The Many Facets of Stephen King

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To Dr. Stewart Hudson, Communication Division Chair;
Dr. James Smythe, Humanities Division Chair;
and colleagues in both Divisions who have shared my enthusiasm.

And--as always

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FOREWORD

As a composition instructor, I frequently approach the word facet with emotions akin to dread. Too many student writers use it as an easy substitute for thing--a word included to impress more than to express. The word recurs in phrases such as "another facet of the educational process" or "another facet of socialization," without regard for the fact that processes (or most -tion nouns for that matter) simply do not have facets; the word implies "sides" or "aspects" (another dangerously vague word), characteristics noticeably lacking from most generalizations. As a result, it sometimes seems the easiest solution simply to ban the word from composition.

The easiest, yes--but not the fairest.

As with so many other misused words, facets carries valuable meaning when used appropriately. In architecture, in anatomy, in zoology, the word communicates specific ideas; more commonly, it refers to the small polished plane surfaces of cut gems--a concrete reference for a word usually approached as an abstraction.

By calling this study The Many Facets of Stephen King, I urge readers to aproach King from multiple directions, just as he approaches his craft from multiple directions. There is in fact much more to Stephen King than his reputation as "King of Horror" suggests. When one considers the immense range of his novels, short fiction, criticism, screenplays, and poetry, it becomes clear that there are indeed many facets to the man, the artist, the critic, and the social phenomenon.

This is the point where many studies of King have faltered. Most critical approaches emphasize chronology. Peter M. Gareffa's sketch in Contemporary Authors, for example, works through King's publications in sequence: several brief paragraphs devoted to each novel (excepting the Bachman books, of course), with a brief concluding note that several novels have been adapted as films. The 1981 entry in Current Biography Yearbook follows the same pattern: a chronological overview of

King's life and publications, concluding with a number of concise critical assessments.

Two subsequent (and more extensive) studies also follow this pattern. Douglas Winter's Stephen King (Starmont, 1982; revised as Stephen King: The Art of Darkness, NAL, 1984) is organized around King's chronological development, as is James Van Hise's Enterprise Incidents Presents Stephen King. Even my own recent contributions to King scholarship and criticism, Stephen King as Richard Bachman (Starmont, 1985) and The Shorter Works of Stephen King (with David Engebretson; Starmont, 1985) adhere to chronological ordering.

It seems time, then, for another approach, an extension of the varied thematic treatments in Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller's Fear Itself: The Horror Fiction of Stephen King (1982, 1984). In The Many Facets, I propose to break from the chronology of King's life and career and focus instead on the "facets" of his work--on the multiple perspectives of "reality" King has chosen to explore. As a result, works published ten or fifteen years apart will share (however uneasily on the surface) the same chapters: 'Salem's Lot with Pet Sematary, or Carrie with "The Reach."

The purpose behind such an arrangement is not merely iconoclastic, however; there are functional reasons for de-emphasizing a dependence on chronology. Many of King's works were published long after they were completed in manuscript--the Bachman novels are the best examples, but stories such as "The Raft" (originally written in 1968, revised and published in 1982) illustrate the same difficulty. In addition, many of the later novels seem outgrowths of images or kernel ideas King toyed with during college.

And finally, King frequently works on several projects simultaneously--during the years he has been writing It (roughly 1979-1986), he published The Long Walk, Roadwork, The Running Man, Christine, Pet Sematary, Danse Macabre, The Dead Zone, Firestarter, Cujo, portions of The Dark Tower, Different Seasons, The Talisman, The Eyes of the Dragon, Cycle of the Werewolf, several stories collected in Skeleton Crew, and the screenplays for Creepshow and Cat's Eye, as well as working on other projects currently in various stages of completion. To say that It should be isolated from

what King was doing during those years and considered only as a novel published in 1986 or 1987 would lessen the work.

The Many Facets of Stephen King also has another purpose. Implicit in virtually every study of King is the sense that he epitomizes horror fiction. There are certainly strong and sufficient reasons for such an assumption. He is, as one writer notes, the only American ever to have three novels on the bestsellers lists simultaneously: Firestarter, The Dead Zone, and The Shining in 1980. All three are to some extent "horror" novels, yet to lump these three together under one classification is to ignore critical differences among them. If we then place 'Salem's Lot next to The Talisman, or Rage against Christine, we discover that in spite of King's reputation, there is more in his novels than merely "accounts of man-eating rats, gigantic worms, vampires, murder, revenge, and bloodletting" (Gareffa 334).

True, there are monsters; "The Mist" seems a culmination of King's fascination with things from beyond our understanding. But there is also the unnervingly "real" world of Johnny Smith in The Dead Zone.

> Though the characters are not complex, for the most part, they breathe a warmth and love of life it is easy to relate to. By creating a world so very close to our own existence, then disturbing it with a frightening supposition, King offers a horror no seven-foot green monster or fanged stalker ever can. After all, horror we can place in an isolation booth is one thing. Horror let loose in the real world in quite another. (Gareffa 335)

In Stephen King's writing, we explore many "facets" of horror as they glint from widely divergent perspectives. King's writing is not straight-line in the sense that he went through a "mainstream phase," a separate "horror phase," or a distinct "epic-fantasy quest" phase. Instead, his forms and themes intertwine, reflecting each other, glittering like the continuous movement of light around a brilliantly set gem-stone.

Thus, The Many Facets of Stephen King, concentrating on works not included in Stephen King as Richard Bachman or The Shorter Works of Stephen King.

This study, like the two preceding it, owes much to earlier writers: Douglas Winter; Tim Underwood, Chuck Miller, and the contributors to Fear Itself; James Van Hise; and King's many reviewers and interviewers. In addition, my debt to Stephanie Leonard and Castle Rock, already mentioned in the two earlier studies, continues unabated. Barbara Bolan remains a mainstay and a support, locating hard-to-find materials and opening lines of communication with book dealers and collectors. Excellences in this study can frequently be traced back to these people; weaknesses are, I fear, my own.

My thanks also to Stephen King. It is both exciting and intimidating to study living authors--they have the disconcerting habit of publishing new works before the criticism even reaches the readers. But that is the stuff of literature; it merely enhances the challenge. Working this intensely with King has given me new insight into the nature of horror fiction, into the functions and forms of literature, and into contemporary trends . . . and, lest it be overlooked, enormous enjoyment.

Michael R. Collings
Thousand Oaks CA

August 1985

ABBREVIATIONS

Art	Stephen King: The Art of Darkness, by Douglas E. Winter (NAL, 1984)
CBY	Current Biography Yearbook, 1981
CR	Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter
Cycle	Cycle of the Werewolf (1981)
DM	Danse Macabre (1981)
DS	Different Seasons (1982)
DSK	Discovering Stephen King, ed. Darrell Schweitzer (Starmont 1985)
DT	The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger (1982)
DZ	The Dead Zone (1979)
ED	The Eyes of the Dragon (1984)
FI	Fear Itself, ed. Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller (Underwood-Miller, 1982; NAL, 1984)
FSF	The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction
"GT"	"King's Garbage Truck"
KC	King's Crypt (Newsletter)
LW	The Long Walk ("Bachman," 1979)
NS	Night Shift (1978)
PS	Pet Sematary (1983)
RG/SK	Reader's Guide to Stephen King, by Douglas E. Winter (Starmont, 1982)
RM	The Running Man ("Bachman," 1982)
RW	Roadwork ("Bachman," 1981)
SC	Skeleton Crew (1985)
SK/RB	Stephen King as Richard Bachman by Michael R. Collings (Starmont, 1985)
SL	'Salem's Lot (1975)
SW	The Shorter Works of Stephen King, by Michael R. Collings and David A. Engebretson (Starmont, 1985)

Chapter I

Canon and Critical Overview

While it may seem self-contradictory, in light of my "Foreword," to begin The Many Facets of Stephen King with a chronology, such information clarifies the sequence of King's works and their implicit relationships. Chronology in and of itself is at best pedestrian; as a guide to when certain works appeared--particularly in a study which has consciously refrained from a continuing sense of chronological sequence--it may help avoid potential confusion.

And if nothing else, a chronological listing clearly demonstrates King's consistent prolificacy.

1948-1956: King was born in Portland, Maine, on September 21, the second child in his family. His father, a merchant sailor named Donald King, left a year later; King never saw him again. His mother, Nellie Ruth (Pillsbury) King, supported her two sons through a variety of jobs, including working in a laundry (a motif that would recur repeatedly in King's prose). During this period, King lived for several years in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Stratford, Connecticut. He saw the first motion picture he remembers (The Creature from the Black Lagoon) and began writing short stories.

1957: Russia successfully orbited its Sputnik satellite. King recalls the fear he felt at that moment, his sense of impending doom. America had been the "good guys," the front runner in the space race. Suddenly, for King at least, "it was the end of the sweet dream . . . and the beginning of the nightmare" (DM 24).

1958: King's family moved to Durham, Maine, where Nellie King began caring for her parents, an experience King later transformed into the hor-

ror story "Gramma."

1959-1962: The discovery of a collection of paperback books his father had left behind stimulated King's interest in science fiction and adventure. He worked even more seriously on his own writing, especially after finding out that Donald King had unsuccessfully submitted horror stories to such magazines as Bluebook and Argosy (CBY 253).

1963-1966: King attended the Lisbon Falls high school. Although he participated in sports and played rhythm guitar for a rock 'n roll band (providing the basis for his later dedication to rock 'n' roll, both in his life and in his fiction), he also continued writing, winning a prize in an essay contest sponsored by a scholastic magazine.

1964: King completed "The Star Invaders," the only surviving example of his early self-published booklets. An uneasy attempt at science fiction, it modulates into a subtle exploration of horror under the guise of science fiction.

1965: "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber," King's first published story, appeared in a fanzine; it was later reprinted as "In a Half-world of Terror."

1966: As a freshman at the University of Maine at Orono, King began working toward an English degree. He also wrote the first half of a novel-length project that would result seven years later in Rage. "I didn't rewrite it much," King has noted. "It still has a quirky sophomore quality to it" (Brown, C4).

1967: "The Glass Floor," King's first professional sale, appeared in Startling Mystery Stories, Fall 1967. During that year (1966-1967), he also completed the manuscript for The Long Walk, the second Bachman novel, published in 1979.

1968: While still at UMO, King began Sword in the Darkness, a race-riot novel King later referred to as "just terrible" (Also called Babylon Here, the ms. was completed in 1969). In the spring and fall issues of Ubris, the UMO literary magazine, he published "Cain Rose Up," "Here There Be Tygers," the original version of "Strawberry Spring," and a poem, "Harrison State Park '68."

1969: In February, King began writing a weekly

column for The Maine Campus, "King's Garbage Truck," which would continue until his graduation; the final column appeared in May, 1970. On 11 July 1969, he responded to the moon-walk, writing of a dream of madness and fear, of a

> huge, tideless wind [that] has swept down on them and their puny ship, a cyclopean gale from no place that is sweeping them off their neatly computerized orbit and into the gaping germless map of deep space itself.

* Publications: "The Reaper's Image," his second professional sale, again in Startling Mystery Stories; "Night Surf," "Stud City" (later incorporated into "The Body"), and a poem, "The Dark Man," all in Ubris.

1970: King graduated from UMO with a degree in English. He also completed a novel, Blaze, a "reworking of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, and kind of a ghost story" (Letter 3 August 1985).

* Publications: "Graveyard Shift," his first sale to Cavalier, one of his main markets for several years; "It Grows on You"; "Slade," serialized in The Maine Campus from 11 June to 6 August 1970.

1971: King married Tabitha Spruce, whom he had met while working in the library at UMO. Writing in "one feverish weekend" (Brown, C4), he completed The Running Man, published in 1981 as the fourth Bachman novel. He also finished the ms. for Rage and submitted the novel as Getting It On to Doubleday in late 1971 or early 1972. He began teaching English at Hampden Academy, a position he held for two years.

* Publications: "The Blue Air Compressor" and an untitled poem in Onan; "I Am the Doorway."

1972: After finishing his fourth novel in manuscript, King started a short story, "Carrie"; it later outgrew its form and developed into his first novel sale.

* Publications: "Battleground"; "The Fifth Quarter," published under King's first pseudonym, John Swithen; "The Mangler"; "Suffer the Little Children."

1973: Doubleday purchased Carrie, allowing King to quit teaching and write full time. He also

began a novel, Second Coming, which evolved into 'Salem's Lot. His mother died of cancer before Carrie's release; her death formed the central image for "The Woman in the Room."

* Publications: "The Boogeyman"; "Gray Matter"; "Trucks."

1974: King completed 'Salem's Lot and Roadwork, published seven years later as the third Bachman novel, and began The Stand and The Shining while he was living in Boulder, Colorado.

* Publications: Carrie; "Sometimes They Come Back"; the revised "Night Surf," with its thematic connections to The Stand.

1975: After returning to Maine, King completed the first draft of The Stand.

* Publications: 'Salem's Lot; "It Grows on You"; "The Lawnmower Man"; "The Revenge of Lard Ass Hogan" (incorporated into "The Body"); the revised "Strawberry Spring," with additions that enhance it as a study of guilt and hidden terror.

1976: Brian de Palma's film version of Carrie was released, assuring King's reputation; "The movie made the book," King has noted, "and the book made me" (Lawson).

* Publications: "I Know What You Need"; "The Ledge"; "Weeds."
* Film: De Palma's Carrie.

1977: Within one year, King completed initial drafts of three novels: The Dead Zone, Firestarter, and Cujo. He traveled to England, where he met Peter Straub and began a friendship that would lead to The Talisman.

* Publications: The Shining; Rage; "The Cat from Hell"; "Children of the Corn"; "The Man Who Loved Flowers"; "One for the Road," a return visit to 'Salem's Lot.

1978: During a year as Writer-in-Residence at UMO, King delivered a series of lectures that evolved into Danse Macabre. He also acted as judge for the 1977 World Fantasy Awards.

* Publications: The Stand; Night Shift (including "Jerusalem's Lot", "The Last Rung on the Ladder", "Quitters, Inc.," and "The Woman in the Room"); "Man With a Belly"; "The Night of the Tiger"; "Nona."

1979: As in 1977, King again drafted three books (Christine, Pet Sematary, and Danse Macabre) as

well as the screeenplay for Creepshow. A guest of honor at the World Fantasy Convention, he also received World Fantasy Award nominations for The Stand and Night Shift.

* Publications: The Dead Zone; The Long Walk (Bachman); "The Crate."
* Film: 'Salem's Lot, a television mini-series directed by Tobe Hooper.

1980: King moved to Bangor, Maine, after purchasing an old Victorian mansion. He completed the first draft of his "magnum opus," IT, scheduled for publication in 1986 or 1987. He became the first American to have three books on the bestsellers lists simultaneously: Firestarter, The Dead Zone, and The Shining. He also made his film debut with an appearance in George Romero's Knightriders.

* Publications: Firestarter; "The Mist"; "Big Wheels: A Tale of the Laundry Game"; "Crouch End"; "The Gunslinger"; "The Monkey"; "The Way Station"; "The Wedding Gig."
* Film: Stanley Kubrick's The Shining.

1981: The University of Maine acknowledged King's achievements with a Career Alumni Award; with his multiple nominations for World Fantasy Awards and Nebula Awards, as well as his receiving a special British Fantasy Award, the Alumni award signals King's growing reputation.

* Publications: Cujo; Roadwork (Bachman); Danse Macabre (non-fiction); "The Bird and the Album" (an excerpt from IT); "Do the Dead Sing?"; "The Gunslinger and the Dark Man"; "The Jaunt"; "The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands"; "The Oracle and the Mountain"; "The Slow Mutants."

1982: King began two novels: The Talisman, with Peter Straub; and The Cannibals. He also completed the final Bachman novel, Thinner, and received a number of awards, including a Hugo for Danse Macabre, the British Fantasy Award for Cujo, and the World Fantasy Award for "Do the Dead Sing?" Douglas Winter published the first full-scale critical study of King, The Reader's Guide to Stephen King for Starmont House, and Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller published their collection of criticism, Fear Itself: The Horror Fiction of Stephen King.

* Publications: The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger; Different Seasons ("Rita Hayworth and Shawshank

Redemption," "Apt Pupil," "The Body," and "The Breathing Method"); Creepshow ("Father's Day"; "The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill," an adaptation of "Weeds" starring King as Jordy Verrill; "The Crate"; "Something to Tide You Over"; and "They're Creeping Up on You"); The Running Man (Bachman); "Before the Play"; "The Plant" Part 1; "The Raft"; "Skybar"; "Survivor Type."

* Film: George Romero's Creepshow, in which King participated as both writer and actor.

1983: Again, King completed first drafts for three novels (The Talisman; The Tommyknockers; and The Napkins, published as The Eyes of the Dragon), and a screenplay, Cat's Eye.

* Publications: Christine; Pet Sematary; Cycle of the Werewolf; "The Plant," Part 2; "Uncle Otto's Truck"; "The Word Processor."
* Films: Lewis Teague's Cujo; David Cronenberg's The Dead Zone; John Carpenter's Christine.

1984: Winter's Stephen King: The Art of Darkness was published through NAL.

* Publications: The Talisman (with Peter Straub); The Eyes of the Dragon, in a limited edition of 1250 copies; Thinner, the final Bachman novel and the one that forced King to acknowledge the pseudonym; "The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet"; "Gramma"; "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut"; "The Revelations of 'Becka Paulson."
* Films: "The Word Processor of the Gods," produced for the television series Tales from the Darkside; student productions of The Boogeyman and The Woman in the Room.

1985: In January, Stephanie Leonard, King's secretary, began publishing Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter as an official source of information about King. In March, he acknowledged the "Bachman" pseudonym; the subsequent interest in finding more "hidden" novels by Stephen King resulted in a review-hoax falsely linking King to a non-existent pornographic novel. An unexpurgated version of The Stand was scheduled for later 1985, but the project stalled over contractual problems; an omnibus edition of the first four Bachman novels (Rage, The Long Walk, Roadwork, and The Running Man) is scheduled from NAL in late 1985. Starmont House began publishing its series of critical studies.

* Publications: Skeleton Crew (including "Paranoid: A Chant" [poem], "For Owen" [poem], and "Morning Deliveries [Milkman #1]"); the trade edition of Cycle of the Werewolf; "Beachworld"; "Dolan's Cadillac," serialized in CR.
* Films: Cat's Eye, written by King and directed by Lewis Teague. Silver Bullet (based on Cycle of the Werewolf), Maximum Overdrive (based on "Trucks"), The Body, The Stand, Pet Sematary, and a television version of "Gramma" are all in various stages of production. Two of the Bachman novels are also scheduled for production, as is a musical version of Carrie.

1986-1987: As a result of a multi-million dollar contract, King will publish four novels in fourteen months: IT, The Eyes of the Dragon (trade edition); Misery, and The Tommyknockers.

As prolific and popular as King is, many critics (particularly "mainstream" critics) have dealt harshly with him. His writing, they say, is marred by prolixity; by syntactic confusion; by "pseudoscientific hokum" (Demarest); by a flat, inelegant, and heavy-handed style; and by unintentional humor. Elizabeth Hall and Jan Belon Shaw objected to the blood and violence in Carrie; Walter Bobbie commented on the unnecessary elongation" of 'Salem's Lot; Richard Lingman noted that King lacks the "sly craftsmanship" of Ira Levin and the "narrative strength" of Thomas Tryon (Gareffa 334). Christopher Lehmann-Haupt referred to Cujo as cruel and disturbing (Gareffa 254); when asking rhetorically if Cujo was a good novel, Jean Strouse answered simply, "Of course not." Leslie Fiedler called King the "master of horror schlock" (9), while Paul Gray discussed him extensively as the "master of postliterate prose."

The problem is that King, like his forebears in horror fiction, Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft, "has not been taken very seriously, if at all, by the critical establishment" (Slung 147), in King's case both because of his chosen genre and because of his enormous commercial success within it. Even when trying to separate King from the genre, Charles de Lint paradoxically emphasizes King's identification with horror by writing that ED proves "once and for all that while he can deliver the shocks, he doesn't need them to be one

of America's premier story tellers."

That is in fact the crux of the matter. King may lapse into stylistic infelicities; Straub noted one particular case in "Meeting Stevie" (FI 8-9). He is on occasion (and by his own admission) afflicted with "literary elephantiasis" (DS 508). Yet, as de Lint implies and a number of other critics have admitted, ultimately those technical problems fade and the story takes over. In many cases, the story is based on terror or horror; yet invariably, beneath the horror lies an extraordinary talent for the tale well told.

It is this talent that I propose to explore in The Many Facets of Stephen King.

