite horrifying for the participants (Carroll, 1990, p. 62). In other words, social order is illusionary; instead, the reality of the young boys is chaotic and unbearable especially to those who tend to demonstrate extensive sensibility.

## **4.2 The Horror Implied by the Organized Event of ‘The Long Walk’**

On the day of May 1, the young boys meet at the initial point, where soldiers verify and confirm them in and give those canteens and food supply. The Major welcomes them and allocates each boy a number from 1 to 100 in an alphabetical order recognized by their last name; each boy is also given a poster or sign with his number, which he must carry or tie to his clothes (Sanders, 2006, p. 95). The soldiers call participants with their numbers throughout the mode of the event. At exactly 9 o'clock in the morning, the Major gives the sign for the walk to begin. King describes these aspects in a vivid manner pointing out at the importance of rules that the participants are expected to follow. Yet such rules soon turn out a basis for developing a distorted world dominated by lost innocence, lost hope and courage to deal with challenging situations in life (Badley, 1996, p. 63). The event depicted by the writer is something more than a challenging situation; it is something that goes beyond the expectations of people to observe a normal competition.

There are rules in this survival contest with no stops or rest periods. The young teenage boys require walking 24 hours a day until there is only one survival or walker remaining. There is broad and extensive television coverage provided for this contest, as tens of thousands of viewers queue the survival contest walk route day and night, and \$2 billion is gambled or awarded on the outcome (Underwood and Miller 83). The contest champion will collect anything he wants for the rest of his life. Yet this is quite tricky, which is a typical element of King's style of combining elements of ordinary people's lives with absurd dimensions of horror (Egan, 2010, p. 132). The focus on the participants' lost innocence is what makes this novel an appealing piece to read and go deep into the children's inner worlds (King, 1999, p. 218). Moreover, King's emphasis on the psychology of characters is a new element, which contributes to the story's originality and authenticity.

The Long Walk is a novel dominated by a wide range of characters, but Ray Garrity is considered the main character in this novel. He is a 16-year-old boy from Pownal, Maine, and has involved in volunteering for the walk over the tough objections from both his mother and his girlfriend, Janice. The fact that this boy has openly opposed the wish and demand of his mother is evident of his lost innocence. The rebellious spirit of this character makes him unique; he apparently stands above the crowd of characters depicted by King (Sanders, 2006, p. 152). The author of the novel selected

this character in order to provide strong, meaningful arguments about the overall importance and symbolism inherent in the event of the Long Walk. Ray Garrity tries to impose his opinion onto the people who are closest to him. He symbolizes the state of Maine as its only main competitor in the Long Walk, and frequently observes signs held by the crowd declaring him a Maine boy and supporting him constantly (Cherry, 2009, p. 20). In this novel, King once again demonstrates his obsession with including Main as a relevant background for developing memorable horror stories.

Garrity had only noticed one long walk in his life, where he was unwillingly taken by his father, a man who did not accept this walk. Because Garrity's father was so verbal in his hatred for the long walk, he was considered to be squaded. Although the description of the phrase is never mentioned in the story, "squaded" is understood to be by taken or missing by soldiers and ultimately executed (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 213). Garrity is in the competition with other several young boys, as they are also with him during the route of the walk, including Peter McVries, who has become the closest friend of Garrity, Art Baker, Hank Olson, Collie Parker, Pearson, Harkness, and Abraham etc. Gary Barkovich, another young boy, established himself as a main rival of Garrity, pointing the other young boys with threats like dancing and making funny pictures on their graves. Stebbins, another boy, establishes himself as the outsider of the group, frequently walking toward the backside of the group by only initiating a conversation with Garrity for a short period of time and using mysterious phrases (King, 1999, p. 312).

The main reason for their opposition is of what may happen to 99 participating boys who do not win the contest. The walkers are watched, observed, as they must maintain a speed of four miles per hour. If they drop below that speed for 30 seconds, they are notified and warned (Morris, 2010, p. 105). Each walker is approved for receiving three warnings and on a fourth violation, they receive the ticket, the slang expression for being gunshot in the head by the armed soldiers who monitor the walkers' pace and travel alongside with a military vehicle called Half-Track. Walkers can also receive tickets for leaving the contest road, which typically means trying to run away into the forest or the viewer crowds. If a boy runs on a speed for an hour, one ticket warning is deducted from his total (Hale 186).

