

Innocence Lost as a Recurring Motif in Stephen King's Horror

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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.

Chapter I: Introduction

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. 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 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 40). In fact, King has presented himself as a horror fan in an attempt to identify himself with the respective horror audience (Hoppenstand 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 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 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 59). The fact that he writes about subjects like death and destruction obviously relates him to the genre of horror.

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" (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 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 28). As a representative of the horror genre, King has achieved substantial success especially in the process of enhancing simplistic fears.

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 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 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 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 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.

Stephen King does not 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 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 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.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

Chapter II: The Initial Presentation of Innocence in King's Canon

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 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.

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 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 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.

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 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 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 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 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 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 smells 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.

Chapter III: King’s Focus on Horror and Innocence in *Needful Things*

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 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, was 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.

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 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.

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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 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 *Needful Things* Index).

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 65). The novel continues a long tradition in American fiction about the importance of stranger who emerges with something powerful to reveal (Strengell 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 (Carroll 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 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.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 Ridgewick 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*.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

Chapter IV: Elements of horror and innocence in *The Long Walk* 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 105). Two hundred contestants are selected, with 100 to be selected and considered as Prime Walkers (Russell 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 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 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 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 15). In *The Long Walk*, the readers may be absorbed in exploring the distinct features of such child characters (Sanders 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 120). Even though such aspects show focus on social order and rules, the reality is quite horrifying for the participants (Carroll 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.

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 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 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 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 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 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 20). In this novel, King once again demonstrates his obsession with including Maine 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 84). Furthermore, he is shocked about the situation of the other 95 children in the competition.

Psychological Study of a Small Group of Characters

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 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 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 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 67). The leader of this horrifying event is the Major who is described in the role of a sociopath sponsored by society.

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 illusionary with the progression of such dramatic walk (Cherry 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 175). Horror seems supported by different rules and institutions exposed by King, and this actually constitutes the tragedy of society.

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 92). A psychological exploration of a group of characters implies the author's skills in constructing a narrative dominated by unique characteristics.

Chapter V: 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 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.

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 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.

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 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.

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 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 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 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.

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 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 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 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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