Chapter II

THE SEARCH FOR A FORM: EARLY WRITINGS

In a recent interview, King was asked why he wrote. "You don't do it for money," he said,

> don't think of it in terms of hourly wage, yearly wage, even lifetime wage . . . . In the end you don't even do it for love. . . . You do it because to not do it is suicide. (Foltz 62)

For King, writing as compulsion (Foltz refers to his "obsessive scribbling") has been virtually a life-long experience--and for most of that time, he has worked within what could loosely be defined as the "fantastic": science fiction, fantasy, dark fantasy, and supernatural horror. The results of his dedication/compulsion/obsession include:

* Over 50,000,000 books in print; earnings in excess of $20,000,000; and a publishing contract which specifies that rights to two new books revert to King in fifteen years;

* Films (completed or in production) of almost all of his novels, a number of short stories, and several original screenplays;

* And the undisputed reputation as the King of Modern Horror or, in Foltz' phrasing, the "Titan of Terror" (62).

The accomplishments did not come easily, however. King began writing early, around the age of seven, and has continued to do so--at the rate of 1500-2000 words a day, excluding Christmas, the Fourth of July, and September 21 (his birthday).

In addition, most of his early attempts and his earliest publications clearly show his interest in and command of a chosen genre: horror.

This interest, however, was neither all-encompassing nor absolute. King also tried his hand at a number of other forms and genres. The "Afterword" to Different Seasons reproduces an enlightening conversation between King and his editor at Doubleday, Bill Thompson. King had sent Thompson two manuscripts as possibilities to follow the success of Carrie. The first, according to the "Afterword," was Blaze, "a melodrama about a huge, almost retarded criminal who kidnaps a baby, planning to ransom it back to the child's rich parents . . . and then falls in love with the child instead" (519); in a recent letter, however, King identified the second manuscript as Roadwork, later published as the fourth Bachman novel--presumably the reference to Blaze was an attempt at discrediting any rumors then circulating that Stephen King was Richard Bachman (Letter, 3 August 1985). The other manuscript, then titled Second Coming, while equally melodramatic, was about vampires coming to a New England town.

Thompson opted for the second, although with an odd sense of reluctance. Pushed for an explanation, he said that he feared King would be typed--as a horror writer. The fear deepened with the third novel, The Shining, about a haunted hotel. But by that time, King had thought the question through, deciding that belonging to a group that included H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Frank Belknap Long, Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Richard Matheson, and Shirley Jackson was itself a worthwhile goal.

He had committed himself to horror, a decision he has never regretted.

Yet, some years later, when Different Seasons appeared and demonstrated that King could write equally strongly outside of horror, reactions were mixed. Some readers were pleased to see that King could move in other directions; others ignored the collection because it was not horror.

A look into King's background, however, might have lessened the extremity of both of those viewpoints. Although primarily known for his horror fantasies, King has written mainstream fiction, including three of the Bachman novels, three

stories in DS, several in Night Shift, and a number of early uncollected stories. In addition, he has explored other sub-genres, often with remarkable success. As de Lint noted about ED, King does not need the shocks and the horrors to establish his power as a story-teller.

In fact, this sense of exploration begins early in his career. The first story he wrote has long since disappeared, but he recalls it as a science-fiction tale about a dinosaur come to life and subsequently overcome by its allergy to leather (Art 17; SW 7-8). Later, he refined his interest in science fiction, producing "The Star Invaders" (1964), a self-published pamphlet that represents King's earliest extant writing. The story is highly derivative, its plot a re-working of the space-ships-versus-earthlings pattern that figures so prominently in the films King enjoyed during the late 1950s--specifically Earth vs. the Flying Saucers. In Danse Macabre, King refers to the "pulpy-invaders-from-space storyline" of the film (26), an equally accurate description of his own story. Since "The Star Invaders" is discussed fully in the first chapter of SW (10-12), it would be redundant here to repeat verbatim its strengths and weaknesses--except to stress its generic indecisiveness. While the story is overtly modeled on science fiction, it undergoes the same transformation as many of the films that influenced (and inspired) it. While beginning within a science-fictional framework, it edges into horror. It provides images of fear and terror King would later develop more fully in works such as Carrie and "The Raft." Even his latest foray into science fiction--"Beachworld," first published in 1985 and collected in SC the same year--shows the same impulse. While ostensibly science fiction in setting and characterization, it ultimately reveals itself as horror in disguise.

King's early commitment to horror develops even more fully in his two subsequent stories: "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber" (1965), his first published story; and "The Glass Floor" (1967), his first professional sale. In each, King follows traditional forms and directions, producing stories at once workmanlike and conventional. Neither suggests the power he would develop over the next few years. And both lie safely within

the niche of traditional horror fiction. "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber" employs the stock figures of the mad scientist, his delectable young daughter, and the innocent youth who must save her from the horrors her own father has created--the stuff of innumerable "B" movies.

"The Glass Floor," while far beyond the workaday prose of "The Star Invader" and "Teenage Grave Robber," is still derivative, depending upon Poe and Lovecraft for its situational and atmospheric horror. It demonstrates King's interest in characterization, but only marginally. And the focus of horror, the mirrored floor, remains curiously undeveloped, as do the motivations that underlie the story: the reason behind Charles Wharton's visit to the hideous old mansion is as unsatisfying as Anthony Reynard's letting his wife Janine into a room already infamous for mysterious happenings. While the story engages the reader's interest on several levels, it too seems best categorized as conventional horror.

Within the next two years, however, King's writing underwent a radical change, due in part to his exposure to wider varieties of writing in the course of earning an English degree at the University of Maine. His interest in supernatural horror remained, of course, and resulted in his second published story, "The Reaper's Image" (1969; SC 1985), a much stronger, more independent piece of atmospheric horror than King had yet produced. While still drawing on Poe and Lovecraft, it illustrates King's growing command of the form and of literary structures and devices in general. He carefully weaves critical flashbacks into the texture of the story; his characterizations are more self-consistent; and he allows the mystery of the DeIver mirror to develop its own power rather than imposing a mystery upon the characters, as he had done in "The Glass Floor."

Even more importantly, however, King also began writing and publishing stories that moved away from strict supernatural horror. "Cain Rose Up" (1968; SC 1985), written shortly after King had worked through what would become the first Bachman novel, Rage, has its own share of horror. The insane sniper, hidden in an upper room and randomly firing at passersby has become part of

the arsenal of terrifying images society shares. Yet in his first version, King de-emphasized the implicit horror of the visual images. Garrish (the name immediately suggests Raymond Garraty of The Long Walk) fires at a girl and blows her head off. "Her mother went on smiling for a moment," King continues in the Ubris version:

> . . . then her hand went up to her mouth, and she screamed. Garrish could hear her all the way up where he was--a high, thin faraway sound, as if the scream were coming over a telephone wire. She looked very close in the telescopic sight. Garrish blew her head off, and the man who had been loading the suitcases started to run. (34)

King emphasizes the action, describing it neutrally, in a voice almost clinically detached and immediate. In the 1985 revision, he alters the text to capitalize on visual horror:

> Her mother went on smiling for a moment, and then her hand went to her mouth. She screamed through her hand. Garrish shot through it. Hand and head disappeared in a red spray. The man who had been loading the suitcases broke into a lumbering run. (SC 179)

Similarly, a few paragraphs later, the original version reads simply that Garrish "shot Quinn, missed the head, got the shoulder, and had to shoot him again" (35). In SC, King expands the incident, coupling the sense of mindless violence with a parody of a child's prayer:

> "Good drink, good meat, good God, let's eat!" Garrish exclaimed, and shot at Quinn. He pulled instead of squeezing and the shot went wide. Quinn was running. No problem. The second shot took Quinn in the neck and he flew maybe twenty feet. (179)

In each instance, and elsewhere in "Cain Rose Up," what was initially a starkly brutal study of a

student subjected to unendurable pressure has been transformed into an image of graphic violence and visual horror.

"Strawberry Spring" (1968; NS 1978) underwent a similar transformation. What had originally appeared as a psychological study--but without any overtly horrific overtones--later becomes a powerful study of repression and terror. In the Ubris original, there is no suggestion that the narrator is connected with the series of vicious murders other than as observer. The story depends again upon tone and atmosphere for its power; the inexplicable and frighteningly brutal murders differ little from what we are used to seeing in headlines and on the evening news. The NS version, on the other hand, consciously intrudes an element of horror--the narrator fears that he may himself be the murderer. He does not remember . . . quite, and he fears to find out. Both stories are powerful, but in different directions. The revision moves "Strawberry Spring" closer to what King is best known for; the original stands well within mainstream fiction.

"Night Surf" (1969; NS 1978), important as an image kernel for The Stand, follows a similar pattern. The original version begins neutrally: "After the guy was dead and the fire was down to coals, we went back to the beach" (Ubris 6). For its appearance in NS, King adds graphic, sensory horror: "After the guy was dead and the smell of his burning flesh was off the air, we all went back down to the beach" (52). Again, the revisions emphasize something inherently grisly but understated in the original.

A final story published in Ubris, "Stud City" (1969), later became part of the partially autobiographical "The Body." Both "Stud City" and its frame again veer from King's trademark horror, embracing the purposes and structures of mainstream fiction and illustrating King's interest in and involvement with such forms.

While at UMO, King also published several poems, again illustrating his exploration of alternative forms and genres. One, "The Dark Man" (Ubris 1969), has proven difficult to locate; without a copy, I can only speculate as to what it was like. However, given the title, King's comments about the influence of Browning's "Childe

Roland to the Dark Tower Came" in the "Afterword" to The Dark Tower, and the presence of "dark" characters in works as diverse as The Stand, DT, and The Talisman, a poem by that title would seem appropriate for King.

Two other poems, however, are available and therefore provide more definitive information. In 1971, the year after graduating from UMO, King published a story, "The Blue Air Compressor," in Onan, a student literary magazine at UMO. The story, reprinted with only superficial alterations in Heavy Metal ten years later (SW 25-28), resembles Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart," to which King refers several times in the text; to that extent, it illustrates his increasing skill in his chosen genre. But the same issue of Onan also contains an untitled poem by King. Beginning with an image of "depthless" water in the "key-chords of dawn," the poem uses fishing as a metaphor for responsibility. The first stanza emphasizes freedom through the images of flashing fish and running water; the second suggests the incremental approach of adult awareness ("love/ is responsibility"), fully developed in the last stanza, in which fishing becomes responsibility and thus is put away. The stanzas are unexceptional in structure and development; the metaphors are simultaneously bland and at times confusing, as when fishing (itself used metaphorically) suddenly becomes a "loom of complexity," introducing an uncomfortable Melvillean weaving image. In general, the poem fits nicely into a student literary magazine. It is competent and mildly interesting but lacks depth. And it is without any suggestion of supernatural horror.

Three years earlier, however, King had published another poem. The Fall 1968 issue of Ubris included a two-page experimental poem, "Harrison State Park '68" (25-26). Unlike the later poem, this one exhibits many characteristics associated with King, beginning with two short quotations introducing his subject (mental disorders) and tone ("And I feel like homemade shit."). Where the later poem is smooth and gently conventional, this one is rough, its stanzas scattered over the page like the reality it attempts to describe, its content hidden among cliches ("If you can't be an athlete,/ be an athletic supporter") and images of

implicit violence. While skirting the supernatural, the poem embraces the kind of horror that emerges in the revised "Strawberry Spring" or "Cain Rose Up," the horror of madness endemic in contemporary society. Its images concentrate on death and violence: Mickey Rooney as Pretty Boy Floyd; a skeleton in Death Valley; monsters induced by nuclear radiation; worms crawling through white grass at midnight. Throughout, King develops the question "Can you do it?" into the same sort of leitmotif that he creates from "Do you love?" in SC--and to much the same effect. Love links with death; in the final stanza, the speaker reaches for a hand, only to touch the "radiating five pencils/ of your bones" (26). The poem is by far the more interesting, if only because King speaks here with a more authentic voice.

Perhaps more than anything else, however, King's writing for The Maine Campus helped him refine his talents. "King's Garbage Truck," a weekly column running from January 20, 1969 through May 21, 1970, included discussions of student apathy, anti-War protests, and campus politics, as well as reviews of books and films. The columns are fascinating indicators of King's development, of his wide interests and rapidly developing power as a writer. Some of the columns sound trite and hackneyed; his condemnation of adult perspectives on youth (February 12, 1970) could have been written by almost any young person about to graduate from college in 1969 or 1970. Others are strikingly original, as in his meditation on the frightening power of snow (March 10, 1970), an early non-fictional sketch of ideas later developed in works such as The Shining (1977), "One for the Road" (1977), and--most importantly, almost archetypally--"The Reach" (1981; SC 1985).

In a number of instances, King's discussion of non-horror materials provided him with seminal images that later became horror stories or novels. In the first column, he reviews the Goddard College dance troupe, specifically a number called "Child of Our Darkness," in which Wynd Winston "portrays a child-woman torn between the forces of light and darkness." The conclusion of the dance, "with burning flames projected onto her body and a

screen behind her, was almost numbing in impact," and strongly suggests the central image of Firestarter.

Similarly, a column on "strange things in the world" (December 18, 1969) foreshadows several later stories. In addition to discussing Judge Crater, who figures prominently in "The Reaper's Image," the column mentions a place called "Jeremiah's Lot," a Shaker settlement in Vermont from which all ihnabitants mysteriously disappeared in the early 1800s--a clear parallel to 'Salem's Lot, "Jerusalem's Lot," and "One for the Road." The possibility of a hole punched through our universe and into another finds fictional expression later in the DT stories and in "Crouch End" (1980) and "The Mist" (1980; SC 1985). King's dream, also recounted in this column, of a "hideous man with a scarred face hanging from a black gibbet against a green sky" immediately suggests scenes from the DT stories.

"King's Garbage Truck" ties in directly with several other works as well: "Cain Rose Up," "Strawberry Spring," "Children of the Corn," "The Cat from Hell," "Uncle Otto's Truck," "The Fifth Quarter," "Nona," "The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet," Rage, The Long Walk, Roadwork, The Running Man (King has a good deal to say about television, networks, and programming in the "Garbage Truck"), The Stand, Pet Sematary, and The Talisman. In each instance, the columns contain passages, often just a phrase or two, that suggests important themes or images in King's later fiction.

The columns deserve a full study themselves (there will be a chapter on "King's Garbage Truck" in The Stephen King Phenomenon), but here it is sufficient to indicate how extensively they served as sounding boards for King's ideas and opinions. Occasionally they offer unusual insight into his development as an individual and as a writer. At least one column seems to contradict an important point in King's official biography. Several studies--including DM (15-28) and Winter's Art of Darkness (xv)--refer to King's first awareness of threat in the "real" world when the Soviet Union successfully orbited the first space satellite in October, 1957. King was ten years old and, "as was only fitting," at a movie. Even more fitting, the film was Earth vs. the Flying Saucers. During

the showing, the film stopped and the manager announced that the Russians had "put a space satellite into orbit around the earth. They call it . . . Spootnik" (DM 21).

The reaction was deep silence . . . and fear.

Eleven years earlier, however, in the "Garbage Truck" for May 7, 1970, King looked to graduation by writing about "Where We Are At" and "Where We Were." He recalls important scenes from childhood: a favorite movie (Randolph Scott's Gung Ho), the 1956 Hungarian Revolt and the intense pride it engendered, and Sputnik:

> I was waiting in the barbershop to get a haircut when that happened. I thought it had to be a joke. Americans were always first--we have been with the telephone, the electric light, the airplane--surely the Russians, who played dirty, could not have beaten us into space! It was downright degrading, it was frightening . . . well, it was downright embarrassing.

The reactions are the same, but the scenes differ markedly. King has transformed life into art; the setting in DM is far more powerful as an image than that in the "Garbage Truck" column.

In Christine, Dennis Guilder analyzes fear:

> I had never been so frightened in my life as I was right then. Time passes: the mind rebuilds its defenses. I think one of the reasons there is so little convincing evidence of psychic phenomena is that the mind goes to work and restructures the evidence. A little stacking is better than a lot of insanity. (422)

The issue in question is neither sanity nor psychic phenomena; but it seems possible that King was aware of the intrinsic value of the theater as setting: a small boy, a dark theater, a frightening movie, and the sudden voice announcing doom. The "Garbage Truck" passage relies upon content for effect; the later passage, the result of a decade-long involvement with fiction and writing,

adds setting and atmosphere to content, communicating the small boy's fear literally and symbolically. The difference between the two episodes parallels King's own development as a writer.

By the time King graduated from college, then, he had explored several genres. If one adds other tales published before Carrie in 1974, the extent of King's "search for a form" becomes evident. To his science fiction, horror fantasy, and mainstream fiction (including several novels in manuscript), one can add the satire/parody western "Slade," published in weekly installments in The Maine Campus during the summer of 1970 and the "hard-bitten" crime fiction of "The Fifth Quarter" (1972), King's first pseudonymous publication.

Nor is that the end of his explorations. The Talisman (1984) represented a new departure into collaborative fiction as well as into epic-quest and high fantasy. Cycle of the Werewolf began as a calendar; The Eyes of the Dragon is basically a children's story (albeit a remarkably sophisticated one). And King continues to range beyond the limits of horror. For some time, he said recently,

> I've wanted to write a magic carpet story. It would be a fantastic story, but so far I can't hook it up. It's like a car with a bad transmission. . . .
>
> Actually, I'd like to write an Elvis novel. I'd really like to write a rock 'n' roll novel. But it's very, very hard to write about music, so I haven't been able to hook that one up. (Modderno)

These are but a few of the many facets of Stephen King; still, they suffice as an introduction to King and to his fiction.

In a larger sense, however, form is secondary to content in Stephen King's writing, a fact that determines the shape of his novels and stories. The narrative itself stands in first position of importance, as opposed to theme or symbol. He is in fact wary of such overtly literary considerations; when they do occur, he says,

> I tend to suppress them, because I think conscious structure spoils story. Some editor once described Thomas Wolfe not as a real writer but as 'a divine wind-chime' --that is, an essentially idiotic device through which a breeze or wind might blow, creating pleasant sounds. As Cyndy Lauper says about the Goonies, that's good enough for me. (Letter, 3 August 1985).

Through his explorations of possibilities--early and late--King has enabled himself to represent the real and the unreal, the rational and the irrational, in ways that highlight the implicit power of his narratives. He is comfortable in mainstream and horror, in psychological suspense and science fiction. And through all, his concern for the underlying story shows through, thrilling, chilling, and entertaining his readers.

Chapter III

ALONG THE MAIN STREAM:

Rage, The Long Walk, Sword in the Darkness, Blaze, and Roadwork

When Frank Belknap Long was asked by Twilight Zone Magazine to assess contemporary horror-writers, he mentioned Stephen King specifically:

> Many present-day writers have greater maturity, greater insight than the horror writers of the 1920s or 1930s. I think every powerful new writer who has come along has contributed something new and important. Stephen King, for example, has taken ordinary situations, situations that confront young people in, let us say, the average American village, and has dwelt in a totally naturalistic way on how they act and react. He has made all of this so realistic that when he introduces an element of supernatural horror, you wholly believe it. (Collins 18)

Long pinpoints perhaps the most effective stylistic technique in King's fiction--the inexorable sense of reality subtly transforming into reality-gone-wrong. The characteristic is present in all of King's horror fiction, not a particularly surprising discovery in light of King's long apprenticeship in writing "realistic" fiction.

Until 1977, all of his published novels were to some degree horror fiction; in 1977, he published his first non-horror novel, Rage, but only under the Bachman pseudonym. Not until Different Seasons (1982) did he publish non-horror fiction under his own name. Even before Carrie appeared in 1974, however, King had written several novels, few of them overtly supernatural horror. Because he needed to preserve the integrity of the Bachman

pseudonym, lists of those early manuscript novels have frequently been vague as to number and order of composition; in a letter sent in August 1985, however, King clarified the matter considerably by providing the following information:

* Getting It On, begun in the summer of 1966, completed and submitted in late 1971 or early 1972, and finally published as Rage (1977), the first "Bachman novel";

* The Long Walk (1979), published as the second "Bachman" novel but written during 1966-1967, King's freshman year at UMO--his first finished novel;

* Sword in the Darkness, which Winter calls King's second novel (Art xvi-xvii); King also referred to this manuscript as Babylon Here when discussing his early manuscripts because, as he says, "I wanted to throw sand in the eyes of people who might think I was Bachman";

* Blaze, written around 1970, a "reworking of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men and kind of a ghost story." In spite of King's comments in the "Afterword" to DS, this was not the manuscript submitted to Bill Thompson along with Second Coming ('Salem's Lot);

* The Running Man (1982), the fourth "Bachman" novel, written during a weekend in 1971, shortly after King completed the first draft for Carrie. His initial impulse was that The Running Man was much stronger than Carrie, but submissions to Doubleday and DAW resulted in rejection slips;

* Roadwork (1981), the third "Bachman" novel, written in 1974 "in roughly the time-frame of the novel itself," just after King completed 'Salem's Lot. (Letter, 3 August 1985)

In addition, the bibliography in Fear Itself refers to a final manuscript, The Cannibals as "a novel, publication plans indefinite" (268). While no date is mentioned, the title appears among the

pre-Carrie works.