The expression of the 100 young boys walkers are drawn out of large news on national television like summary numbers. Death is near the young boys as they walk

and the shocking view is that there is applause by impassive crowds with the terror of a bullet in the head an ever current concern (Edmundson, 1997, p. 67). The city-raised young boys hear strange noises in the Maine forest at night and are frightened of what is going around out there. There is an aspiration that could be seen from the young boys to stay alive at all costs, but there is also a general and universal connection among the walkers. The young boys are required to adjust their thinking, to be happy that they are alive now and not to worry about their lives (Cherry, 2009, p. 17). There are different questions were in their minds, such as ‘Why did they do it? What were they thinking when they signed up?’ However, not a single boy answered those questions completely, as they are convinced that there is not any good reason to join the event (King, 1999. P. 340).

The Long Walk is considered being set in an alternate United States, a state under the dictatorial or military rule of the Major, who monitors the event. Once the competition starts, the story is either the walkers talking or the Garrity's interpretation and feelings. The boys walk through the high temperature at noontime, afternoon rainstorm/hurricane, and the isolation of night. Young boys can demand a coffee or water at any time and every morning at 9 o'clock they are given with tubes of high-energy (Carroll, 1990, p. 119). Stephen King did a great and masterful work by portraying the first night, which started generally 10-11 hours into the walk, after several walkers had been killed, and any first boldness has long since disappeared. Conversation had washed out with the daylight. The silence had placed the boys into an oppressive reality, and for the first time it appears absolutely a real and totally unnatural event. Garrity doubts of why he participates in this event and why he involves in this competition. Garrity is stressing himself by thinking about his real motive for joining this competition, but it remains unknown (Morris, 2001, p. 84). Furthermore, he is shocked about the situation of the other 95 children in the competition.

### **4.3 Psychological Study of a Small Group of Characters**

Most of the young kids quit themselves to a long, scarcely understood hostility ahead little set of society, softened into 3s, 2s, personal islands. The hours draw each of the young boys/walkers' moves through the dark fog, having withdrawal into their own



personal world of pain, soreness and effort. The dark night appears to separate each of them, and Garrity feels a ray of light in intense isolation (Janeczko, 1980, p. 9). Darkness is an inseparable part of the idea to present the harsh emotions of the boys more vividly. In this way, the readers may make certain associations of inevitability, desperation and hopelessness that embrace them like the veil of the night. They are all alone in the night; they are left with their fears and concerns as they cannot share them with anyone considering the absurdity of the event (Badley, 1996, p. 33). In fact, such event is so devastating in effect that leaves no doubt about the negative associations it evokes.

To some individuals, *The Long Walk* is one of the best horror novels written by Stephen King. The writer's imagination is evident throughout the book, as there are numerous elements presenting the world of the characters as a twisted version of normality. King focuses on describing a reality dominated by horror. At the same time, persistent social restrictions are being described such as the militaristic government ruling the country during the period mentioned by the writer in the novel (Fahy, 2010, p. 68). Such government is intolerable toward any manifestation of uprising by citizens. Strict governmental measures that are undertaken to limit citizens' freedoms include removing individuals from their homes and disposing of them in a completely silent manner (Kristeva, 1982, p. 34). America is depicted as a militant state. In addition, King extensively discusses the annual event of the "Long Walk" as an intimidation strategy.

The plot of the novel is quite repetitive in the sense that the writer emphasizes the horrifying idea of walking or dying. In this way, King refers to the psychology of the walkers in order to depict them in relevant terms. The walkers' hopes and regrets are extensively presented in the novel. There is a strong sense of escalating hysteria and horror surrounding the described annual event. In the end, the depicted walkers are all alone with their thoughts and memories (Edmundson, 1997, p. 183). Indeed, the readers may ask various questions while reading the novel. One such question is concerned with finding out why the depicted characters are actually walking. The participation of the boys in this event reflects the sickness of the society in which they live (Botting, 2004, p. 67). The leader of this horrifying event is the Major who is described in the role of a sociopath sponsored by society.