Most of the manuscripts share a single characteristic: they seem as much mainstream as supernatural horror. The Running Man and The Long Walk are minimally science-fictional and thus could be considered non-mainstream; King mentions Blaze as "kind of" a ghost story, the only overt mention of the supernatural in the listing. As important as it is to establish the chronology of composition for those early works, it is equally important to note the kind of novels King considered as he began his career. The fact that King completed at least eight novels before seeing Carrie in print in 1974 demonstrates his dedication to writing, while the parallel fact that of the eight half are predominantly mainstream illustrates the depth of King's apprenticeship in writing novels outside the narrow limits of supernatural horror. From this apprenticeship arises the incessant sense throughout his writing that his worlds are real, his characters believable, and his narratives both plausible and possible, regardless of how incredible developments may become.

The earliest extended manifestation of King's mastery over what C. S. Lewis called "realism of presentation" occurs in manuscripts such as Rage or The Long Walk, novels that owe as much to traditional, mainstream literature as to supernatural horror. As important as horror has been in King's career, it has never been exclusive. As early as the "Garbage Truck" columns, for instance, King showed a remarkable diversity of interests. Only twice did he devote columns entirely to horror: once to a review of novels, including Robert Bloch's The Dead Beat, Richard Matheson's The Shrinking Man, Michael Avallone's The Coffin Things, and Bram Stoker's Dracula (27 June 1969); and once to a discussion of a series of films sponsored by the UMO Memorial Union Activities Board, including Rosemary's Baby, Psycho, Dracula, Frankenstein, and The Pit and the Pendulum (19 February 1970).

Otherwise, the columns cover a wide range of topics: films as divergent as Easy Rider and If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium; contemporary poetry, especially the works of Howard Nemerov, Richard Wilbur, Constance Hunting, and Ron Loewensohn; birth control; the California grape boycott;

the moon walk; television, the generation gap; and trivia quizzes. Although many columns suggest images or themes that later appear in King's horror novels and stories, even more concern themselves with analyzing King's world--the people, places, and events that mattered to him and to his fellow students.

This concern finds its way into King's earliest manuscripts.

After the publication of Stephen King as Richard Bachman, it seems repetitive to discuss the Bachman novels. It is worthwhile, however, in order to gain a necessary perspective on King's subsequent fictions. In addition, the novels are worth more attention than they have received, both as King's first attempts at novels and as completed works in their own right.

Rage, for example, is not only among King's earliest full-length manuscripts, but it is also a highly detailed, highly convincing examination of the pressures and frustrations endemic to American school systems. Charlie Decker's responses to situations are admittedly extreme: shooting two teachers, threatening several others, holding a class hostage, and forcing administrators and police officials to confront their own levels of fear and frustration. Yet in another sense, the novel is not that extreme; it defines the shifting, tenuous relationships in most contemporary high schools and, to a lesser extent, colleges. It translates those relationships into explosive, often heavily sexual actions, but beneath the fictive elements the reader can discern seeds of truth, which King also examined in several "Garbage Truck" columns.

> Want me to tell you a bad thing? Okay. I will. It's a bad thing to wake up in the middle of the night, light a cigarette, and wonder what the hell you are doing in this place. That's pretty bad. But it's worse if you don't have any kind of answer. ("GT" 8 May 1969)

Although this passage is part of King's non-fiction discussion of student pressures for The Maine Campus, it could have appeared in any of several places in Rage. Charlie Decker's funda-

mental questions are the same; the answers he posits are also King's. The column continues, drawing pessimistic thumbnail sketches of faculty members "painted into an academic corner with no place to stretch and no room to breathe"; of students crushed beneath "requirements, irrelevant courses, and a suffocating feeling of futility," with the survivors facing futures of interminable soap operas, stultifying careers, and heart-attacks at thirty-five (a motif that recurs in Thinner, with even more personal meaning for King, who had by then entered heart-attack country). For the students in Rage, for Barton George Dawes in Roadwork, for William Halleck in Thinner, life is a "shaky cease-fire" (RW).

That these concerns should first appear in Rage is understandable. Half of it was written during the summer of 1966, between King's graduation from high school and his entrance into college, and completed in the summer of 1971, while King was working at the New Franklin Laundry in Bangor. As a result, it is adolescent in tone and content, in theme and vitality. It reflects King's fears and frustrations, not only as a student, but as an adult. School is "a pressure cooker, sure," he writes in the "Garbage Truck" columns:

> We all know that. But the thing that scares me at three in the morning is that I'm afraid the pressure-cooker effect doesn't stop with graduation. Things don't look much better. (8 May 1969).

A year later, his views had become even more pessimistic. In his final column, a mock announcement of his birth "into the real world," he defined his political stance as "Extremely radical, largely due to the fact that nobody seems to listen to you unless you threaten to shut them down, turn them off, or make some kind of trouble." Under "future prospects," he wrote: "Hazy, although either nuclear annihilation or environmental strangulation seem to be definite possibilities" (21 May 1970).

The result of these questions, problems, and fears was a series of novels that reflected King's attitudes. Rage was begun in 1966; even before

completing it, however, King wrote three more novels. The Long Walk was written in 1968-1969, while King was a freshman at UMO. The premise came to him while he was hitchhiking home from college one night: a sporting event in a future America, in which one hundred boys would walk until they died, the last one winning the Prize: anything he wanted for the rest of his life. Although science fiction in its future setting, the novel is firmly grounded in realism. Garraty and his fellow walkers follow highways King knew well; they suffer the same insecurities and identity crises that the young King refers to in his "Garbage Truck" columns; and they are victims of the same insensitive if not inimical adult establishment he had already begun describing in Rage. The Long Walk expands King's vision, moving outward from the narrow focus of a high-school classroom to encompass an entire society. The Long Walk effects the America of the future economically, politically, and socially; the Walkers become sacrificial victims expended in order to insure stability and prosperity.

The novel is an unusually strong achievement for a twenty-one-year-old writer. King manages to create empathy as well as sympathy for the pains Garraty and the others endure during the Long Walk. He handles their immaturity and emotional outbursts with restraint, while simultaneously instilling the readers with a sense of psychological horror as the Walk progresses, as children die in agony amid the cheers of the great god Crowd. Its apocalyptic final scene is the culmination of a novel that exhausts its readers, literally and physically as well as symbolically and emotionally.

King's third novel, Sword in the Darkness (which he has also referred to as Babylon Here) again expands the scope of his vision. About a race riot in a city called Harding, it too indicates another facet of King's social consciousness. In early 1970, shortly after finishing the manuscript for Sword in the Darkness, King reviewed George Kennedy's film Tick . . . Tick . . . Tick, concentrating in one paragraph on the film's awareness of the complexities of racial tensions:

> the movie treats some of the problems of white-black relations in the south with clarity and humanity (what do you do when a black man commits rape? What do you do when a white 16-year-old boy gets liquored up and causes a car accident which kills a small girl?) . . . .

The film, King notes, fails to consider the situations fully; "the ultimate result," he concludes, "is just a little too sugary sweet--the Kleegle of the local KKK ends up Changing His Ways and helping [Jim] Brown and Kennedy turn back an avenging posse of vigilantes, which is determined to free one of Brown's white prisoners" (26 February 1970).

Sword in the Darkness was King's opportunity to explore the problems and resolutions of racial tensions for himself. Unfortunately, the novel did not succeed: "it is a very bad book," he writes. "I can't even like it when I'm drunk" (Letter, 3 August 1985).

The fourth novel, Blaze, was written around 1970--essentially, King had worked on four novels in as many years, while still not yet twenty-three years old. This novel, he has noted, was based on Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, much as The Long Walk reflected Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." It was a "kind of ghost story," the first mention among King's early manuscript novels of anything overtly supernatural. And it was unpublishable:

> It wasn't a terrible novel, but absurdly downbeat and ultimately corny. . . . I came close to publishing it as a Bachman and pulled it at almost the last minute, after a sober reading of the rewritten manuscript. The goddam thing was so dismal it made "The Little Match Girl" look like "Pollyanna." (Letter, 3 August 1985).

Following the completion of Carrie in manuscript, King wrote one final mainstream novel, Roadwork. Taking place during the "First Energy Crisis" of late 1973 and early 1974, the novel examines the disintegration of Barton George Dawes

under the multiple pressures of a changing economy, a failing marriage, his increasing alienation from others, and--overshadowing all else--the earlier death of his son from cancer. The novel in fact seems almost as much about cancer as about Dawes: cancer as disease, cancer as metaphor for destructive relationships, cancer as symbol of the unknowable and uncontrollable in human lives. Like Rage and The Long Walk, the novel stems from King's experiences, although in this case a far more critical one: the death of his mother to cancer shortly before. As with "The Woman in the Room" (NS, 1978), life provided the stimulus for a strong work, giving the novel an additional touch of emotional realism that makes reading it an unusually moving experience. The pressures Dawes encounters are not extraordinary; the tragedy of his destruction becomes even more tragic with King's clear suggestion that such things happen in the real world. None of us is immune.

As with Blaze, King was influenced in writing Roadwork. The references to Nick Adams throughout suggests Ernest Hemingway's fictional hero (SK/RB 74-77, 83-85), although King considers Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five as the most direct influence. His use of white space and signs in Roadwork was an attempt at re-creating the resonance of Vonnegut's repeated "So it goes" (Letter, 3 August 1985).

As noted earlier, Roadwork was submitted with Second Coming as a follow-up to Carrie's success. Thompson chose the horror novel, and King embarked on a series of enormously successful novels, all in some degree touched with the supernatural and the horrific. Still, he did not completely divorce himself from mainstream fiction. "The Woman in the Room," is among his finest pieces; the film made from it is equally successful in defining the difficult decisions faced by a man who must watch his mother dying slowly and painfully. "The Last Rung on the Ladder" (NS) is a similarly powerful anatomy of fragile relations and human interdependence. Nor is it coincidental, I think, that both stories appeared first in King's collection, rather than separately in magazines or periodicals. Strong as they are, they are not what readers expected of him.

With Different Seasons, King's abilities to

write non-horror fiction came to the fore. Only "The Breathing Method" diverges into the fantastic; the remaining three are stridently and consciously realistic stories of hope, maturity, and despair. Since Different Seasons was discussed at length by David Engebretson in The Shorter Works of Stephen King, little more need be said here except, as with the Bachman novels, to emphasize their importance in King's development. His "brand-name technique" succeeds to the extent that it does because he understands and analyzes his world, then replicates it with uncanny intensity. Events in The Shining, The Stand, or Christine, for example, seem believable because of the context King places them in. Nor is it difficult to see how little a space there is between a story such as "Apt Pupil," which develops horror out of the everyday and the possible (however improbable), and a novel like Cujo, which adds but the slightest suggestion of the supernatural and thus qualifies as a "horror" novel.

By 1974, then, King had come a long way. He had written eight novels, published one, and prepared himself for the most spectacularly successful career in contemporary horror fantasy. But throughout, he retains close connections with mainstream writing and with his own past.

NOTES

[1] In late 1971 or early 1972, King submitted Rage under the title Getting It On, a phrase from a song by T. Rex called "Bang a Gong (Get It On)." Doubleday was interested, but finally rejected it. It was originally submitted under the pseudonym Guy Pillsbury (King's maternal grandfather and "a Jud Crandall prototype if ever there was one" [Letter, 3 August 1985]). Later, when NAL accepted it, the editors noted that the Pillsbury name appeared on contracts with King's. When a phone call came asking him to create a new pseudonym, King was listening to Bachman-Turner Overdrive on the stereo and a novel by Richard Stark lay on his desk--thus, Richard Bachman.

Thinner's dust-jacket photograph, which misled many readers and continues to raise an occasional question about Richard Bachman's identity

in spite of King's having acknowledged the novels, is of a friend of King's agent.

Chapter IV

INTO THE TWILIGHT LANDS:

Carrie, Cujo, The Dead Zone, Firestarter, and Thinner

Early in Cujo, King describes Red Razberry Zingers as "somewhere in the twilight zone between cereal and candy" (30). Not quite either one, Zingers are difficult to classify, except as a source of trouble for Vic Trenton.

A parallel cross-classification occurs among several of King's novels which, like Red Razberry Zingers, seem to exist in a "twilight zone," not quite horror, not quite supernatural fantasy, not quite science fiction (in spite of Joseph Patrouch's arguments), and not quite mainstream. In Carrie, Cujo and The Dead Zone, King relies only marginally on the supernatural, despite surface suggestions that the novels are intended as horror. In all three, he insists upon defining episodes as clearly explainable. With Firestarter, he moves closer to horror while still maintaining both a respectable distance and the illusion that situations are ultimately and objectively explainable. In Thinner, he asserts the supernatural, blurring the borders between mainstream and horror.

As if to provide transition from the more or less mainstream fiction of the early Bachman novels into supernatural horror, King wrote several stories and novels that illustrate his interest in the "twilight lands" between genres. "Strawberry Spring," for example, indicates several changes in King's artistic and literary directions. The first version, published in Ubris in 1968, concentrates on psychological suspense; the horror in the story, if any exists, stems from King's highly effective descriptions, from the sense of an un-

known lurking in the warm fogs of an unseasonal spring. The revision, published a decade later in Night Shift with intermediate appearances in Cavalier and Gent, shows a Stephen King more aware of the potential of horror and turning that potential back on the reader. After impelling empathy with the unnamed first-person narrator (an unusual narrative stance for King), King reverses positions by revealing that the narrator not only fears the killer but is the killer. Fear and terror infuse the story, but there is nothing specifically supernatural.

With Carrie (1974), the situation becomes more complicated. As his first book, it set the directions which subsequent novels would follow and which forced King to publish his non-horror novels under the Bachman pseudonym. From the beginning, King's career as a novelist has been marked by an emphasis on the horrific. The dust jacket for the hardcover edition of Carrie represents typical attitudes toward King:

> . . . **Stephen King** reveals a New England town, a girl, and a secret older than history. His chilling tale takes hold of the reader, from the first bizarre incident to the last blossoming terror.

Overstated (as dust-jacket blurbs frequently are), the appraisal at least partially misleads readers. The "secret older than history" must be telekinesis, but if so, the statement becomes doubly problematical.

If telekinesis is indeed "older than history," it can only with difficulty be defined as "supernatural," and the results of Carrie White's explosive telekinesis become horror only in a limited sense; that is, the experiences and descriptions may be graphic and bloody, but they do not stir the deepest levels of fear . . . fear of the unknown and the unknowable.

In addition, King himself takes pains in the text to raise telekinesis from the level of myth and legend and place it on a marginally scientific footing. The opening pages of the novel urge the reader to view Carrie's paranormal ability in calm, rational terms: "Nobody was really surprised when it happened," King asserts, only then

hinting at the horrific: "not at the subconscious level where savage things grow." The girls who abuse Carrie are "shocked, thrilled, ashamed, or simply glad" at the effects of their hazing but not horrified or terrified. Their claims to surprise are "of course" untrue:

> Carrie had been going to school with some of them since the first grade, and this had been building since all that time, building slowly and immutably, in accordance with all the laws that govern human nature, building with all the steadiness of a chain reaction approaching critical mass.
>
> What none of them knew, of course, was that Carrie White was telekinetic. (3-4)

The tone and diction are all carefully neutral; with few exceptions, King does not yet telegraph horror through word choice, as is the case with many other writers and in many other novels. Instead, he creates a feeling of calmness, of objectivity, stipulating that Carrie's actions and reactions are natural and inevitable. Carrie's world is, as the text says, a twilight land of paradoxical probabilities, "a real world where nightmares happen" (24).

Certainly his approach in Carrie differs from that of more traditional "horror" novels. From the first paragraph, for example, T.E.D. Klein's The Ceremonies leaves no doubt about its nature:

> The city lies throbbing in the sunlight. From its heart a thin black thread of smoke coils lazily toward the sky. April is almost thirteen hours dead: already the world has changed. (9)

"Throbbing," "black," "coils," "dead," "change"--the diction defines the thrust of the novel.

Even more explicitly, Frank de Felitta's Golgotha Falls uses the opening pages to define both the genre and the reader's expectations:

> Golgotha Falls, 1890, north Massachusetts. The town lay in a hollow of

> hard, obdurate terrain where the stagnant ponds bred crawling mites on browned, drooping reeds. Siloam Creek choked on detritus from the woolen mills and there, on the clay bank, the Catholic merchants from the nearby town of Lawrence decided to build their church.
>
> The ground when broken was sandy. Indians, long dead and disinterred from the loose soil, had to be carted away in skeletal heaps. (7)

Within two more paragraphs, de Felitta conjures a "stench like sour milk" emanating from "fissured" bedrock, cracked timbers that kill four workmen, diphtheria, malaria, and seven new graves behind an iron gate . . . a substantially different atmosphere from Carrie.

King is, of course, capable of asserting the horrific within the first few words of a story or novel. The imagistic echoes of Poe and Lovecraft in the openings of "The Glass Floor" (1967) or "The Blue Air Compressor" (1971, 1981), or the gray skies and rotting pumpkins of "It Grows on You" (1975) define King's intentions in those stories; among his novels, Thinner is perhaps the best example of a clear-cut introduction into the world of horror. It is, as Kirby McCauley noted, more like a King book than a Bachman, and several reviewers argued explicitly that no one but King could have written the first paragraph:

> "Thinner," the old Gypsy man with the rotting nose whispers to William Halleck. . . . "Thinner." And before Halleck can jerk away, the old Gypsy reaches out and caresses his cheek with one twisted finger. His lips spread open like a wound, showing a few tombstone stumps poking out of his gums. They are black and green. His tongue squirms between them and then slides out to slick his grinning, bitter lips. (1)

Set against such imagery, Carrie seems sedate and controlled. King's initial quotation from the "Westover (Me.) weekly Enterprise, August 19, 1966," enhances the realistic tone, implying that

what follows must be truthful and accurate; any doubters can simply check the apropriate issue of the newspaper. The neutral, objective, and precise diction of the article itself reinforces the tone. Horror becomes more image than action, more simile than reality. Carrie sees ivy cloaking the White bungalow "like a grotesque giant hand ridged with great veins which had sprung up out of the ground to grip the building" (21; my italics), an image that asserts an external horror more in keeping with de Palma's film than King's fiction. Similarly, when Estelle Horan speaks of Carrie, her expression changes to make her look "more like Lovecraft out of Arkham than Kerouac out of Southern California" (22; my italics)--again the emphasis on a simile asserting but not demonstrating horror.

In this respect, Carrie parallels other recent novels that blend the subjectivity of fantasy and horror with the objectivity of science fiction by providing scientific (or pseudoscientific) explanations for monsters, creatures, or other paraphernalia of horror:

* Colin Wilson's The Mind Parasites (1967) and The Space Vampires (1976), the latter describing aliens discovered in a derelict ship in terms drawn from traditional vampire motifs, then re-defining the aliens as fugitive entities from another galaxy;

* Peter Straub's If You Could See Me Now (1977) and Ghost Story (1979), which explain ghosts as objectively observable shape-shifters co-existent with humanity;

* Whitley Strieber's The Wolfen (1978), The Hunger (1980), Black Magic (1981), and The Night Church (1983), each re-defining traditional horror figures--werewolves, vampires, demons--in contemporary scientific terms;

* F. Paul Wilson's The Keep (1981), which subverts the entire panoply of vampire mythology by revealing that the supposed vampire belongs to a species pre-dating humanity;

* Dean Koontz' Phantasms (1983), which connects

Koontz's amorphous monster with mysterious disappearances throughout history.

In each instance, the writers consciously subvert the fantastic by shifting to logical, rational (or rational-seeming) explanations for phenomena an earlier generation of novelists might have asserted simply as supernatural (Collings, "Filling the Niche"). In Carrie, as in The Dead Zone, Cujo, and Firestarter, King applies a similar technique.

King's ambivalence toward genre characterizes Carrie, particularly in its dual narrative structure. Although much of the non-narrative material was added in later drafts to bring the novel up to a minimum length (Winter 196; Warren 17), the interpolations seem critical to the tone of the novel. Ben P. Indick writes that fear is so important to King's next two novels ('Salem's Lot and The Shining) that "in retrospect it is surprising how small a part it plays in Carrie . . ." (9-10). If one of King's purposes is to touch wellsprings of fear within his readers, as he has argued in Danse Macabre, Carrie seems almost counterproductive. Instead of creating an escalating narrative beginning and ending in blood and terror (as in de Palma's film version), King interrupts the narrative with excerpts from "documentary" studies written after the cataclysm that destroys Chamberlain, Maine. The interpolations simultaneously reassure the reader that ultimately all will be resolved (someone must, like Melville's Ishmael, be able to say "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee") and create suspense . . . but not horror. We are told, for example, that a character has only two hours to live; such structures are invariably neutrally worded, avoiding any implicit evocations of horror. They startle and shock, but do not inspire horror.

In addition, King emphasizes the objectivity of the interpolations. Quotations appear from The Shadow Exploded: Documented Facts and Specific Conclusions Derived from the Case of Carietta White, ostensibly published by Tulane University Press. Key words in the title--"documented facts," "conclusions," "derived," "case"--enhance the illusion of reality, as does King's crediting the book to a university press, which would tend toward academic conservatism rather than sensation-

alism. The horror might have been far more explicit had King quoted from Richard Dees' Inside Views, as he would do later in The Dead Zone.

Equally convincing (if something of an inside joke) is the brief reference to Carrie's seventh-grade poetry (57). The passage furthers the reader's empathy for Carrie, particularly as it quotes verbatim from her teacher, Edwin King. Coming from the pen of Stephen Edwin King, teacher of English at Hampden Academy, publishing poet, and empathetic human being, the passage ties the novel closer to the twilight land, that "real world where nightmares happen."

Any potential sensationalism, as in references to Susan Snell's My Name is Susan Snell or Jack Gasver's Carrie: The Black Dawn (appearing in the September 12, 1980 issue of a popular magazine, Esquire), is countered by other outside "sources": Ogilvie's Dictionary of Psychic Phenomena; Dean D. L. McGuffin's "Telekinesis: Analysis and Aftermath" (Science Yearbook 1981); Black Prom: The White Commission Report, sponsored by the State Investigatory Board of Maine and published by Signet in 1980 (another inside joke; Carrie was published in paperback by Signet, as were all of King's paperback reprints); and the New England and national AP tickers.

The brief "Part Three: Wreckage" accentuates the sense of documentary realism, as King includes the "Westover Mercy Hospital/Report of Decease" for Carrie White and further references from The Shadow Exploded and My Name is Susan Snell. By the end of the novel, Carrie's experiences have become so integrated into "reality" that King includes an entry from John R. Coombs' Slang Terms Explained defining "to rip off a Carrie" (198), implying that the events in Chamberlain have passed beyond sensationalism to become part of normal human activities.

The final interpolation, from Amelia Jenks' letter of 1988, confirms what King has suggested from the beginning: Carrie White's outburst of telekinetic destruction is not something supernatural. It has happened before; it will surely, inevitably happen again.

The joke, of course, is that all of King's excerpts are as fictional as the narratives interwoven with them. Like the scientific references

in The Dead Zone and Firestarter, however, they create the illusion of reality. Indeed, King even provides a marginally scientific explanation for Carrie White. She is the victim of a "genetic-regressive occurrence," similar to but opposite from hemophilia (81-82). The condition manifests only in women, and then under specified physiological and psychological conditions (100). Regardless of how unconvincing the explanation may be, King does not simply assert horror as he does in 'Salem's Lot, Christine, Thinner, The Talisman or Cycle of the Werewolf. To that extent, Carrie is almost as much science fiction as horror.

Much more could and should be said about Carrie (and will be in The Films of Stephen King). Carrie depends on heavily symbolic overtones, as has been noted in Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's discussion of its mythic and fairy-tale motifs. Douglas Winter effectively anatomizes characterization, King's underlying romanticism, and Carrie as a vehicle for discussing the dangers implicit in growing up--a recurring theme in King's fiction.

For this study, however, it is sufficient to suggest that in spite of popular and critical attitudes toward King as the modern master of horror, there is more to Carrie than that. It neatly balances divergent perspectives; it carefully interweaves the visceral and the rational, the subjective and the objective, the horrific and the scientific. Even its radically differing prose textures blend to create a work that transcends easy classification.

Many of the techniques King used in Carrie recur in Cujo (1981). The later novel exhibits the same ambivalence of treatment and atmosphere, with the difference that in Cujo, King moves even further from the supernatural to concentrate on events that could in fact happen. In spite of the Sharp Cereal Professor's repeated assurance, "Nope, nothing wrong here," there is decidedly something wrong in the Castle Rock of Cujo. Each character understands that. Vic Trenton confronts the dissolution of his business; Donna Trenton, the prospect of a disintegrating marriage. Tad Trenton faces the symbolic monster in the closet; Brett Camber, the monster-father in the barn. Joe Camber tries to understand a world beyond his com-

prehension and retreats into drunkenness and boorishness; Charity Camber watches her son gradually falling into the same traits and traps. Steve Kemp turns back to a wasted past; Gary Pervier watches an empty future stretch interminably before him.

Castle Rock and its inhabitants still struggle under the shadow of Frank Dodd, dead six years yet present in their memories and imaginations. Although King may have added the Dodd references in a later draft (Winter, Art 97), they work structurally to unite Cujo. The evil is external, not simply a result of Donna Trenton's infidelity, Joe Camber's boorishness, or Gary Pervier's drunken cynicism. It seems, for example, as if King disposes of George Bannermann crudely and harshly in Cujo. A single lapse in following police procedures results in Bannerman's violent and horribly painful death. In other ways, however, that death is appropriate. In his last moments, Bannerman sees (or thinks he sees) the spectre of Frank Dodd in Cujo's eyes (285). It is as if he finally confronts the truth he missed with such devastating results in The Dead Zone; his death approaches an atonement.

This unrelenting feeling of things gone desperately wrong makes Cujo painfully difficult to read . . . and even more difficult to re-read. In spite of the publicity hype for Pet Sematary as the "story so horrifying he was unsure of when it should be published" or the novel that makes it "possible for Stephen King to terrify even himself" (Doubleday), Cujo seems more threatening on a second reading. One can dismiss Pet Sematary; after having once followed the trajectory of fear and death, re-reading the novel is an intellectual exercise, a stretching of imagination rather than an exploration into visceral terror. One can, after all, simply relegate the Wendigo and the horror it brings to handy mental boxes: myth, legend, fantasy of the darker kind. And, of course, no one really comes back from the dead like Church or Gage.

Cujo is far more difficult to dismiss, either as novel or as film, because it is not an exercise in the imagination. Unlike 'Salem's Lot or Christine or Cycle of the Werewolf, Cujo could occur without any substantive alterations in our percep-

tion of the universe. The evil in Cujo may simply be reality itself--a harsh world where otherwise good men develop mental and sexual aberrations that transform them into vicious killers, or where otherwise good dogs (and King says repeatedly that Cujo was one of those rare good dogs) develop rabies and kill.

To that extent, the "monster in the closet" becomes more metaphorical than horrific. In spite of its emphatic fairy-tale beginning, with the phrase "Once upon a time" isolated on the first page, or its frequent references to situations as being like fairy tales, Cujo is stridently realistic. The opening paragraphs define the monster that had afflicted Castle Rock:

> He was not werewolf, vampire, ghoul, or unnameable creature from the enchanted forest or from the snowy wastes; he was only a cop named Frank Dodd with mental and sexual problems. (2)

Frank Dodd kills himself in The Dead Zone; the physical manifestation of the "monster" disappears. But as King notes, the monster can never die: "It came to Castle Rock again in the summer of 1980" (3). Even more critically, King suggests that the monster has been present all along in sublimated forms, long before the minor outbreak of rabies that results in four deaths. Brett Camber began sleepwalking and having bad dreams in 1974, when he was only four years old (the same age as Tad at the time of the novel). George Bannermann has not forgotten Frank Dodd, nor has the rest of Castle Rock. Mothers and grandmothers frighten children into obedience by conjuring his name and image, keeping alive the essence of the monster.

Thus, to a large extent, Tad's monster in the closet seems as much a metaphor as manifestation --a suggestion King develops throughout. Again and again, he presents images of false horror: toilet bowls full of blood are really only the result of a chemical dye; Charity Camber has a premonition of her son's death in the barn, a presentiment undeveloped in the novel; the back of the Trenton's Pinto looks as if someone had committed hari-kiri there (an intriguing foreshadow-

ing, implying that Tad's death is both ritual and sacrificial), but it is only spilled ketchup. Elsewhere, King creates the texture of horror by judiciously placing emphatic adjectives in otherwise innocuous sentences. Vic refers to his discovery of Donna's infidelity as "grisly dessert following a putrid main course" (91-92); only the critical words "grisly" and "putrid" transform the passage into horror. Cujo is "like a horror-movie monster" (156); Donna's sudden fear that the Cambers are lying dead in the barn strikes her as "gargoyle-like" (180; my italics). The structural like turns reality into simile, denying the sense of the supernatural. Similarly vampires appear . . . in a dream; Vic enters the Narnia-like horror landscape of the closet . . . but only in his dream (185-186).

Still, King does allow characters to confront the monster. Tad sees it in the closet; Donna recognizes a malevolent sentience in the mad dog's eyes; Vic Trenton hears his son's voice from the closet, and George Bannerman recognizes Frank Dodd in Cujo's eyes. Yet in each instance, the characters are under inordinate stress--Bannerman stands within moments of death--and their perceptions, like perceptions throughout the novel, are distorted. They might be seeing tricks of light and shadow, as in Tad's case, or hallucinating.

On the other hand, King explicitly highlights the impossibly coincidental events that isolate Donna and Tad on Camber's farm: a faulty dye-lot, a stuck pin in a carburetor, Charity Camber winning something for the first (and as even she realizes, the only) time in her life and standing up to her husband; Vic's isolation from Donna because of the Sharps debacle and her infidelity; Steve Kemp's decision to trash the Trenton home, throwing both Vic and the police momentarily off track; Camber's stopping his mail delivery; Bannerman's decision (out of character, given what we know of him from The Dead Zone) to break procedure when he sees the battered Pinto in the Camber's yard. All of these situations, focusing as they do on Tad Trenton dying in the sun, suggest a larger force at work than mere coincidence.

There is, of course, a reason for the seemingly inevitable progression of events. As King's mock hero Slade says, he rescues Sandra Dawson in

the nick of time because he always does--"Steve King sees to that" (Maine Campus 23 July 1970). The deadly sequence leading to Tad's death occurs because Stephen King so orders his fictional universe. Yet in this case, even King was caught by surprise. In a question session at the Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (March 1984), King was asked why he let Tad die. His response was that he had not intended to; from the beginning, Tad was to live, as in King's original screenplay, the basis for Don Carlos Dunaway and Lauren Currier's final version. Instead, King said, he had Donna push Vic away from Tad's body and begin giving the boy artificial respiration; only when he realized that twenty minutes had passed (306) did King accept Tad's death as irrevocable, an explanation for the repeated "Tad was still dead" threading through the final pages of the novel.

In this world--and in the world of Cujo--dogs do develop rabies and little boys do die. it isn't pleasant; it just is.

The feeling that Cujo is a monster or even (as Jean Strouse argues) possessed by the evil spirit of Frank Dodd is at best ambivalent. For every passage linking Cujo with Dodd or suggesting that events lie outside the natural order of things, King provides an equal and opposite passage, culminating in the final paragraphs of the novel. The characters have departed. The Trentons are resuming their shattered lives and, finally, for them "it was a little better. A little" (316). The Cambers have a new dog and a new life, one far more hope-filled than the old one. And Cujo is gone. Divorced from the emotional weight of events, the narrative voice speaks calmly and soothingly:

> It would perhaps not be amiss to point out that he had always tried to be a good dog. . . . He had never wanted to kill anybody. He had been struck by something, possibly destiny, or fate, or only a degenerative nerve disease called rabies. Free will was not a factor. (318)

If there is a "monster" in Cujo, it is life itself . . . or perhaps time, since with one exception,

the major characters in the novel are obsessed by age and the passing of time. Aunt Evie, like Stella Flanders of "The Reach" the oldest member of her community and a harbinger of change, is fully absorbed by time--her status is a result of her having experienced more of it than anyone else. Tad Trenton, on the other end, is almost unaware of time and the changes it brings. Only with difficulty can he recognize an older version of himself in his dream (another false foreshadowing, since he will not live that long). For him, life is present-tense. Between these two lies a range of characters effected (and afflicted) by time. Donna's fears of aging impel her into the abortive affair with Kemp; his vanity, coupled by the discovery of gray hair in his beard, stimulates his violent response to her rejection. Charity Camber sees how time had worn her and her sister; even more critically, she sees Brett adopting his father's worst characteristics. Gary Pervier lives in a lost past, uncaring of any future at all. He almost lives to die, and finally gets his wish. Bannerman's past is haunted by his disastrous failure to connect Frank Dodd with the series of murders--this connection with The Dead Zone gives Bannerman's death an air of penance and restitution as he equates the mad dog with an earlier incident of madness.

It is as if King intends Tad as a sacrifice. The one character untouched by time dies. Brett has begun modeling himself after his father, repeating Joe Camber's phrases, attitudes, and physical mannerisms; he has moved into the adult world of time-consciousness, simultaneously losing his innocence, and in that sense is safe. Gary Pervier has spent years trying to die; Joe Camber stands between Brett and the boy's future. They too die. But attention focuses on Tad Trenton. Although King has frequently disavowed intentional symbolism in characters' names, Tad, like Todd in "Apt Pupil," reflects the German Tod, "death." If Cujo is an "Unconquerable force" (Warner), then Tod becomes the object against which that force expends itself, temporarily at least.

To consider these points is not to digress into symbolical readings or psychological suppositions. It is merely to say that in reading Cujo, one becomes aware of an odd kind of logic, of a

progression of theme and imagery that parallels the progression of events. That Tad must die is not so much inevitable as realistic; sometimes such things happen. Youth dies and frustrated, discouraged adults must carry on. The final paragraphs of the novel, the coda restoring peace and meaning to Castle Rock, turns the reader further and further away from the tragedy of Tad's death to the reconciliation between Vic and Donna, to the renewed hope Charity Camber feels for Brett, and to Cujo himself, with a brief, final glance at the rabbit's bones lying undisturbed forever.

Cujo is a fascinating, painful novel. It reaches out beyond itself to touch other of King's works: The Dead Zone, The Stand, Christine and The Talisman; "The Reach" and "The Raft"; and most significantly, Rage, Roadwork, and Thinner. Charity Camber's reactions to men's hunting trips re-creates a crucial scene from Rage; Althea Breakstone's disintegration following the death of her son not only foreshadows Donna's collapse at the end of Cujo but echoes Mary Dawes' in Roadwork. When Donna appears wearing white shorts and a red blouse, King adumbrates the "uniform" that appears in Thinner (39, 40, 187, 299). The latter connections are understandable; as King's agent, Kirby McCauley, says: "Steve thought of Cujo as more of a Bachman book. There was nothing supernatural about it, and it certainly had a downbeat ending" (Brown).

Cujo remains ambiguous and ambivalent. At times it evokes the visceral reactions associated with horror fiction; Debra Stump argues that Tad's death helps keep Cujo "within the genre" (136). Yet it constantly de-emphasizes the supernatural, allowing connections between Cujo, Frank Dodd, and the monster in the closet to remain as tenuous as possible.

In The Dead Zone (1979), King's directions seem clearer. Although preceding Cujo by two years, it fits logically after Cujo in a discussion of King's treatment of the supernatural. Cujo leaves the question open; The Dead Zone answers and explains.

There are, of course, additional connections between the two, primarily the presence of Frank

Dodd. Although both Douglas Winter (Art 97) and Leonard Heldreth (146-147) have noted that King added the references to Dodd in a later draft of Cujo, the decision to cross-reference with The Dead Zone helped establish the later novel even more clearly as King's "first attempt at exceeding the traditional limits of the horror genre" (Stump, "A Matter of Choice" 131). The realism of character, setting, and action King develops in The Dead Zone spills over into Firestarter and Cujo, endowing them with greater objectivity and possibility and shifting them closer to science fiction or mainstream literature than to horror.

Reading (or re-reading) The Dead Zone confirms King's strength in characterization. Although many of the episodes seem incredible, the characters are not. By dedicating more space to minor characters than many writers might dare, King allows Johnny Smith (the archetypal "common man") and the others to develop beyond the pages. Readers can empathize with their struggles and fears to a degree unusual even in King. The final passage, as Sarah intuits Johnny's presence in the cemetery, is particularly strong, since the reader has participated deeply in the loves, lives, and losses of both. The resolution is not perfect, but it is the best one can expect in an imperfect world.

King's emphasis on character explains much of the novel's attraction. Douglas Winter (RG 75), Fritz Leiber (FI), Alan Warren (23) and others, have discussed The Dead Zone as among King's finest novels, if not the finest. Such a claim demands support, and the support is not long in coming. The Dead Zone is one of King's most restrained works, handling both the everyday and the paranormal with extraordinary skill, weaving empathy with interest, action with engagement, and avoiding a too-frequent use of King's characteristic scatological language. And, as Leiber says, it does so without relying on supernatural elements as short-cuts to reader interest. The Shining would be a very different novel without the malevolence King attributes to the Overlook; The Dead Zone could succeed without any reference to the supernatural at all, merely on the strength of its clear, precise characterization.

In fact, King goes out of his way to deny the

supernatural in The Dead Zone, just as he would do in Cujo. In Cujo everything could be explained through rabies and coincidence. Even the connections with Frank Dodd, or Vic and Donna Trenton's eerie experiences in Tad's closet could result from hallucination, hyper-sensitivity, or other psychological quirks.

In The Dead Zone, King moves even further from the supernatural. True, Johnny Smith does have an ability beyond most human experience, but it is treated in the novel as paranormal rather than abnormal. Weizak casts his explanation of Johnny's state in technical, scientific terminology. "You may also quote me as saying," he tells the assembled journalists," that this man is now in possession of a very new human ability, or a very old one." Johnny's damaged brain limits him but also opens new perceptions, not easily understood perhaps but still explainable:

> another tiny part of John Smith's brain appears to have awakened. A section of the cerebrum within the parietal lobe. This is one of the deeply grooved sections of the 'forward' or 'thinking' brain. The electrical responses from this section of Smith's brain are way out of line from what they should be, nuh? Here is one more thing. The parietal lobe has something to do with the sense of touch--how much or how little we are not completely sure--and it is very near to that area of the brain that sorts and identifies various shapes and textures. And it has been my own observation that John's "flashes" are always preceded by some sort of touching. (Ch. 11, pt. 2)

The point here is not the validity of King's science; perhaps this passage is more of what Michael Demarest calls "pseudoscientific hokum" in Firestarter. What is important is that in the context of the novel, Johnny Smith's actions and abilities receive careful, rational explanation based on scientific observation and expressed in scientific language. No matter how extraordinary the manifestation of those abilities, King constantly returns

to physiological causes: brain trauma, either from the accident or from the skating incident when Johnny was a child.

More than anything else, this element of the novel differentiates it from what many readers consider archetypal Stephen King. There are no monsters in The Dead Zone. Or rather, the monsters are only too obviously human: cruel and manipulative types like Greg Stillson, Sonny Elliman, or Richard Dees, the representative of Inside View (an ironic title, in light of Johnny's ability); unthinking mobs led by demagogues; or simply insensitive people carried away by situations, as with those who beg Johnny to locate missing relatives without realizing how deeply it hurts him to handle a scarf from a dead man. Yet even their deviousness, their callousness, and their insensitive curiosity are clearly human; it requires no crossing into the supernatural for most of the characters to remain believable.

In addition, The Dead Zone moves beyond Cujo in its sense of threat. Cujo, frightening as he may be (and that is frequently inordinately so), is still only a dog. He kills four people and injures one more before he is killed. The tragedy is local and personal, warranting only brief mention in the newspapers.

The Dead Zone begins that way, but quickly expands its focus. Johnny Smith's first manifestations of his new ability are equally local and private. He knows that Marie Michaud's boy will respond well to surgery; he knows that Weizak's mother is alive; he tells Sarah where to find her lost wedding ring. With Eileen Magown, however, his ability expands beyond the personal level. Her home is threatened by fire, an external, destructive force circumvented by Johnny's newly developed ability. As The Dead Zone progresses, Johnny's influence widens, becoming increasingly important. By identifying the Castle Rock killer, he potentially saves the lives of a number of women. By convincing Chuck Chatsworth not to attend the graduation party, he saves scores of lives even though seventy-five young people die. And by stopping Stillson's election, he may have averted a global catastrophe.