The future described in the novel is dystopian to a certain extent because of the assumed search of the 'Ultimate Prize' for the one that would be able to survive such impossible and inhuman competition (Morris, 2001, p. 20). The epic walk in the novel targets the endurance of the human body and spirit, as the boys are pushed to their limits. It can be argued that this leads to the loss of innocence of these 100 teenage boys who are tempted to endure such vicious cycle leading them nowhere (Rolls, 2008, p. 49). In this sense, King keeps the story moving by referring to actions of walking, falling, shooting and repeating such aspects continuously throughout the story. The element of repetition symbolizes the writer's intention to convey the tragedy surrounding this annual event identified as the "Long Walk". Individuals may interpret the walk as both an endurance and direct road to hell (Davis, 1994, p. 173). Although the cast of characters is built up, King suddenly brings them down. The readers are constantly guessing as to what actually happens in the novel, which contributes to its mystery.

The event is depicted as depressing and brutal, but at the end individuals may appreciate the importance of being alive owing to the arguments introduced in the novel. Despite the presence of horror in the story, it can be suggested that the novel is more like a morality tale. The contest is grotesque in its essence considering the expected reward of the winner and deaths for those losing the competition (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 44). The long walkers turn out to symbolize all those exhausted individuals who are unable to keep balance in their lives. Their hopelessness and pain have been explored by King quite realistically to evoke strong emotions in the readers. There is also an element of acceptance related to the long walking experience in the sense that the characters should simply accept the reality behind this annual event (Fahy, 2010, p. 65). However, there is something curious about the event, which is associated with the idea of why no one seems to question the existence of such absurd and grotesque event. It appears that the characters may be unwilling to discuss their fears of the unknown as well as prefer to remain in a state of psychological and emotional terror which paralyzes their ability to think and react appropriately (Pollin, 2004, p. 145). They can be seen as walking, automated machines, but as the readers go deeper through the novel, the reality is different because the writer clearly describes the emotions of these characters.

Despite the simplicity evident in the plot, King describes characters with whom the readers can identify in reality. For instance, the reading audience can clearly feel the pain and terror the characters encounter during the “Long Walk”. The nightmare of the walk is closely related to the specificity of human nature to include certain aspects like greed, pleasure and motivation to succeed (Sanders, 2006, p. 51). In fact, those 100 teenage boys undertake such long ‘walk’ in order to achieve their dreams. In this way, the writer shows them as quite naïve considering the association about dreams they make. Nonetheless, such naivety may be linked with the inherent innocence they represent as children (Fahy, 2010, p. 153). The disintegration that occurs in the boys’ physical and spiritual world puts an end to such innocence, and as such, innocence appears lost as in other novels and short stories by Stephen King.

The dystopian aspects in *The Long Walk* indicate that this novel is quite different from other books by Stephen King. Yet the specific conditions of the competition are what make the story identified with the genre of horror. Once the walk begins, the simple rule is to maintain a steady pace, which is crucial for staying alive. However, the aspect of staying alive soon becomes illusory with the progression of such dramatic walk (Cherry, 2009, p. 201). It is important to indicate that the novel provides a quite realistic interpretation of the trials through which individuals may encounter in their lives. Moreover, the readers may address the issue that such horrifying events should never occur in the first place. The long walk makes sure that everyone stays close in line, which indicates the spirit of togetherness of the participants. They constantly discuss certain issues, but the amount of relentless horror is imposed upon them (Bain, 2013, p. 175). Horror seems supported by different rules and institutions exposed by King, and this actually constitutes the tragedy of society.

The long walk also indicates the writer’s ability to sustain a story considering his focus on describing a group of boys walking. This associates the book with the psychological realm due to the writer’s emphasis on psychological representation of the characters. Such psychological dimensions are evident in the thoughts and experiences of those hopeless and anxious teenage boys (Fahy, 2010, p. 246). Another strong psychological component of the book refers to depicting individuals competing against each other to obtain the ultimate reward at the end, which is simply staying alive.

King demonstrates relevant techniques in providing a psychological analysis of a group of characters. The massive event in which they participate reveals interesting aspects of their personality, especially the personal characteristics of Garrity. This character makes the readers focus deeply in the hidden layers of the novel in order to uncover essential meanings about the relationship between lost innocence and horror (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 92). A psychological exploration of a group of characters implies the author's skills in constructing a narrative dominated by unique characteristics.