The transition from private and internal to public and external defines the increasing com-

plexity of The Dead Zone. Winter's analysis of the novel in Art concentrates on the Jekyll-Hyde manifestations of evil, beginning with Johnny Smith's grotesque Halloween mask as symbol of potential, internal evil, expanding to include the wheel of fortune as symbol of external evil, and culminating in Greg Stillson's identification with the laughing tiger: a man beneath the tiger suit, and beneath the man a beast (70-73). Even beyond the overtly symbolic imagery, however, The Dead Zone couples the suggestion of visceral horror present in such vivid images as Frank Dodd's murders and suicide or Greg Stillson's bloody destruction of the dog in the Prologue, with a consistent realism of setting and characterization.

The Dead Zone is also an intensely personal novel. Written between 1976 and 1977, at a time when King was having difficulty writing (Winter, Art 76), it reflects a number of personal elements. Vera Smith's death carries the same power as in Roadwork or the death scene in "The Woman in the Room," both conscious connections with King's mother; the relationship between mother and son in the fictions gains strength by echoing King's experiences.

More positively, early in The Dead Zone, Johnny Smith is approached by David Bright, a reporter from the Bangor Daily News. Initially interested primarily in Smith as a recovered coma victim, Bright covers the story of Eileen Magown's house and is also present at the disastrous televised interview that results in Vera Smith's heart attack and death. Unlike Roger Dussault or, later in the novel, Richard Dees, David Bright is an honest, responsible newsman uninterested in sensationalism or manipulation of the news.

Although a minor character in The Dead Zone, Bright is important as a connection between fiction and life. While at UMO, King wrote for The Maine Campus, then edited by David Bright. In the "Garbage Truck" columns, King refers to Bright: to his courageous responses to harrassment during the march to end the war (15 May 1969); to his friendship (8 August 1969); to his expertise as editor (30 October 1969); and as one of King's candidates for "Gutsiest Student Body Members" in the final "Birth Announcement" column (21 May 1970). By in-

cluding Bright in The Dead Zone under his own name and as a journalist, King accentuates the realistic tone of the novel.

Similarly, a brief reference to Harrison Beach (Ch. 1, part 4) echoes King's early poem "Harrison State Park '68" (1968), with its oblique references to violent death, as well as Harrison College in Firestarter (1980). Again, these touches subtly reinforce the strength of The Dead Zone by giving the novel outside referents; it exists not only as an isolated fiction but also in relation to other fictions and to external experience.

The Dead Zone, like Cujo, may be atypical, given what many readers expect from Stephen King. It is, however, one of his strongest novels, compelling in movement and in depicting the unrest of the seventies, forceful in style and execution, and convincing in characterization--without relying on supernatural horror to generate interest.

After completing The Stand, King felt written out. He finished "Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption" (DS 1982), then began The Dead Zone. Part way through, he set the manuscript aside and started Firestarter. After drafting about a third of Firestarter, he returned to The Dead Zone; the two novels were written almost simultaneously, a fact that helps explain similarities between them, the most important for this discussion being their attitudes toward the interaction of the natural and the supernatural.

In an interview with Douglas Winter in January, 1984, King commented on thematic parallels between Firestarter and Carrie and on the probable reaction of critics to those parallels. As a genre writer, he would undoubtedly be accused of self-imitation:

> I thought that critics might claim that Steve King had started to eat himself; but I recognized that they would do no such thing if I were a "serious" novelist--they would say, as you have, that Stephen King is attempting to amplify themes that are intrinsic to his work. And, with that in mind, I made my peace with Firestarter. (Art 76)

King's responses are doubly important. First, they define the disparity King sees between his treatment as a novelist and the treatment afforded to "serious" (i.e., mainstream) novelists. And second, they establish connections between Firestarter and Carrie.

Both perceptions are helpful in assessing Firestarter. On the surface, it seems, as King feared, to repeat elements of Carrie: a young girl has unusual powers which, when unleashed, destroy everything around her. While writing the episode on the Mander's farm, King says in the interview, he became convinced that the parallels were too close, and subsequently set the novel aside.

Yet after working on The Dead Zone, he returned to the manuscript, re-read it, and decided that it not only differed from Carrie but improved upon the earlier novel (Winter, Art 76).

In part the difference lies in King's treatment of Charlie McGee's powers. As with Johnny Smith's powers in The Dead Zone, King bases her pyrokinesis on a scientific premise--or at least creates the illusion of scientific support. Michael Demarest refers to her "napalm-to-nuclear capabilities" and her "inflammatory forte" (K18); the trivial tone in these phrases, and in the review as a whole, parallels Demarest's attitude toward the novel. After summarizing the results of the Shop's experiments (Vicky develops telekinesis, Andy "comes off the couch" able to dominate minds), Demarest says:

> The drug has changed both parents' chromosomal structure: it is this mutation, not convincingly explained by King, that has produced Charlie's pyrokinesis. (K12)

Demarest may refer slightingly to King's basing the novel on at least a "pseudoscientific" supposition; what he misses is the importance of that attempt. It would have been easy enough for King merely to have asserted pyrokinesis; after all, in 'Salem's Lot, vampires simply appear, as supernatural phenomena simply occur throughout the horror literature as a genre.

King's insistence that the McGees' abilities lie outside the range of normal human experience

yet fit within the reality we accept as normal transforms Firestarter from just another horror novel about a haunted child into something more closely approximating what King achieved in The Dead Zone and Cujo, the two novels bracketing Firestarter. If, as his comments to Winter suggest, King was concerned about the different critical standards applied to genre writers and to mainstream writers, these three novels may have been in part a response to that disparity. While appealing to his reader's taste for horror, the three also define their characters, settings, and actions as possible within our objective, scientifically oriented universe.

There are, of course, contradictory elements in Firestarter as there were in The Dead Zone and Cujo. Certain scenes compel a visceral reaction consonant with supernatural horror. When one of Andy McGee's "pushes" becomes a "lethal ricochet" and Herm Pynchot shoves his arm into a garbage disposal unit, committing grisly, bloody suicide, Andy responds with "horror . . . and there was a caveman who capered and rejoiced." Throughout, as Winter notes, the novel concentrates on widening circles of paranoia and fear, on a "pursuit and confrontation pattern native to the espionage novel" (Art 77), it also depicts increasingly dangerous potentials of Charlie's powers. While her mother could only absent-mindedly close refrigerator doors and her father could at most "push" a few people into greater self-confidence, Charlie possesses more frightening powers. At first, she too restricts her actions to individuals or small, non-threatening manifestations: she sets fire to the chauvinistic soldier's shoes and steals coins from telephone booths. Later, as the chase intensifies, she must expand the limits of her power, destroying men and machines until finally Wanless describes her as having the potential to split the earth itself "like a china plate in a shooting gallery."

Balancing these assertions of the horrific, however, are King's repeated and insistent connections between the McGees' powers and scientific research. Throughout the novel, he explains their apparently supernatural abilities; and, as in The Dead Zone, the question of whether or not the explanations are sufficient is secondary to the

role those explanations play in creating verisimilitude in the novel. Even Charlie's unwillingness to use her power is defined in terms of psychological conditioning--although underlying it is King's insistence that good characters in his novels rarely instigate action; they are more frequently acted upon (Winter 78). He chooses to clothe his thematic and moral purposes in the garb of scientific, explainable phenomena, even having Wanless make a symbolic connection between the fictional Charlie McGee and the historical John Milton, reinforcing the sense of Charlie's world as ours.

There is horror in Firestarter--and fear and terror, as de Laurentiis' recent film graphically shows. But there is also more, as there was more in Carrie, The Dead Zone, and Cujo. All four approach the boundaries of mainstream fiction, at times bridging the gap between it and genre fiction.

King follows a similar pattern in many of his short stories. In addition to the three stories from Different Seasons, "The Woman in the Room," and "The Last Rung on the Ladder," others focus on the horror implicit in this world: "Cain Rose Up," with its crazed killer; "The Man Who Loved Flowers," with its exploration of perverted sexuality and murder; "Man With a Belly," a study in meaningless circles of retribution; "Morning Deliveries," which blends pastoral settings with covert madness; "Suffer the Little Children," which allows for two equally possible explanations, madness or the supernatural, but does not force either on the reader; "Survivor Type," with its naturalistic account of self-cannibalism; and "The Wedding Gig," which avoids the supernatural entirely in its tale of a monstrous bride. (See SW.)

In other narratives, however, King begins with a realistic or naturalistic presentation, then shifts into the supernatural. In both "The Reach" (1981) and Thinner (1984), for example, he works through the possibilities inherent in this world before reaching out to touch the inexplicable. Stella Flanders achieves a life-like power early in "The Reach," long before King suggests the presence of ghosts and, through the metaphor of Stella crossing the frozen reach, allows the

reader to cross unseen boundaries between this and other worlds (SW 166-170). This tension between the seen and the unseen, between the rational and the irrational, and the culminating resolution admitting both makes "The Reach" one of King's most satisfying fictions.

With Thinner, the transition is more obvious, and for that reason the novel provides an ideal bridge between this chapter and the one following. In spite of the asserted, visual horror of the opening paragraph, the novel actually begins within the world of objective and explainable phenomena. Billy Halleck, his wife, his friends, and his doctor all work through a list of possibilities to explain his weight loss: nervousness, excessive dieting, anorexia nervosa, herpes, heart irregularities, and even that ultimate, pervasive "horror" in King's fiction, cancer. Only after exhausting all rational explanations does Halleck accept the irrational--that he has been cursed.

Even then, King tempers the manifestation of supernatural horror with realism. There are in fact two curses in Thinner. Taduz Lemke touches Halleck's cheek, and mysteriously Halleck loses weight. In turn, Halleck curses Lemke and the gypsy band with the curse of the white man from the city; it is a pragmatic curse, firmly rooted in the historical attitude of city-dwellers toward transients, and embodied by Ginelli. When Ginelli attacks the camp with poison, guns, and threats against Lemke and his family, the curse is fulfilled--without any supernatural intervention. By the end of Thinner, King has balanced the two elements. On the one hand, Halleck faces death caused by a potassium and electrolyte imbalance in his system--a scientific explanation for the outcome of the gypsy curse. On the other, he receives the pulsating pie, as nauseatingly horrific an image as any in King. In addition, settings and descriptions combine to emphasize both the realistic and the supernatural. A glimpse of Halleck is sufficient to give a boy nightmares, just as his presence turns the boardwalk into a carnival freak show. (See also SK/RB 115-137.)

With Thinner, King extends the progression explored in Carrie, The Dead Zone, Firestarter and Cujo to its logical limits and beyond. When the gypsy curse is spoken, King crosses from the

twilight lands of possibilities into the world of the supernatural; before us now lie the realms of vampires, ghosts, and monsters . . . another facet of the imagination of Stephen King.

Chapter V

"GHOULIES AND GHOSTIES"

The Shining, 'Salem's Lot, Cycle of the Werewolf, Pet Sematary

Reading the works of Stephen King frequently calls to mind an old Scottish invocation:

> From ghoulies and ghosties
> And long-legged beasties
> And things that go bump in the night,
> Good Lord deliver us!

In spite of King's frequent forays into mainstream and near-mainstream fictions, there are sufficient "things that go bump in the night" in his works to satisfy the most compulsive craving for horror. And, again in spite of his demonstrated ability to entertain and engage readers without resorting to things horrific or supernatural, King is best known for these explorations of the supernatural, even though only a few of his novels and marginally more of his short stories involve what might be considered "traditional" horror creatures: ghosts, vampires, werewolves, etc.

While King is aware of the background and heritage of horror (see Indick, "Literary Tradition"), his works transform that heritage into a presentation uniquely Stephen King's, uniquely appropriate for his contemporary readers. Part of his inordinate appeal stems from his ability to make horror seem possible, if not probable, within the context of his readers' experiences; only occasionally, as in the two mens' club tales, "The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands" and "The Breathing Method," or in a work of conscious pastiche, as in "Crouch End," does he evoke the language, strucures, and effects of another age. Early in his

career, he advised beginners trying to break into the men's magazine horror market that prospective writers must

> Throw away Poe and Lovecraft before you start. . . . Both of these fine writers were rococo stylists, weaving words into almost Byzantine patterns. . . .
>
> A great many writers begin with the mistaken notion that "the Lovecraft style" is essential to success in the field. Those who feel this way no doubt pick up the idea by reading the numerous Lovecraft-oriented anthologies on sale. But anthologies are not magazines, and while the idea is no small tribute to H.P.L.'s influence on the field, it's simply not so. If you're looking for alternatives (ones that are adaptable to the men's magazine format), I'd recommend John Collier, Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch (who began as a Lovecraft imitator and has made a successful switch to a more modern style), and Harlan Ellison. All of these writers have short story anthologies on the market, and a volume of each makes a wonderful exercise book for the beginner. ("Market Writer and the Ten Bears" 11-12)

More commonly, King takes his own advice and welds contemporary style, structures, images, and attitudes onto the traditional forms, with the result that his fictions both partake of and transform what has gone before. "Dolan's Cadillac," for instance, is at once recognizably influenced by Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," yet unequivocably Stephen King in its extended descriptions, its concentration on visceral responses to pain and grief, and its self-conscious cross-referencing with King's own fiction. Only rarely does he present substantially unaltered representations of conventional horrors; more frequently, he either transmogrifies them to suit his narrative purposes or constructs his own inimitable brand of "creature": the inexplicable black thing in "The Raft"; Richie Grenadine in "Gray Matter," transformed through some process that defies definition into a

thing that defies description; or the sand-entity in "Beachworld," which suggests science fiction (i.e., Stanislaw Lem's sentient ocean in Solaris) while equally asserting horror fantasy. Still, his fiction occasionally allows the "ghosties and ghoulies" of traditional supernatural horror to peek through.

Ghosts and Hauntings

With the exception of the invisible staff and guests at the Overlook Hotel in The Shining, the execrable but largely undeveloped Roland Le Bay in Christine (about whom more in a later chapter), the image of Hubie Marsten hanging from the rafters of the Marsten House in 'Salem's Lot, and a hint of ghostly presence in The Stand (786-789), King's novels do not concentrate on that staple of the supernatural horror, the ghost.

To move into the realm of the ghostly, readers are better served by King's short stories. "The Reach" touches only the outer fringes of that ghostly landscape, looking more toward this life than to the next. The ghostly presences Stella Flanders meets are but extensions of what she has known for nearly a century in her isolation on Goat Island; their voices are gentle and warm and sing of love, a repeated motif in Skeleton Crew (SW 166-170). The ghosts do not frighten; they invite. Like Conrad Aiken's "silent snow, secret snow," they whisper peace.

Similarly, while "Squad D" may be considered a "ghost story" of sorts, it entails an intriguingly compassionate haunting: a figure mysteriously appears in a photograph, reuniting comrades in arms and bringing resolution and an initially uncomfortable peace to families disrupted by the Viet Nam conflict. In spite of the presence of suicide and death, both stories are oddly optimistic and upbeat; in neither case do the "ghosts" resemble the ectoplasmic entities of traditional tales.

This does not mean, however, that King is incapable of creating, or uninterested in, ghosts that rant or ghosts that threaten. While "Nona" is in part an exercise in the psychology of horror and madness, it can also be interpreted as a rather traditional ghost story, complete with the

appurtenances associated with nineteenth century ghosts: a graveyard, a white mausoleum, an empty bier with "withered rose petals . . . scattered across it like an ancient bridal offering," and the final, horrifying vision of the decaying body ripped open and exposed, as if "turned into a womb" (SC 356). The sexuality present in many ghost stories (including the sublimated and repressed sexuality of James's The Turn of the Screw) here becomes foremost; the narrator is sexually obsessed and repressed, uncomfortable with his own masculinity and threatened by the femininity he translates into images of rats and spiders. "Nona" not only frightens through its supernatural elements but threatens with its re-construction of madness.

More ambiguously, King works directly with revenants in "Sometimes They Come Back," defining Vinnie Corey, Robert Lawson, and David Garcia as ghosts, as malevolent in their own way as Nona. In addition, however, King includes a complication when Jim Norman conjures the Wayne-thing--not quite a ghost, possibly a demon, certainly a threat. When it arrives, "the air became heavier. There was a thickness in it that seemed to fill the throat and the belly with gray steel" (NS 172). It speaks with a voice unlike Wayne's, and when the three attack the Wayne-thing and wither away, it "seemed to melt and run together. The eyes went yellow, and a horrible, grinning malignancy looked out at him" (NS 175). Even though the Wayne-thing had helped Jim Norman rid the world of three evil presences, it remains, a shadow and a threat.

Ben P. Indick has referred to The Shining as "Stephen King's consummate ghostly tale" ("Literary Tradition" 183). It is certainly that . . . and much more. While ghosts aplenty inhabit the corridors and suites of the Overlook Hotel, King often draws attention away from the ghosts to the Hotel itself. It is, with Shirley Jackon's The Haunting of Hill House (King admires both the novel and the film version, by the way), an archetypal haunted house. Yet the Overlook differs greatly from the austere and lonely Hill House with its upright walls, neat bricks, firm floors and doors "sensibly shut":

> silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone" (3)

The Overlook, on the other hand,

> was having one hell of a good time. There was a little boy to terrorize, a man and his woman to set one against the other, and if it played its cards right they could end up flitting through the Overlook's halls like insubstantial shades in a Shirley Jackson novel, whatever walked in Hill House walked alone, but you wouldn't be alone in the Overlook, oh no, there would be plenty of company here. (281)

In addition, King blends motifs from other literatures with the ghost story and the haunted-house story. The Shining has its share of monsters: the topiary animals, not quite ghosts yet as dependent as the ghosts upon the malevolent sentience controlling the Overlook for their temporary life; the black thing in the playground, again not quite defined as a ghostly manifestation; and the Jack-thing, the walking dead that Jack becomes when the Overlook enters him and uses his physical body to attack Danny.

Picking up threads from the Gothic tradition, King includes a contemporary version of the Gothic castle, isolated among lowering and "sublime" mountain peaks and staffed by a full complement of unsavory, supernatural inhabitants ("Every big hotel has got a ghost"), threatening and brooding, inviting to Jack Torrance's flawed Byronic character. And, true to his Gothic backgrounds, King incorporates premonitions and dreams, both true and false, most emphatically in the figure of Tony, a vague manifestation of Danny's own perceptions; Danny's full name, after all, is Daniel Anthony Torrance. Madness is similarly a consistent threat throughout, as each of the main characters questions his or her sanity in the face of clearly irrational, inexplicable occurrences. King never forgets, however, that fear of madness is a last resort of rational minds, an ironic vestige of normality. In The Shining, the problem is

less madness than the simple fact that the Overlook is, in spite of all rationality, haunted and haunting. Stanley Kubrick's film of The Shining errs by insisting on Jack Torrance's madness; too much in the film could be explained as a result of Jack' insanity and its effects on Danny's sensitive imagination. King, on the other hand, places the Overlook at the center; his novel concerns ghosts and hauntings, avoiding the "easy" rationalistic explanation of insanity.

King also weaves references to fairy tales into the narrative, but fairy tales of the darker sort--a technique Peter Straub would later expand in Shadowland (chapter 4 of The Shining is in fact called "Shadowland"). In an inversion of "Little Red Riding Hood," for example, King makes the grandmother the object of horror. In spite of Tony's warnings and Danny's own understanding that the Overlook threatens himself and his father, Danny chooses to remain; the alternative is to visit grandmother's house and confront a contemporary monster which, like the wolf in the tale, wants to eat Danny and Wendy (201-202). Later, as Danny confronts more archaic terror in a haunted room, he recalls a fairy tale his drunken father once told him and couples it with his perception of his grandmother: "what big teeth you have grandma and is that a wolf in a BLUEBEARD suit or a BLUEBEARD in a wolf suit . . ." (214). If one accepts Eric S. Rabkin's psychological interpretation of "Little Red Riding Hood" as admonishing its listeners about the dangers of maturation (37-38), the relationship of the fairy tale to Danny Torrance becomes even more critical; like Red Riding Hood, he too must ultimately face danger alone, isolated from adult support yet trapped in a world the adults have created (unless--drawing the analogy perhaps too far--Hallorann is seen as the hunter-figure who rescues Danny at the last moment). As with so many of King's young characters, Danny Torrance is forced to act older, more responsibly than his years would normally allow since even fairy tales turn against Danny, joining with the Overlook to weave a tighter texture of terror.