#### **4.4 Focus on the Internal Life of Ray Garrity**

Furthermore, Garrity is one of the characters who pay significant attention to details as depicted in the novel. It seems that King selected Garrity as a main character because of his strong personality and ability to present rather philosophical and deep thoughts having impact on understanding specific layers of the novel (Sanders, 2006, p. 51). For instance, the major character turns up his collar and pays attention to the noise of his feet pounding the footpath. This moment can be associated with the basic thought of how small events can have a big impact on one's life. Garrity is concerned with exploring the source of this noise, as in this way, he remains focused on his reality (Frazier, 2010, p. 2). There is a deception to that, a slight mental adjustment, like having improved night vision the longer young boys are in the dark. Every morning the sound of Garrity's feet makes him lost (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 87). This shows that the respective noise has a deep symbolic meaning in the novel. Such noise points out an extensive amount of horror and desperation evident in the lives of the walkers.

The readers can be misled in the foot noise of ninety-nine other walkers, not to reveal the thunder of the halftrack. Such massive noise, including all boys participating in the walk, is something unbearable, something which destroys the normal tempo of life. Yet now Garrity listens to their foot noise easily (King, 1999, p. 325). His own particular pace and the way his left foot scrapes the footpath every second and then is grotesque in the background of the horrifying event. It also appears that the described noise serves the function of a distracting force in the isolation of the main character (Carroll, 1990, p. 70). This means that by listening to such repetitive noise, Garrity is obsessed with finding a certain way to escape his unbearable reality. The noise

emerges as a partial solution to the challenges experienced by the primary character in the novel. It appears to him that the noise of his footfalls had become as noisy to his ears as the noise of his own heartbeat—a crucial life and death sound (Morris, 2000, p. 116). This indicates the multidimensional, symbolic nature of the noise that points out at the characters' loss of innocence, harsh reality from which they are unable to escape, and inability to think or react properly after encountering so negative experiences (Beahm, 1998, p. 74).

Furthermore, the author of the novel describes a scene in which by four o'clock in the morning there is a lightening group on the horizon. Although such light may imply a common aspect of positive events to take place, it reflects the opposite given the entire negative occurrence of the Long Walk. Garrity looks back at the long passageway of the night in real horror, and is surprised of how and why he joined this competition (Davis, 1994, p. 75). Along the highway, the young boys discover that one of their walkers, an older kid named Scramm, who was initially considered to be the heavy weight or favourite to win the competition, is married. When Scramm gets viral infection pneumonia, and recognizes that he will shortly die, the remaining boys agree that the winner will utilize some of the Prize money to take care of his pregnant wife (widow), Cathy. Such details revealed by the author show the ability of the characters to demonstrate empathy even under such intolerable social circumstances. This aspect is also linked with the idea of showing the partial innocence of the boys, which has not been lost due to the horror described by King. Yet the force of horror is more persistently evident than the presence of any signs of innocence among the walkers.

After five days, the walk is nearly over down to Garrity and Stebbins, who has just confessed to being the rogue son of the Major. After walking for roughly an entire day more, Garrity concludes that he cannot pursue furthermore and accepts his destiny/outcome. The moment of accepting one's destiny is both dramatic and positive (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p. 35). First, the dramatic dimension of such acceptance reflects in an individual's simple decision of giving up and being unable to fight for any cause (Dollard, 2007, p. 61). Second, the positive aspect of accepting one's destiny may imply that he or she has accepted God's plan with wisdom, patience and tolerance of the unknown in front of him or her. Garrity walks up to Stebbins to inform him that he is planning to give up; Stebbins is the last

walker to die, tearing/ clawing badly at Garrity before collapsing to death (Cherry, 2009, p. 22). Unaware of the festival going on all around him, Garrity walks forward to a dark figure in front of him, attempting to identify it. When the Major places his hand on Garrity's shoulders to applaud him for winning the competition, Garrity somehow recovers the power and strength to run.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper presented the necessity to explore the aspect of innocence lost as a recurring motif in Stephen King's horror. Undoubtedly, Stephen King is recognized as one of the masters of horror in contemporary American literature. This view has been consistently introduced in the paper in order to emphasize the author's contribution to writing impressive pieces of work that can be classified as Gothic and horror depending on the literary strategies and elements utilized by King. The importance of Stephen King as a horror writer is evident not only in the United States but also all over the world, as he has many fans and followers due to the unique writing style introduced in his horror novels (Badley, 1996, p. 41). Therefore, the paper provided substantial details about horror as a genre. In this way, the focus was on setting a relevant basis for identifying how King's novels utilize major horror aspects. It has been indicated that horror is a specific genre in literature that should be adequately analyzed in order individuals to understand the motifs of the author.

King's focus on developing simplistic fears indicates the author's intention to provide a better understanding of the nature of fears and how human beings tend to respond to various fears they may experience. In fact, it should be mentioned that the thorough description of human fears enables individuals to know themselves better, especially when they are in a state of vulnerability. However, when it comes to exploring society's perceptions of innocence, there are certain contradictions that may confuse individuals or prevent them from acting in a proper manner. The concept of innocence has been projected in different contexts and discussed with regards to the understanding of its elements that may be differently perceived by people under specific circumstances (Morris, 2001, p. 21). It becomes clear that the application of the innocence motif in King's horror novels is associated with rethinking the boundaries and limits set for some people. This implies that individuals usually demonstrate different ideas about innocence. Some may even argue that the presence of innocence as a recurring motif in King's prose is improper because innocence and horror are incompatible categories.

However, Stephen King completes this task in a relevant manner by indicating that the motif of innocence could be properly incorporated into his novels. In general,

innocence is directly associated with children and their clean, pure perceptions of the surrounding world. Such perceptions should not be altered as a result of children's interactions with others. Nonetheless, the horror novels of Stephen King indicate that the usual understanding of what constitutes innocence has been changed. The writer ensures the implementation of a creative literary approach by inserting new elements into the social perceptions of innocence (Sanders, 2006, p. 90). The major point emphasized by King in his novels is the idea of lost innocence. Therefore, the reading audience may reach the conclusion that the gruesome context of horror excludes the possibility of thriving innocence. On the contrary, innocence is lost due to the influence of various external forces or factors leading to a complicated situation, in which children and adults act in an irrelevant manner. What King mostly implies with the projection of innocence into his novels is that children have unique abilities to perceive and understand horror in a different way than that of adults. Therefore, a substantial amount of the character list included in King's novels is represented by children.

Another essential aspect described in this paper refers to the definition of horror within the context of other genres, within the boundaries of emotion and through the exploration of fear and how human beings experience it. Providing such definitions is important for the presentation of consistent and properly structured arguments relating to the main topic of innocence lost in King's horror (Davis, 1994, p. 18). It can be suggested that the nature and specificity of horror as a genre suppose that innocence is gradually transformed and eventually lost because of people's inability to deal with the gruesome effects of horror situations or events. The loss of innocence marks a distinct period in contemporary horror literature in the sense of redefining the meaning and purpose of horror fiction. King has extensively contributed to such developments because of his emphasis on innocence lost as a recurring motif in his novels.

The paper provides a discussion of the initial presentation of innocence in King's canon, as the aspect of sullied innocence has been used as a starting point for one of the most influential novels by King, *It*. This novel shows that King dramatizes some of his worst fears in order to present a unique structure and characters that prompt the readers to distinguish the author's line of developing contextual links between characters and horror situations (Carroll, 1990, p. 114). It has been indicated that the



murdering of children by a powerful evil force serves as the foundation for the development of major events in *It*. The introduction of children as main characters in this novel demonstrates the author's use of the motif of lost innocence. Children are victims of such ageless and powerful evil, which aims to achieve complete physical and moral destruction of individuals. There are different events that are distinctly presented by King in *It*, such as the gruesome death of George Denbrough, home dysfunction and minority status issues faced by some of the characters. The strategic importance of The Losers Club has been repeatedly mentioned throughout the novel in an attempt to defend the position that the burdensome lives of the characters justify the formation of such club.

In addition, the paper provided adequate clarification about the extreme evil force, Pennywise, through which the readers can explore the implications of lost innocence and horror that are intertwined in the novel. The fact that Pennywise solely chooses children for victims shows that children are usually more vulnerable compared to adults (Edmundson, 1997, p. 56). Young individuals can be easily lured and trapped into the tempting world of new experiences. They indicate the tendency to react spontaneously to different situations emerging in their immediate reality. Whether children are prepared to understand the complex nature of horror is questionable.