In spite of King's momentary excursions into fairy tale, however, the Overlook is haunted; when, at the end, Hallorann sees a monstrous dark

shape escaping through the blasted windows of the Presidential suite, looking like a "huge, obscene manta" before scattering to the winds, King implies that something had possessed the Overlook and brought the ghosts and topiary animals to life even as it destroyed Jack Torrance . . . and has now escaped. Since evil is frequently external to characters, coming in its own time and through its own will, it cannot be destroyed; the best King's characters can hope for is a temporary victory in a single, isolated skirmish. As in 'Salem's Lot, The Shining, The Stand, Christine, Pet Sematary, The Eyes of the Dragon, The Talisman, and so many of King's short stories, the horrific elements, though displaced, survive, and in their survival lies the kernel of future horror.

There is more to The Shining than this complex of horror motifs, however. The novel often refers to mainstream writers--poets, novelists, playwrights--as well as to fairy tales and fantasies. The result is a richly textured narrative, allusive and elusive. Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" provides a recurrent, crucial image, while King's references to Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland juxtapose horror with lighter fantasy, punning on Carroll's title; for Danny Torrance, the rabbit hole signals his entry into a "land full of sick wonders" (306). Balancing the fantasies of Poe and Carroll, however, Jack Torrance refers to Sean O'Casey's plays as models for his own (104, 105); a dozen pages later, King makes what might be a similar pun on the title of O'Casey's Purple Dust as he describes Danny's "huge purple Volkswagon" as "burning up a dirt track" (116). Emily Dickinson's "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" contributes the image of Jack "all zero at the bone" (127), connecting the continuing serpent/snake imagery with the increasingly important and threatening snow, while at the same time tying The Shining at least temporarily to mainstream American literature.

King's allusions to mainstream literary figures also function structurally as a parallel to one of the most intriguing developments in The Shining. In addition to King's typical references to contemporary politics (Nixon, Rockefeller, Ford and others), King concentrates on allusions to the theater, working throughout the novel to create an

extended metaphor based on plays. He mentions such theatrical celebrities as Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, Carole Lombard, and Robert Redford; films such as Ray Milland's The Lost Weekend, an appropriate connection; and, more importantly, playwrights: Sean O'Casey, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neil, Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot.

After all, Jack Torrance is a playwright--or is trying to become such. And The Little School, which he is working on, reflects his own life in setting and characterization: he must eventually "school" both himself and his family (as Delbert Grady once schooled his). As a result, The Shining becomes an involved, convoluted exploration of play in multiple senses, in the importance of words and their relationship to reality. Again and again King allows Jack to refer to "his" play in phrases that echo ambiguously throughout the novel. Jack plans on finishing his play before the New Year; it would be done by then, he hopes, "for better or worse" (120). The Overlook completes its "play," literally a masque modeled on Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," between Thanksgiving and Christmas--definitely for the worse. During his disastrous telephone conversation with Ullman, Jack comments that he hadn't yet gotten around to murdering his wife; he was "saving that until after the holidays, when things get dull" (178). Later, as the Overlook insinuates itself more completely into Jack's will, he re-reads his play, discovering that it no longer reflects his view of reality. His loyalties have shifted, as has his conception of how the struggle must end, with himself becoming more like the authority figure, Danny like the recalcitrant, rebellious student. The play parallels life at the Overlook; and in a phrase foreshadowing the climax of the novel, King notes that Jack Torrance was unable to complete it. His attitudes toward himself, Wendy, and Danny are as ambiguous and uncertain as his attitudes toward his characters.

There is, of course, a reason for the centrality of play as image in The Shining. In addition to the immediate symbolical and imagistic value of play as mimesis, King uses drama--particularly tragedy--as a structural device. The novel is divided into five parts, reflecting the five acts of Shakespearean tragedy. "On The Shining

and Other Perpetrations" discusses his original conception for the novel explicitly in terms of Shakespearean tragedy, acts, and scenes, concluding with the comment that the project "probably sounds pretentious, and undoubtedly was" (14) but that the tragic structure created a sense of "staging" critical to the finished novel:

> The result was an incredibly strong sense of visualization for me, the writer, and that has apparently carried over to the book's readers, who seem to do more than simply dislike Mr. Kubrick's film of the book; they actually seem offended by it, or by Kubrick's concretization of the highly personal images with which the book provided them. (15)

The images in The Shining are indeed powerful: the wasps, with their pervasive sense of threat finally linked imagistically with the sentience of the Overlook itself; the topiary animals and the roque mallet, far more effective than Kubrick's substitutions; the elevator, carpet, and Presidential suite; the serpentine fire-hose, the image at the center of King's original idea for the novel and the one that formed the "bones of the book" ("On The Shining" 13). They remain with the reader, incrementally more powerful as King layers images with meaning after meaning, transforming them from the level of physical objects to increasingly symbolic devices. Even something as initially innocuous as a key becomes a powerful image when coupled with the blood-stained clock and the Poesque masque of death for which Danny functions as the key.

In keeping with the sense of novel as play, King also wrote an Epilogue and Prologue. Although they tied together many of the imagistic and narrative strands, the published novel would have been almost five hundred pages long had they been included. Accordingly, King deleted them on the advice of his editor at Doubleday. The Prologue, published later as "Before the Play," introduces many of the images and episodes alluded to in the novel; although interesting in itself, it is not entirely necessary to understanding The

Shining. The Epilogue has disappeared, except for the final chapter of the published novel--Wendy, Danny, and Hallorann in Maine, establishing order and direction to their shattered lives.

On an even deeper level, however, The Shining moves beyond the the motif of play reflecting life to touch upon language itself. Words are critical in the novel. Danny Torrance cannot read; Tony shows him frustratingly incomprehensible signs, and the recurrent "redrum" horrifies Danny primarily because of its meaninglessness. As Danny learns to read and unlocks the secrets of words, he understands more and more about the Overlook and its threat. Jack, on the other hand, moves in the opposite direction. Initially verbal, he becomes increasingly averbal, morose and withdrawn, unable to write, and finally, after the Overlook possesses him almost entirely, restricted in language to obscenities, scatological phrasing, and barbarisms. He loses control over the words that structure his reality, then loses that reality itself.

Hallorann similarly illustrates the importance of words. The "shine," after all, consists in the ability to communicate directly, to send words from one mind to another. As the novel approaches its climax, he loses contact with Danny, receiving instead the message sent by the Overlook: not words, but "a series of rebuslike images," painful and potent (391-392). Even after the boiler explodes and the great dark shadow erupts from the window of the Presidential suite, there is still danger. Searching for blankets in the shed, Hallorann sees the roque mallets, then receives a series of images: bone and blood juxtaposed with iced tea, swings, ladies in summer hats, and the sound of mosquitoes. King signals the danger Hallorann faces by transposing image for word.

This undercurrent of symbolic meaning reinforces the purpose of The Shining as horror novel. Horror, as King has so often pointed out, develops when disorder intrudes upon order. In The Shining, characters repeatedly move from order to chaos and back again, beginning with minor cycles and culminating in a reaffirmation of rationality and sanity. The final chapter seems anticlimactic in its calmness yet is essential to the novel. In

spite of what has happened at the Overlook, the change of location as the characters return to King's Maine assures that there is still order somewhere.

The Shining is about ghosts; it is about a haunted house; and it is about gothic romanticism. Yet these generic considerations are secondary to King's obsession with order. Because of this, and because of its brilliant handling of plot, theme, setting, characterization, image, symbol--the appurtenances of literature--it is also among King's most teachable novels, touching readers on levels far divorced from ghosts and haunts.

Vampires

"In the early 1800's," King says in the "Garbage Truck" column for December 18, 1969, "a whole sect of Shakers, a rather strange religious persuasion at best, disappeared from their village (Jeremiah's Lot) in Vermont. The town remains uninhabited to this day."

In this comment lies two important elements in 'Salem's Lot (1975), "Jerusalem's Lot" (NS 1978), and "One for the Road" (1977): first, the distinctive name, Jerusalem's Lot, apparently derived in part from Jeremiah's Lot; and second, the specter of a town inexplicably deserted.

Working from these beginnings through an interest in how a vampire could survive in contemporary American society, King completed one of his favorite novels, 'Salem's Lot. His second published novel (originally titled Second Coming), 'Salem's Lot is also among his rarest as far as collectible trade editions go. Initially selling at $7.95, by 1983 first editions in good condition sold for between $350 and $450; as of August 1985, only a decade after publication, the same volumes might command between $500 and $650, with a "mint" (i.e., virtually unread) copy running as high as $750. The initial press run was relatively small for Doubleday, perhaps fewer than 5,000 and possibly smaller even than the press run for Carrie. In addition, although the novel reached the best-sellers lists (King's first appearance in hardcover), he was still comparatively unknown and not as obviously collectible as he would become; many copies probably disappeared through hard use and

multiple readings. "No one seems to know why this particular book is so valuable," Peter Schneider concludes, however, adding that

> it is certainly no rarer than his first novel, Carrie, which goes for a good deal less. (This is borne out by the fact that first editions of 'Salem's Lot pop up in huckster rooms at conventions with the same regularity that H. P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon, with only three or four copies reputedly in existence, appeared in innumerable "dark and accursed" libraries.) (2709)

The mention of Lovecraft's name and fiction is appropriate in conjunction with 'Salem's Lot. The atmosphere surrounding Jerusalem's Lot recalls Lovecraft's backwoods New England, with its ramshackle buildings and eerily degenerate inhabitants. Not that King goes out of his way to echo Lovecraft; in fact, the first chapters of 'Salem's Lot are remarkably clear of such authorial borrowings. Alan Ryan provides a careful, detailed account of King's narrative movement in the opening pages of the novel, beginning with the reference to Jackson's Hill House as an introductory sketch for the Marsten House. "It is essential," he says, "that the Marsten House, from the first moment we lay eyes on it, be scary." King incrementally "predisposes" the reader to fear, Ryan continues, by controlling the pace of action as Ben Mears approaches the Lot, delaying as long as possible the first view of the House itself, then revealing its "peaked, gabled roof" in the climactic position at the end of the sentence and the paragraph (190).

While Ryan's point is well taken, it is also important to note that King works--apparently with equal consciousness--at disallowing any particular sense of horror or dread this early in the novel. The atmosphere is curiously diffuse, the elements of fear and terror hidden for the most part in Ben Mears' memories, which he divulges only much later. Weaving through hints of things desperately wrong we see the landscape of King's Maine: the "grand final fling" of summer countering Mears' "not unpleasurable tingle of excitement in his

belly" (13). A near accident with a motorcycle unnerves Mears--for no immediately apparent reason--and then dissolves in a "burst of pleasure and recognition" as he spots a familiar red barn. Again and again, King volleys between images of fear and images of pleasure, delaying the moment when his narrative passes irrevocably into the realm of horror fantasy.

The atmosphere gradually thickens, shadows fall over the Lot, eerie and unspeakable events occur (which King carefully does not graphically define) until only one element remains hidden.

The vampire.

Even as perceptive a reader as Peter Straub reacted with surprise to the description of Barlow as Dud Rogers sees him: "My God! I thought: a vampire! Nearly everything about this moment took my breath away . . ." (8). The surprise, Straub says, was well planned, well staged, well paced. In a society surfeited with literary and cinematic vampires, where over 600 film versions of vampires have skulked across screens since the early 1900s and uncountable paperback novels have exploited every potential of the theme from the serious to the parodic, to introduce a vampire at all requires courage.

Indeed, most of the more successful recent revivifications of the vampire motif have altered the formula to make it more palatable. Colin Wilson's The Space Vampires (1976) is really about SF alien invaders who consciously cloak themselves in the paraphernalia of Bram Stoker's Dracula. F. Paul Wilson's The Keep and Whitley Strieber's The Hunger both posit alternate non-human but sentient species; the novels carefully incorporate and explain away most of the vampire lore. Somtow Sucharitkul's Vampire Junction (1984; as S. P. Somtow) moves his vampire through time and space, transforming Timmy Valentine into a rock musician, teen idol, arcade master, and vampire, finally settling his hero in backwoods Idaho.

But in 'Salem's Lot, King does not attempt any such transformation. Barlow is a vampire, pure and simple, arriving in the dead of night in a wooden crate, bearing no history (other than vague suggestions necessary to establish residence in the Lot). As Stoker did with Count Dracula and King would later do Cycle of the Werewolf, the ex-

ternal evil merely is. There are (and can be) no explanations.

In addition, of course, the novel carries King's distinctive trademarks: graphic descriptions (it is among his "bloodiest" novels); characteristic language, frequently intrusive and self-defeating; and characters working through their own levels of isolation and guilt. Ben Mears must face two "vampires" simultaneously; the external, physical Barlow, who threatens Mears' life, and the inner "vampire" of memory threatening to sap him of strength and vigor (in this sense, he seems a precursor to Straub's Miles Teagarden in If You Could See Me Now). Susan Norton faces similar estrangement from her parents and from Floyd Tibbets; she has chosen a new direction but the old does not want to let her go. Mark Petrie's case differs subtly; like so many children in King's fiction, he enjoys no inherent connection with his parents, but exists separately from them, with interests and fears and knowledge that they cannot share.

Even more typically, King creates and then destroys what seems an ideal family unit: Mears, Susan Norton, and Mark Petrie. It is clear from the start that Ben Mears and Susan Norton act as hero and heroine. It is equally clear that Ben and Mark will end up together; the prologue establishes that. Yet, as happens again and again in King's fiction, the triad is disrupted. Carrie White's father deserted his family, leaving Carrie with an unwholesome and fanatical mother; Wendy and Danny Torrance survive Jack's murderous attacks, to become a partial family under Hallorann's partial protection; in The Stand, The Dead Zone, Firestarter, Cujo, Christine, Pet Sematary, The Talisman, Roadwork, The Running Man, and Thinner--in virtually all of King's novels, in fact--the same disruption occurs, resulting in different alignments of parents and child but always entailing fragmentation.

In 'Salem's Lot, this fragmentation occurs perhaps most obviously because we observe it while the ties are still being created. Susan is drawn to Ben Mears, but barely meets Mark before her death; as King said in an interview:

I began having serious doubts about that

> character because I'd conceived of her as being a really independent Maine girl. I started to say to myself: "This girl is twenty-three years old and out of school--yet she's still living with her parents and not working." Belatedly I had to get her out of that situation, and it wasn't very long before I decided, "Well, I'll kill her off." It gave me great satisfaction to get rid of her. And I also thought that the reader's reaction would be: If Susan Norton can go, anybody can go. Nobody is protected. (Grant 20)

King's pragmatic decision parallels his symbolic fragmentation of relationships--no one is safe in the Lot.

The central alliance between Ben and Mark forms abruptly, forced upon both by violence and terror. And behind the three lurk shadowy figures from the Lot, alternatively supportive and threatening: Mrs. Miller and her roomers; Mark's parents; Floyd Tibbets, with his curious attack on Ben; Mabel Werts, the archetypal monstrous woman common throughout King's works. Against this backdrop, the possibilities for relationships shine brightly--but with the coming of the vampire, all is lost. Gary William Crawford calls 'Salem's Lot the "blackest of King's works" (44). Whether it descends into greater darkness than Pet Sematary is debatable; but Crawford correctly notes that 'Salem's Lot provides neither transcendence nor relief. At the end as at the beginning, there is only exhaustion and emptiness.

To this extent, 'Salem's Lot seems closely allied to the films that influenced King during his childhood, to those films of the fifties that exploited the paranoia of the times. King's vampire is curiously off-center in the novel; far more time is devoted to other characters, to townspeople who find themselves in terrifying situations at the hands of neighbors and former friends: Mark Petrie confronted by the spectre of Danny Glick suspended in the air outside his window; Charlie Rhodes rushing into the night, only to see his bus filled with familiar faces now drawn and white except for shadowed eyes and ruby

red lips; or Mabel Werts answering a friend's call for help and receiving a vampire into her home as she opens the door: "Glynis was standing there stark naked, her purse over her arm, grinning with huge, ravenous incisors. Mabel had time to scream, but only once" (393). The purse over the arm, with its suggestion of a mindless vestige of normality, may be the most horrifying image in the passage.

The same feeling pervades many films of the fifties. Don Siegel's original Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) builds a similar sense of unreality, paradoxically by means of its unrelenting realism of presentation. Neighbors are no different on the surface, but essentially changed. As with Ben Mears and Mark Petrie, the forces of change prove too great for Kevin McCarthy's character; in fact, the film version most frequently screened includes a revised ending far more optimistic than originally planned. The sense of total isolation and helplessness in Siegel's initial version was so overpowering that audiences rejected the film as first produced. Similarly, the external threats and overt hints of social paranoia in Jack Arnold's The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954) or Gordon Douglas' Them! (1954) or Christian Nyby's The Thing (1951) reflect throughout 'Salem's Lot, as do the myriad treatments of the vampire as cinematic staple.

The novel as finally published was in fact toned down by King's editors. An especially gruesome passage involving rats disappeared from Cody's death scene, for example. But what remains certainly ranks among King's most effective in evoking visceral responses. In "Market Writer and the Ten Bears" (1973), King identified ten phobias or "bears" that create the most convincing horror:

1. Fear of the dark
2. Fear of squishy things
3. Fear of deformity
4. Fear of snakes
5. Fear of rats
6. Fear of closed-on spaces
7. Fear of insects (especially spiders, flies, beetles)
8. Fear of death
9. Fear of others (paranoia)

10. Fear for someone else

The list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive; it simply represents what King calls his "top ten." Nor are these "bears" nightmares of the "nighttime variety"; instead, they are the "ones that hide just beyond the doorway that separates the conscious from the unconscious" (10).

In 'Salem's Lot, King opens that doorway as wide as he can, releasing virtually all ten of the "bears" in a flood over the reader--with the result that 'Salem's Lot is potentially one of King's most difficult works to read. Only the fact of its fantastic premise--that there really are vampires--allows the reader to compartmentalize and step away from the psychological and physiological manipulations King devises in the novel.

Of the many "ghosties and ghoulies and long legged beasties" King re-creates, his vampires, including as they do nearly everyone left behind in Jerusalem's Lot, remain the most vivid . . . and the most directly horrific.

One mark of the power inherent in 'Salem's Lot is that King has discussed possible sequels to it. While several of his novels invite sequels (the final paragraphs of Christine, for example, with the probability of yet another intrusion by the demon car into Dennis Guilder's life), he has specifically mentioned returning to the Lot. He has suggested that he might begin with Ben Mears and Mark Petrie and their joint decision to go back to the Lot and complete their task; alternatively, he has said that he might open with Father Callahan confronting his guilt and discovering a need to return to the Lot. In either case, the fact remains that 'Salem's Lot has cast as intricate and long-lasting a spell upon its creator as it has upon many of its readers.

Werewolves

We may tremble before the vampire; we may shudder at the ephemeral touch of the ghost; we may abhor the creature whose sole purpose is to wreak death and destruction.

But ultimately we pity the werewolf.

Where we might cheer the sight of Dracula disintegrating into dust or, as Frank Langella

did, spiraling into nothingness beneath the sun, we frequently react more ambiguously to the death of the werewolf. Whether it be Lon Chaney's classic 1941 portrayal, or Michael Landon's teenage werewolf, or a more contemporary version complete with bloodchilling special effects (David Naughton's in An American Werewolf in London, for example), the werewolf seems to inspire as much pity as terror.

Unlike other creatures of horror, the werewolf is often more sinned against than sinning. As Bill Pronzini aptly points out, the werewolf differs from other creatures of myth or legend. It is not created in the laboratory or one of the walking undead; it is neither zombie nor mummy preserved by tana leaves; it is not a vampire, a witch, or a demon. Instead,

> "He is just a man, a woman, a mortal human being.
> Who is cursed. (xiii)

The curse works in two ways. On the level of plot, it transforms an otherwise sane, rational individual into a ravening monster. More disconcertingly, however, on the level of theme and symbol it divorces that individual from reality, often arbitrarily isolating the afflicted person from society at large and from personal standards of morality and behavior. There frequently seems to be no inherent reason why the victim succumbs to the curse of the werewolf; it simply happens. The victim may not be at fault and often struggles valiantly against what is happening. Yet finally the victim--and further victims besides--suffer because of it.

Perhaps for this reason, of all the creatures available to King as a horror writer, the werewolf seems most alien to his temperament. The figure appears only briefly in the novels, in the Oshkosh overalled werebeasts in The Talisman, for example. The one work devoted to the werewolf, Cycle of the Werewolf, evolved almost as much by accident as design. Cycle is unusual in King's canon for its brevity and directness. As David Sherman says in his review of the book,

> King is in fine (albeit abbrevi-

> ated) form here, as space limitations pare his storytelling abilities to their bare essentials. Not having 400 pages to wax literary in, he makes it short and sweet. It's like watching the All-Star Game, and ace pitcher King only gets to work one inning. He strikes out the side, one-two-three; just enough of a demonstration to remind everyone why he's the boss. (37)

Originally intended as a series of vignettes for a calender with artwork by Bernie Wrightson, the narrative gradually outgrew the conception, finally appearing in a hardcover edition (trade and limited) from Land of Enchantment in 1983. As with so many of King's works, the price escalated dramatically, from an initial cover price of $28.50 to over $125 for the trade edition. Cost and inaccessibility kept Cycle from wide distribution until April 1985, when NAL/Signet brought out a paperback trade edition, making the narrative widely available for the first time. In his review of the Land of Enchantment edition, David Sherman concluded that "Cycle of the Werewolf is a worthy investment . . . but wait 'till it hits the discount bins before you invest" (37). Unfortunately for his prediction, and for would-be buyers, the first editions of Cycle barely reached retail outlets, let alone the discount bins.

As one of King's sparsest works, Cycle succeeds in spite of the fragmentation inherent in the narrative structure, with essentially a different story for each month, told quickly and concentrating on only a few hours at most. Cycle is an unusually moving piece, particularly when the reader meets Marty Coslaw in July--halfway through Cycle (even though King takes pains to connect Marty retrospectively with January in the segment for July, in part to suggest his presence throughout the year). Marty draws unusual empathy from the reader, as King discovered when he completed the narrative. Gradually, Marty took over, becoming the focus of attention before finally ridding Tarker's Mills of the werewolf. In fact, King felt so strongly that Marty should have emerged even sooner that his screenplay, Silver Bullet, based on Cycle, moves Marty more into the

center where he belongs.

The emphasis on Marty Coslaw differentiates King's version of the werewolf motif from more traditional ones. More frequently, writers and storytellers concentrate on the werewolf, describing its backgrounds, eliciting both sympathy and empathy as the reader watches a normal man or woman inextricably destroyed by fate . . . or accident. As a result, readers are as much drawn to the werewolf's struggles against the curse when in the human state, as repulsed by its actions as a beast. The antithesis between the character's responses, symbolized by the shifting form, signals an ambivalence within the reader as well.

In Cycle, King de-emphasizes this ambiguity by shifting his focus first to the victims, then to Marty Coslaw. The Reverend Lester Lowe does not appear, even indirectly, until April, when the narrative is nearly a third completed--and then only in a single-line reference, along with half a dozen other inhabitants of Tarker's Mills. He first enters as a substantive character when he delivers his sermon in May, with its ironically symbolic title "The Beast Walks Among Us." In Lowe's subsequent dream, King dramatizes his theme of the evil within. In spite of several other minor references, King does not reveal Lowe's importance in the story until October, and only in November does Lowe admit to himself that "something is . . . well, wrong with him."

More critically, King never creates empathy for Lowe, as one might expect for the victim of the curse. Lowe remains a placid figure, delivering rather boring sermons, almost invisible in the community, his relation to the beast unsuspected by anyone except a single crippled boy--and Lowe is so parochial in outlook that he cannot even identify the one person who threatens his secret. When he decides in November to search out the threat, he speaks in curiously mixed terms, refusing even at this late point to accept his own role in what is happening. "Who was it in July?" he wonders. "It's time to find out." Calmly reading his newspaper, Lowe rationalizes that "All things serve the Lord's will, I'll find him. And silence him. Forever."

Because of his passivity, Lowe never engenders the empathy often associated with the were-

wolf; as a result, readers look elsewhere for a focal point and find it in Marty Coslaw. A cripple, Marty is isolated from his friends and from his family. King emphasizes the mother's consistent brusqueness, the father's artificial "let's be pals" attitude, and the sister's minor cruelties that hide a deeper but inexpressible love.

In Tarker's Mills, love is at a premium, as are other human relations. Each victim of the werewolf expands the pervasive sense of isolation. Arnie Westrum (January), the unknown drifter (March), and the innocent but doomed youth Brady Kinkaid (April) are isolated physically. Stella Randolph (February) is isolated by her skewed romanticism and preoccupation with superficial manifestations of love as well as by the corpulence that makes her an object of ridicule in Tarker's Mills. Constable Lander Neary (August) ignores evidence that might have saved his own life, retreating into the public image of the law enforcement officer until it is too late. Milt Sturmfuller (November) abuses his wife physically and emotionally.

At the center, and most isolated of all, Marty Coslaw becomes the focus for King's attention in Cycle. He is crippled, but King never explains why or how. The cause is unimportant; its effects on Marty's life, however, are. His surviving the beast's first attack, his separation from his family in the following months, his discovery of the werewolf's identity, and his decision to confront the beast only extend his initial isolation. Even at the end, when Uncle Al sits with him during the long night of the last day of the year, he is in a sense alone. When the beast attacks, Uncle Al watches, stunned and unmoving, never firing the weapon he cradles in his lap. Only Marty acts, shooting the beast twice with the requisite silver bullets (the silver coming from his melted-down confirmation spoon).

Marty's disability and isolation are ultimately as much without rationale or justification as the fact of the werewolf itself. "Something inhuman has come to Tarker's Mill," King says early in "January":

as unseen as the full moon riding the

> night sky high above. It is the were-wolf, and there is no more reason for its coming now than there would be for the arrival of cancer, or a psychotic with murder on his mind, or a killer tornado. Its time is now, its place is here . . . .

Nor does Lester Lowe have any better explanation for what has occurred when he faces the truth in "November": "This--whatever it is--is nothing I asked for. I wasn't bitten by a wolf or cursed by a gypsy. It just . . . happened." The fact of the werewolf remains as inexplicable as cancer or psychosis or storm . . . or the paraplegia distorting a young boy's life.

King does allow the image of the werewolf to reflect externally humanity's internal state. "The beast within" is as critical in the narrative as the one without, as when Marty sees something in Lowe's eyes on Halloween night, the bestial within the human. Later, Lowe describes men hunting the beast on the evening of the November full moon. They enjoy the "chance to get out in the woods, pull beers, piss in ravines, tell jokes about polacks and frogs and niggers, shoot at squirrels and crows," he says. "They're the real animals."

Cycle adds an interesting complexity to the werewolf motif. It explores the man-beast, the creature that metaphorically defines two sides of human nature by separating them and giving each an appropriate physical form. At the same time, however, it punctuates the meaninglessness and arbitrariness of such a division. In a world where cancer can strike, where children die, where life is at best tenuous, does not a werewolf (however symbolically or metaphorically intended) effectively represent these external intrusions into human existence. King's were-beast both follows the tradition and transcends it, symbolizing at once inner and outer, internal human frailty and external circumstantial evil.

The publication of Signet's softcover edition of Cycle in April 1985 not only made the work more accessible to King's readers, but ameliorated two important complaints. A number of reviewers argued that while Cycle was interesting, it was too lightweight to justify the initial cover

price. More seriously, the original edition contained a number of typographical errors: "bloody" instead of "bloody," "Pice" instead of "piece." According to Edward Bryant,

> Apparently no editorial pencil ever touched the pages of CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF. The text was rife with typos. Funny--with a $29 book, one expects the publisher at least to proofread the text. But then on the jacket, the publisher apparently doesn't know the difference between "phenomena" and "phenomenon." (19)

In addition, the text refers to weapons that do not exist: a Colt Woodsman .38 and a .45 Magnum. Such difficulties alter the work, he concludes, by breaking the illusion of reality. If "part of Stephen King's effectiveness is his ability to suck readers into a recreated every day world," these distractions threaten to "break the spell" (19). Fortunately, with the appearance of the Signet edition, most of these "niggling little wrong details" have disappeared; Cycle of the Werewolf is both accessible and accurate. For the first time, King's general readership can enjoy his one extended treatment of the werewolf.

The Walking Dead . . . and Others

Beyond ghosts, haunted houses, vampires, and werewolves lies a vast range of additional horrors, limited only by imagination--the writer's and the reader's.

Some of King's creatures are easily classifiable. The amorphous thing in "Crouch End," like the monstrous possessed and possessing woman in "Gramma" or the giant rats in "Graveyard Shift" and other stories, reflects Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. Character, setting, and imagery in "Nona" suggest Poe at his graphic best.

Others filter through King's imagination and emerge altered from their originals. As closely related as the creature in "The Raft" may be to The Blob, it retains King's unique touch. It is at once frightening and mysterious. The description of Deke's death, as the creature forces his body

through a crack less than an inch wide, is one of the most graphically realized passages in King's fiction, creating the visceral response Lovecraft and others have argued is necessary in effective horror fiction. At the same time, the play of colors across and through the creature, the inexplicable power it exerts over Randy, and its apparent promise of beauty suggesting that it is ultimately a metaphor for unattainable artistic expression (at least in the earlier version), elevate the creature from a mindless protoplasmic entity, as in The Blob, and increase its symbolic value. If there is a beauty in the creature that can only be apprehended by risking self and identity, and if experiencing that beauty might itself be worth death, "The Raft" could almost be read dually as a tale of dark fantasy and as an allegory for the obsession that can result from art and creation.

On a more literal level, we find a troll in "The General," the third segment of Cat's Eye. In Night Shift, boogeymen hiding in closets reveal the face beneath rationality and reality; King's choice of a psychiatrist as the boogeyman's mask strengthens the symbolic value of that story. In "The Crate," King re-works a cartoon character, the Tasmanian devil, while "The Night of the Tiger" insinuates real animals into the texture of horror. Even the simple act of relaxing and drinking beer can be fraught with danger, as King illustrates in "Gray Matter."

Occasionally, King moves into the realms of gods and demons. "Sometimes They Come Back" encompasses demonology; "Children of the Corn" blends demon and god in "He Who Walks Behind the Rows," imagistically a conflation of pagan deity with Christian ritual and unfairly transformed into a Hollywood boogeyman in the film version. "The Lawnmower Man" reaches into classical mythology to resurrect Pan as nature god, while "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut" avoids almost all of the elements of horror (except, of course, for the strange creatures found on her car's bumper) to create an eerily optimistic tale of Olympus and its occasional and tengential connections with our world.

Yet of all of King's creatures, the most effective for the contemporary reader might be the walking dead. Based in part on George A. Romero's

visualization of shambling creatures in Night of the Living Dead (1968) and Dawn of the Dead (1979), King's version of the walking dead appears briefly in The Shining, to the extent that Wendy's knife kills Jack yet his body continues to function. Only later do the walking dead become a central motif, with the unfinished "Skybar" (1982) and the derivative "Father's Day" and "Something to Tide You Over" segments from Creepshow (1982), a collaborative work with Romero based on the old E.C. comics.

All of this is prefatory, however, to King's definitive (to date, at least) statement on the walking dead: Pet Sematary (1983), completed in May of 1979, withheld for several years, then revised in 1982 prior to publication. King's original reponse to the manuscript was that it was too dark, too unrelievedly intense for him to feel comfortable with it. The last of King's novels from Doubleday, Pet Sematary appeared as a means of meeting a contract requirement--what Winter calls "ransom for substantial money, earned by King's early novels, that had been withheld from him" (Art 131-132).

Even before it was published, the novel stimulated interest and controversy. In part because of the nature of the contract that resulted in its publication, King refused to promote the novel; his question-and-answer session with Douglas Winter at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (March 1984) was one of the few times that he spoke publicly about the book. His reticence enhanced Doubleday's publicity hype that the novel was too horrific even for Stephen King, a claim in part dispelled by King's current work on a screen version in conjunction with George A. Romero.

It seems fitting that Pet Sematary conclude a chapter called "Ghosties and Ghoulies . . ."; it is an omnibus of horror, including not only the reanimated dead but also ghosts, premonitions, dark houses and creaking floors, threatening shadows, things that go bump, and even a "long-legged beastie," if one chooses to so describe the mysterious, almost formless Wendigo that passes Louis Creed in the night.

Even more effectively, it weaves these ele-

ments into a narrative firmly based in reality: people, places, and events reflect King's life. Louis Creed works as doctor-in-residence at the University of Maine at Orono, King's alma mater. In a recent letter discussing Rage, King wrote that he originally submitted the novel under his grandfather's name; Guy Pillsbury, he added, was "a great guy and a Jud Crandall prototype if ever there was one" (Letter, 3 August 1985). One of the first critical episodes, the death of the Creed's cat, Winston Churchill, grew out of the death of King's daughter's cat. Three days after burying the cat, the idea for Pet Sematary came to King; recalling an experience with his son Owen running toward a road, King made an imaginative leap:

> . . . on one side of this two-lane highway was the idea of what if the cat came back, and on the other side of the highway was what if the kid came back --so that when I reached the other side, I had been galvanized by the idea, but not in any melodramatic way. I knew immediately that it was a novel. (Winter, Art 130)

It was a novel--but a difficult one for King to write and for his readers to accommodate. A first reading can be misleading; for someone wanting another 'Salem's Lot, The Stand, or Christine, Pet Sematary seems long, drawn-out, and slow, swirling muddily and interminably (it seems) around the figure of Church the cat, then accomplishing the final horror in only a few pages. A second reading suggests a different structure, however. The novel does move slowly through the early actions, concentrating on the minutiae of reality, as if Louis Creed were desperately trying to retain his hold on what he knows is true, even as he is drawn inexorably into what he can only hope may be. The pacing becomes part of King's structure, emphasizing Creed's unwillingness (and perhaps King's) to confront the horror. When it comes, it proves almost overwhelming; the figure of the child-thing coldly murdering its mother may be too much for even the master of horror to contemplate. Michael Stamm writes that the finale of

this unusually grim novel seems

> relentlessly horrifying, but somehow inappropriate--as well as less complex and frightening than it might have been, ghastly though it is. It is as if King wanted to get out of the story's awful darkness and was less careful than usual about how he did so. (36)

One result of this conjunction of elements is that Pet Sematary repays a second reading . . . and a third. To do so is not to revel in gratuitous blood and death but rather to establish a distance from the immediate narrative, allowing a more objective assessment of what King has achieved. To refer again to Stamm's review, the novel "is a harrowing story, plumbing depths of blackness King has never reached--nor, I think, wanted to reach--before." It attains to a dark poetry, its landscape "peopled with ancient shadows drifting more and more thickly around the lives of the storied inhabitants, and the reader senses the coming of a night [without] end" (36).

In its incessant darkness, Pet Sematary engages disturbing issues, the most apparent being the nature of death and of our reactions to it. As a number of readers have noted, it re-works W. W. Jacob's short story, "The Monkey's Paw." That story begins, in good Gothic fashion, on a dark and stormy night, with father and son playing chess, "the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire" (592). This desire for "radical changes" leads to the climax of the story: the old man receives a talisman that will fulfill three wishes. His first (modest enough) is for two hundred pounds. When the son is killed in a gruesome accident and the employers give the old couple two hundred pounds "in consideration of your son's services" (599), the father realizes the true nature of the talisman and its accompanying wishes. As Sergeant Major Morris said, the paw "had a spell put on it by an old fakir . . . , a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who

interfered with it did so to their sorrow" (594). Morris, we are told, has had his three wishes; he not only refuses to speak of them but his face blanches at the memory.

In spite of the warnings and the tragic effect the talisman has already had on their lives, the old man wishes for an even more radical change: "I wish my son alive again" (601). Unfortunately, with the short-sightedness of so many characters in so many stories, he fails to modify the wish. Later, hearing repeated knocks on his door and realizing what he has in fact wished for, he "found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish" (603).

Jacobs does not define the last wish, nor does he describe who (or what) was knocking on the door; the reader's imagination is sufficient to fill in both. What is important, however, is that the story reaffirms the role of death in human lives and closes on a note of acceptance. There has been a tragedy, followed by a disruption of the natural order; but finally there is restoration of that order and a dark, somnolent peace: "The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road" (603). At the last moment, Mr. White learned the same lesson that Sergeant Major Morris apparently had.

Louis Creed, however, does not learn. King retains the motif of three "wishes," altering the third almost beyond recognition. Although a doctor and thus familiar with death (as the early episode concerning Victor Pascow illustrates), Louis Creed cannot accept the changes Church's death will bring; like Mr. White, he chooses to base his game of chess on radical change. And like the Whites, he attempts to explain away Church's re-appearance as coincidence; the cat was not actually dead, only stunned. He knows better, as the Whites know better, but embraces self-deception rather than admit a more disturbing truth: that he has disrupted the natural order, invoking the mysterious and evil powers of the Wendigo inherent in the ground of the cemetery.

His second action parallels precisely the Whites' second wish: "I wish my son alive again." In spite of what he knows about Church, in spite of the stories Jud Crandall tells about Timmy Baterman and the Micmac burial ground, in spite of

Crandall's explicit warnings and the premonitory episode of the broken casket in the funeral home--in spite of all, Creed, like White, is seduced by the possibility of reversing death. His "wish" is not as easy or clean as White's; King details Creed's visit to the cemetery, his painful and fatiguing hike to the Micmac grounds, his desperate vigil waiting for whatever was to come, and his falling asleep and the terrible consequences of that lapse. As in "The Monkey's Paw" the core of the narrative, this second "wish" underscores Louis Creed's unwillingness to accept death and his abrogation of everything that he, as a physician, knows and represents.

With the third "wish," Creed confirms his insanity. White struggled desperately to find the monkey's paw in the darkness, even as he heard his wife's pleas that he help her unlock the door and let their son into the house. In the end, at the last moment, White chose to restore order by retracting the radical change he had made in the game.

Creed does not. Instead, he descends further into darkness, paradoxically symbolized by his hair turning white as Nadine Cross's hair turned white when she embraced darkness in the person of the Walkin Dude in The Stand. Instead of relinquishing the dead to death, he compounds his error, taking Rachel's body to the Micmac burying grounds and perversely insisting on his third "wish." Later, covering the threateningly symbolic queen of spades with his hand, he listens as his wife approaches, her voice "grating, full of dirt" (374). Pet Sematary has reached its nearly unbearable conclusion.

"The Monkey's Paw" horrifies by implication. Jacobs shows nothing, specifies nothing; readers must fill the interstices between words and by doing so create the horror themselves. Pet Sematary, on the other hand, works through explicit representation. Again and again we see the disastrous results of altering fate: pets returning from the children's cemetery changed in subtle ways; a bull so vicious that it must be destroyed; Church's stiffness and lack of grace (an ironically ambiguous word in this context), and his depredations against birds, nauseatingly detailed in full color; the horror of Timmy Baterman and

the tragic events required to restore the irrevocability of death.

In Pet Sematary, King emphasizes the failure of two social structures designed to accommodate (or at least offset) our fear of death. As a physician, Louis Creed knows that death can sometimes be delayed but never vanquished; living organisms die. Victor Pascow's accident underscores Creed's inability to accept death. At first, as the dying man whispers "In the Pet Sematary," Creed tries to rationalize it away. Like White in "The Monkey's Paw," he speaks of coincidence, of "auditory hallucination" or a chance blending of phonemes.

Yet when Pascow fixes him with a grin like "the large grin of a dead carp" and speaks his cryptically premonitory words--"It's not the real cemetery" and "The soil of a man's heart is stonier, Louis . . . A man grows what he can . . . and tends it"--Louis's physician's rationalism falters. He cannot account for the statements or for the fact that Pascow knows his name; nor can he accept the violence of Pascow's death.

Although Pascow's appearance later as a ghost is consistent with King's narrative purposes and provides a sudden intrusion of the irrational into the novel to presage more devastating intrusions, it seems equally designed as a symbolic statement of Louis Creed's inability to accept death. In a sense, Creed conjures the boy's shade by his obsessive reaction to death. In spite of his attempts to explain his reactions--and the leaves and dirt on his sheets the next morning--part of Louis Creed believes that death is not the end. He rejects the medical view of death as natural and inevitable.

If Pet Sematary anatomizes the medical mind, it also explores the religious. King notes that his characters are not strongly religious. Louis Creed, he says, "was a man with no deep religious training, no bent toward the superstitious or the occult" (58-59); Rachel denies her childhood religious training.

More tantalizingly, King gives his characters names that argue for the failure of religion in contemporary society. Victor Pascow dies and by doing so shows Louis Creed what dying is like. Pascow is startlingly similar to Paschal (of or related to either Easter or Passover); the differ-

ence between the two words is almost, as Louis Creed might argue, a chance divergence of phonemes.

On the basis of one resemblance in sound, of course, it seems reckless to construct a literary interpretation, particularly in light of King's comment that his character's names rarely imply conscious symbolism. In this instance, however, there is additional justification. Pascow's presence in the novel serves only one purpose: to initiate Louis Creed's confrontation with death. Pascow dies a horrible, lingering, and painful death. By doing so he becomes one of King's recurring sacrificial children, dying in order that the main character might more fully understand life and death; he is almost literally, as his name suggests figuratively, a sacrificial lamb. There is, however, no resurrection for Victor Pascow except as a ghost; his first name is as ironic as his last is symbolic.