Another significant novel by Stephen King that has been explored in this paper is *Needful Things*. Similarly to *It*, *Needful Things* uses the motifs of lost innocence and alluring people to act improperly. The main idea is to target individuals' innocence and vulnerability. It has been shown that the evil is capable to defeat people's innocence in King's horror novels. As described in the paper, the title of the novel *Needful Things* is indicative of the author's obsession to describe individuals' tendency of being trapped (Russell, 1996, p. 38). The horror associated with this idea is extensive and leads people to make certain conclusions about the existence of evil forces in their lives. They are not protected against evil even if they try their best to avoid situations that may force them to explore the unknown with all its uncertainty and fear.

As part of the overall concept of *Needful Things*, King introduces the idea of the demon in disguise, who is the owner of the shop described in the novel. His hypnotic charm and speech indicate his power to attract the residents of the small town into his shop and convince them in the necessity not only to buy specific things but also to

act improperly, regardless of any vision of morality they may have. In fact, what King shows in this novel is the imbalance between good and bad forces in people's lives (Badley, 1996, p. 86). It is apparent that the evil has won over the good and thus the devil in a human image has achieved his goals. It can be argued that the demon in disguise as implied in the novel shows triumph over individuals' weaknesses and vulnerability. The motif of lost innocence is also present in this novel because of the characters' inability to think and act in a moral way. King depicts them as greedy human beings who are unable to appreciate the small things in life because they only strive for power and wealth (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996, p 128). However, it has been illustrated that such characters have not only lost their innocence but also the connection to their reality. This eventually leads to their moral and emotional destruction.

As indicated in the paper, *Needful Things* is an emblematic horror novel by Stephen King, who reveals new horizons of thinking in the contemporary horror literature. The entire world of the main characters in the novel is shaken due to their weaknesses. They are depicted as individuals who are unable to control their own reality. In fact, the demon in disguise is in complete control of their lives. The owner of the shop is presented as an extremely evil force that shakes the whole town and plays the characters like puppets (Cherry, 2009, p. 51). They are even unable to think or react on their own, and thus the devil has completed his ultimate objective of winning over the good. The novel is indicative of King's talent to bring twists and turns to the plot by introducing unique characters and situations that require a thorough exploration.

Furthermore, the current paper provided an analysis of King's novel, *The Long Walk*, which also includes elements of lost innocence as a recurring motif and horror. The initial impression which emerges upon reading the novel refers to the idea of the distorted and twisted version of the surrounding world. The organized event of 'The Long Walk' represents something extremely gruesome in the tradition of horror literature (Fahy, 2010, p. 75). As mentioned in the paper, this event comes to show the cruelty and brutality of human beings. What mostly King achieves with this novel is psychological study of a small group of characters. This implies that the author of the novel demonstrates his capacity to conduct psychological analysis of individuals in order to go deeper into their personality and understand the motifs for

their actions, their fears and vulnerability. King once again illustrates his preference to select children as major characters, considering the idea of lost innocence which is mostly associated with young individuals.

The analysis provided for the novels *It*, *Needful Things* and *The Long Walk* shows the potential of Stephen King to create influential pieces of horror that make individuals think of their reality in completely new ways (Morris, 2001, p. 116). The author of the novels has demonstrated creativity in discussing different concepts pertaining to innocence which has been lost. As a result, readers may conclude that the categories of innocence and horror are highly incompatible, or they create interesting imbalance, which has been explored through the characters' thoughts and actions. Stephen King is a master of the horror genre, as he is committed to the idea of bringing out interesting concepts that have not been discussed in literature. The present paper consistently introduced arguments about the recurring motif of lost innocence in some major novels by Stephen King. It has been concluded that the use of children as main characters in the books represents a strategic move toward proving that innocence has been lost and the lives of individuals deteriorated as a result of the power of external, evil forces (Davis, 1994, p. 129). The reading audience is left with numerous possibilities to interpret King's novels and bring out important conclusions relating to people's weaknesses and vulnerability. King's horror leaves a mark in his readers, and he turns out incomparable to other representatives of the horror genre in literature. The interesting novels written by Stephen King will continue to provoke relevant discussions on the strategies and motifs used by the writer to convey a particular meaning.

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