Pascow's death is only the first in a series connected to a theological undercurrent. The second is the death of Winston Churchill, the cat. In spite of the cat's name, and in contradiction to King's occasional introduction of political motifs in his narratives, the cat suggests religion rather than politics. With few exceptions, the cat is simply called "Church." The death of Church (i.e., the church) beneath the wheels of a huge truck that represents industrialized, technological society is too overt a motif to ignore, even though the novel does not develop an explicit theological message; King's intent emerges subtly, through the shadows as it were. Church's death does not help Louis Creed adapt to death. Instead, it provides another springboard for his descent into darkness and horror. "Church" becomes ironic as the cat returns, graceless and fallen, to stand as a constant reminder of Louis Creed's own moment of weakness.

The final link is a double one. Gage Creed and Rachel Creed both die, are buried in the Micmac burying gound, and return . . . changed. Their surname, Creed, insists upon a theological interpretation; not only is the church as institution unable to give meaning to contemporary life (Louis is a "lapsed" Methodist, Rachel a "lapsed" Jew), but belief itself dies. Gage's death paral-

lels Church's beneath the wheels of a truck; he is three days in the darkness of death, then resurrected into deeper darkness. To make a horrible pun (but one appropriate to Pet Sematary), Louis Creed is the father, Gage Creed the son, and Victor Pascow the unholy ghost, all circling the dead and mechanical Church. Rachel, like Melville's ship in Moby Dick a type for mourning Israel after the sacrifice of the infants, returns to seek her lost child; by doing so, yet another "creed" is lost. Only one remains: Eileen is safe at her grandparents', but given Rachel's experiences in that home, even that refuge seems superficial and threatening.

All of this may seem to place an inordinate burden of symbolism and analogy on the novel, but King invites the burden. Pet Sematary is, as Gary Goshgarian argues, inbued with questions of moral responsibility. By introducing Louis Creed's scientific rationalism and his rejection of faith; by re-creating the trauma of Rachel's childhood and her abnormal fear of death removed from the support of religion; and by giving his characters names that echo underlying moral questions, King insists that Pet Sematary be read as more than just a ghost story or an excursion into the horror landscape of the walking dead.

Goshgarian's conclusion merits repeating since it sums up the dark attraction of Pet Sematary:

> Yes, his vampires, demons and zombies are deliciously horrible--but it is between those familiar monsters that King shows his true art--an art that invites us to contemplate our own mortality. King does not believe in ghouls, vampires and zombies. But he does believe in real-life demons like war, violence, disease and death and, perhaps the most frightening thing in the known universe: the human mind. (8)

The inexorable movement of Pet Sematary gives it a deliberation unusual for King, yet consonant with the novel's tone. As Edward Bryant says:

> Even though Pet Sematary flinches at the

> end, that does not deny the innate power of the balance of the novel. Incompletely realized as it is, I still think the book supports my view of the writer. It's stretching, pushing things to the limit, that causes the author to grow. It is only through experiments such as Pet Sematary, painful and difficult as they may be, that Stephen King will cross that hazy but undeniable line between good and great. (19)

When King approaches greatness, as he does in "The Reach," for example, it is because he penetrates beneath surface distinctions such as "horror," or "fantasy," or "mainstream" to touch his readers at the core.

In Pet Sematary, he approaches that intensity.

During a session at the International Conference on the Fantastic, King was asked why he let so many children die in his novels, especially Tad Trenton in Cujo and Gage Creed in Pet Sematary. His answer: in the real world, children die. They die of cancer; they get hit by trucks. And that is the real horror.

Later, in an interview with David Sherman, he repeated that stance:

> There's a little girl in Pet Sematary who lives. Nobody else lives. And there's no rhyme or reason for it. There'd be more justification in that story--in the sense of a final tying up of loose ends--if she died, too. But that isn't the way life is. (16)

Chapter VI

ONE IN EVERY GARAGE: THE MACHINE AMOK

Christine

In late September 1985, as King was directing Maximum Overdrive, one of the sequences to be shot involved a runaway lawnmower. According to King's description, the machine

> really did get away. It struck the wedges under the camera, showering us all with splinters. Several people were cut, I was completely untouched, and Armando [Nanuzzi, the film's cinematographer] sustained an injury that's put him in the Duke Eye Care clinic. We resume next Wednesday. I'm still shaken. All the machines on this project really seem malevolent. (Letter, 3 August 1985)

It may seem appropriate, in a perversely symbolic sense, that a lawnmower "attack" King and his crew, since he has frequently represented machines as sentient, malevolent, and violent.

In several stories, King abandons the possibilities of traditional horror--ghosts, vampires, werewolves, and other creatures of myth and legend--to concentrate on a variant more compatible with and inherent in twentieth-century technology. We orient ourselves around machines; we trust machines and depend upon them, occasionally excoriating them but finally recognizing their importance in our lives.

Even so, the suspicion remains, nagging at our consciousness, that somehow "they" are out to get us. Cars that won't start, electrical gadgets that choose the most inopportune moment to expire in a spray of sparks and black smoke, typewriters

and computers that behave perfectly until the crucial moment halfway through a research paper (or a book of criticism)--these and similar situations prove rich ground for the imagination.

For most of us, such episodes merely frustrate; for the writers of horror fiction, they may stimulate speculation and questioning. Working from a common, everyday object, King twists our perceptions of that object by endowing the thing with life, sentience, mobility, or just a healthy dash of horror. The results include the runaway ironing machine of "The Mangler"; the voracious and deadly mower in "The Lawnmower Man"; rebellious automobiles determined to supplant humanity as masters in "Trucks"; a derelict vehicle that makes its own revenge in "Uncle Otto's Truck"; children's toys that become instruments of death and (again) revenge in "Battleground"; another child's toy that delights in mayhem for the sake of mayhem in "The Monkey"; and finally a machine that, unlike the others, alters reality to restore fairness and justice in the eminently unfair world of "Word Processor of the Gods."

And, of course, there is Christine.

King's fascination with the deadly effects of "machines" (if we can use the word rather loosely for a moment) developed early in his career. "The Star Invaders" depends upon machines: the torture room of the Invaders and Jed Pierce's ray-cannon are essential to the plot but depend upon external agents. In "The Glass Floor," an artifact, the mirrored floor, similarly functions passively; human responses rather than the artifact itself generate the specific horror. In "The Reaper's Image," another mirror initiates the action but again as a vehicle for an inexplicably deeper active principle. Later, in "The Blue Air Compressor," King links a machine more tightly to an image of horror; again, however, human manipulation initiates the action. Although these "machines" may be destructive, they are neither self-motile nor inherently sentient. The horror in those stories depends upon human (or alien but organic) agency.

Gradually, however, King introduced a variant in his stories. The machines move. They rip themselves from the concrete floors of the Blue Ribbon Laundry and rumble down city streets in

search of victims. They trap humans inside a truck stop and force one-time masters to serve them as slaves. They become agents of revenge, vehicles (pun intended) for transporting ordinary characters across the boundaries into horror and dark fantasy. They epitomize our deepest fears and most disturbing nightmares.

In "The Monkey," for example, King masterfully transforms a simple child's toy into an image of terror, capitalizing on a childhood fear and then transferring it, fully developed and justified by the evidence of Hal Shelburn's senses, into an adult. The only other character who understands the threat the monkey poses is his younger and more innocently child-like son, Petey. The older boy, Dennis, has begun to enter the adult world; he is twelve, and the fact that he reacts to the monkey with a respectful "Hey, neat" is critical since, as King points out, "It was a tone Hal rarely got from the boy anymore himself" (SC 141). Later, in an emotional confrontation with Dennis (148-149), Shelburn recognizes the gap age has created between himself and his older son. As with so many of King's characters, Shelburn can only watch as his family fragments.

With Petey, however, he can re-create, face, and finally lay to rest lingering childhood fears, since Petey is young enough to believe in such things . . . and Shelburne is old enough again, to paraphrase C. S. Lewis's prefatory letter to The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe, to accept an intrusion of the fantastic into his life. Together, father and son bridge the years as they fight against the threat of the toy monkey.

"The Monkey" is a fascinating excursion into childhood horror made adult (see SW 137-138), with well-rounded characters and a complex plot requiring multiple flashbacks that gradually reveal the horror of the childhood toy. As with so many of King's narratives, it describes an external evil imposing itself on an innocent--a toy that, no matter how many times it is thrown away, manages to come back . . . and kill.

An even more interesting element, however, is an implicit connection in the final pages between the monkey and King's ultimate monster-machine, Christine. As Shelburn throws the bag containing the toy overboard, he looks into the water:

> there was Amos Culligan's Studebaker, and Hal's mother was behind its slimy wheel, a grinning skeleton with a lake bass staring coldly from one fleshless eye socket. Uncle Will and Aunt Ida lolled beside her, and Aunt Ida's gray hair trailed upward as the bag fell . . . .
>
> Hal slammed the oars back into the water, scraping blood from his knuckles (and ah God the back of Amos Culligan's Studebaker had been fill of dead children! Charlie Silverman . . . Johnny McCabe . . .), and began to bring the boat about. (170)

The image prefigures Christine, a haunted machine similarly filled with unnerving passengers. The conclusion of "The Monkey," with its calmly factual newspaper article and its suggestion that the monkey has not relinquished its power to destroy, equally foreshadows the final pages of Christine. King's choice of name for the by-line--"Betsy Moriarity"--conflates innocence with experience; a childlike, almost pastoral sense blends with a hint of Conan Doyle's murderer in the Sherlock Holmes tales. Although to push the resemblance any further would injure the story, even a detail as apparently minor as this journalist's name underscores the ambivalence King's characters (and perhaps King himself) feel toward the toy monkey and its final destruction, an emotion parallelled and amplified in Christine. In King's universe, evil can only rarely be destroyed; more often it merely lies in wait for another try.

Of King's major works, Christine (1983) lends itself most readily to a symbolic interpretation. Like Roadwork, which was written during roughly the time frame of the novel (August 1972 to January 1974), Christine seems a product of its time. It is, with the earlier book, a distinctly post-energy-crisis novel harkening back to a less restricted relationship between Americans and their automobile; it is, in a phrase, about the end of a love affair.

The text itself virtually demands such a symbolic reading. The first lines define the complex

of loyalties to be tested through the novel:

> This is the story of a lover's triangle, I suppose you'd say--Arnie Cunningham, Leigh Cabot, and, of course, Christine. But I want you to understand that Christine was there first. She was Arnie's first love . . . . (1)

At first, nothing seems amiss in this description . . . until one discovers that Christine is a 1958 Plymouth Fury. At that point, King moves beyond reality and into a world of hauntings and malevolent machinery. Yet underlying the irrationalities and impossibilities suddenly made enforcedly rational and possible is the fact of a changing America: an economy shifting in part away from dependence upon the automobile and increasingly obsessed with small, fuel-efficient cars. Next to the Toyotas or Volkswagens of 1983, Christine seems a monster in more ways than one.

Coupled to this overt reading is a second, amplifying the first and making possible the tragedy of Christine. The America of the late seventies perceived itself as mature. It had, after all, successfully negotiated the turmoil of the sixties; it had recently passed its two hundredth anniversary, with sufficient concommitant hoopla to convince itself that it had fully come of age; and it had begun looking back on the 1950s as a time of adolescence preparatory to entry into adulthood.

Coming of age forms a critical motif in Christine. Built in 1958, Christine is in her twenty-first year, approaching her majority, as it were. Arnie Cunningham, Dennis Guilder, and Leigh Cabot are seniors in high school. The question of Arnie's finally making his own decisions, including his choice of which college to attend or even whether to attend college at all, creates a continuing theme in the novel, parallelling his increasing obsession with and finally possession by Christine. At bottom is the question of his age: is he near enough adult to be responsible for his own decisions? Arnie says he is and asserts his new independence by impulsively buying Christine; Regina Cunningham insists that he is not and risks alienating her only son by refusing to

compromise until it is too late.

As a result, characters and names reflect a historical era closely associated with transition in American culture and society. Having Christine a 1958 model firmly ties the novel to the late fifties, as do King's references to rock songs from the same period, allusions so important that he included them in spite of the healthy fee required for permissions: $15,000, to be paid by King, Viking, and NAL ("King New Book"). The car symbolizes adolescence, obsessive and possessive in her absorption of Arnie's developing personality, paralleling society's transition from the adolescent fifties to the adult eighties.

Arnie Cunningham's name also connects King's novel of contemporary adolescence with the archetypal representation of television adolescence, Happy Days. "Cunningham" is, of course, the surname of the central family in that long-running paean to the fifties; "Richie," the diminutive for "Richard"; and "Arnold's," the central hang-out. Christine thus includes a double allusion to Richie Cunningham and Happy Days in Arnold Richard Cunningham (353). Arnie is television's Richie gone bad, with Dennis Guilder as the more positive role model: solid, intelligent, responsible, devoted to his family but nonetheless capable of independent thought and action. To carry the parallels even further, Buddy Repperton suggests the kind of character Arthur "Fonzie" Fonzarelli was originally intended to represent, before he mellowed into a contemporary cult figure.

Christine explores the rites associated with coming of age in our society--or perhaps better said, the lack of rites. Arnie is initially helpless to assert his increasingly adult identity. Only with the arrival of Christine does he find an external object of sufficient importance to challenge Regina's authority. Like characters in Rage, The Long Walk, Carrie, Firestarter, or The Talisman, Arnie must accept and understand change while simultaneously becoming aware of the dangers inherent in growing up.

More importantly, he begins to define his changing relationship with his parents. Arnie exemplifies the fragmentation and isolation within the family unit typical in King's fictions when, early in the novel, he asks if Dennis has realized

that "parents are nothing but overgrown kids until their children drag them into adulthood? Usually kicking and screaming?" (26). Later, the accusation and the implicit separation of parent and child become more threatening: "I think that part of being a parent is trying to kill your kids," Arnie asserts. "Because as soon as you have a kid, you know for sure that you're going to die. When you have a kid, you see your own gravestone" (26, 27). As blunt as Arnie's comment is, King provides additional support for it much later when Dennis asks George LeBay if Roland LeBay had in fact "offered his daughter up as some kind of a human sacrifice." The best response George LeBay can provide is a long silence and a hesitant, "Not in any conscious way, no" (453).

Part of Arnie's frustration stems from the image his parents present and consequently from the threat that he may become like them, yet neither fully himself nor fully them; throughout, he sees himself as sacrificed to their perceptions of what he should be. He insists that he be allowed to follow his own path; unfortunately, in spite of his protestations, he fails the test.

Nor is Arnie alone. Dennis Guilder is in some ways as central a character as Arnie. He narrates two thirds of the novel, an unusual occurrence in King, since only Rage (also an examination of adolescent adjustment to on-coming adulthood) provides that kind of subjectivity. Later, when Dennis is in the hospital and incapable of narrating events, King simply shifts to third person without explanation or apology, moving back to Dennis for the final chapters. Dennis has his own adjustments to make. He sees his years-long influence over Arnie diminish--as rightly it should--but for the wrong reasons. He sees Arnie first win then abandon Leigh Cabot. And he sees what Christine is and how she changes Arnie. Knowing what he does, Dennis must likewise choose between a child's response and an adult's. He can either tell what he knows and depend upon the adults (in this case his substantially more responsive parents) to rectify matters, or take action himself and by doing so thrust himself into a world of self-sufficiency.

Wisely, he chooses the latter. His parents are unusually understanding, questioning as long

as they sense that they are helping, backing off when it becomes clear that Dennis must make serious decisions, trusting him to take the right action. Their trust saves their lives, just as Michael Cunningham's failure to heed Dennis' warnings about Christine eventually leads to his death.

In Christine, children must act as adults. As they do so, they shed light both on themselves and on what they may become. If there is a triangle in Christine it might as justifiably be defined as Arnie, Christine, and Dennis. Standing on each side of the monstrous machine, Arnie and Dennis illustrate opposing responses to the irrational, the inexplicable, the fantastic, and the horrific. Dennis, of course, comes off best; that he narrates the story from the vantage of hindsight allows him, however unconsciously, to recast events in his own favor. In this case, the first-person voice throws doubt on the narrator himself. Regardless of this complication, however, Dennis does defeat Christine, if only temporarily; Arnie succumbs, becomes entrapped by the evil presence of the dead Roland LeBay, and only emerges at the end long enough to destroy his possessor even as he kills himself.

Christine and the ghostly presence of Roland LeBay symbolize externally Arnie's internal changes as he struggles for individuality and freedom. A child becoming involved in things beyond his understanding or control, Arnie can also function symbolically in the novel. Christine or LeBay provide explicit pressures and temptations, with Will Darnell acting as an additional force for evil.

On one level, such a reading is possible. And even on that restricted a level, Christine is an intriguing and empathetic portrait of failure and false choice.

There is, of course, only one problem with stopping at that point.

Christine is haunted.

Again and again in the novel, characters shut their eyes to the irrational, refusing to accept it within their well-ordered, carefully defined perceptions of reality. As late as chapter 45, Dennis still must fight with that simple fact: there is something beyond reason happening to him,

to Arnie, and to Leigh. It takes him a long time to accept the unacceptable. After a difficult night assessing evidence and events, he says that his mind "had already begun to heal itself with unreality. My problem was that I could simply no longer afford to listen to that lulling song. The line was blurred for good" (439).

That blurred line is crucial in Christine. It is not enough to talk of the novel as an adolescent rite of passage, as an anatomy of teenagers growing up and away from parents, or even, as King has, as a discussion of sex substitutes and sublimation. It is that, of course, but more.

From the beginning, King makes it clear that there is something supernatural involved. Arnie's choices are not entirely his own, increasingly so as the novel progresses and Christine's hold intensifies. The fundamental problem is that, as Darnell realizes, "most people would accept anything if they saw it happen right before their very eyes. In a very real sense there was no supernatural, no abnormal: what happened, happened, and that was the end" (316).

Reference after reference, however, makes it clear that Arnie, Dennis, Leigh, and those surrounding them are in the midst of something evil, frightening, and inexplicable. At first, King merely suggests the supernatural; Leigh worries about Arnie, thinking that Christine seems almost like a vampire (290). Later, King drops all pretense of simile--Dennis sees the ghost of LeBay in the car.

As if to insure the persistence of danger, King not only connects Christine with the ghosts and ghoulies of The Shining and the vampires of 'Salem's Lot, but neatly suggests that even had Arnie capitulated and accepted his mother's dicta concerning Christine, he would not necessarily have been safe; after all, both Regina and Michael teach at the University in Horlicks, well known to King's readers as the site of "The Crate" and "The Raft."

Connections between "The Raft" and Christine multiply upon close examination. Young people, barely adults, are isolated and threatened by an unexplainable entity that seems intent upon absorbing them--in one literally, in the other figuratively. In each, sexuality intrudes as a

threatening principle. In "The Raft," Randy and LaVerne make love; the action leads to her death. In Christine, Dennis and Leigh form a similar attachment which, while not expressed physically, nonetheless places both in jeopardy from Christine. Earlier, of course, Leigh's growing love for Arnie similarly brought events to a crisis as she nearly choked to death in Christine. In each instance, sexuality becomes an image of maturity, intruding complication and danger.

There are also differences between the novel and the story, of course. "The Raft" asserts a shapeless creature; Christine merges the creature with the most pervasive machine in our society. "The Raft" sets the four students physically apart from others; in Christine, the isolation is more psychological as each character discovers things about Christine and the dead LeBay that cannot be talked about. And finally, the conclusions move in quite different directions. In spite of King's additions to the Skeleton Crew version of the story, shifting its emphasis more stridently toward Randy's fear of and final rejection of maturity and the adult world, "The Raft," even in its original form, is highly pessimistic. There is no relief, no hope except that the mysterious play of color on the creature can at least remove the pain. Christine ends more optimistically. For the moment at least, the threat is removed. Sexuality ceases to bring danger; Dennis and Leigh consummate their relationship, then gradually grow apart to establish new lives as adults. In spite of the fear that Christine is on the move again, the novel could be said to have a positive ending. Even Arnie ultimately succeeds (or so Dennis hopes), surfacing long enough to destroy LeBay.

Indeed, the novel closes on an awkward note. In spite of an insistence on the surface techniques and characteristics of horror, Dennis and Leigh subordinate the horror and terror inspired by ghosts and malevolent machines to a deeper emotion: sorrow. After his nightmare ride in Christine, as the landscape itself shifts and blurs between 1978 and 1958, Dennis says good-night to Arnie: "I shut the door," he says. "My horror had changed to a deep and terrible sorrow--it was as if [Arnie] had been buried.

Buried alive" (437). The sense increases later as, just before the final confrontation in Darnell's garage, Dennis challenges the LeBay-thing within Arnie: "There was no Arnie in it now. No Arnie at all. My friend was gone. I felt a dark sorrow that was deeper than tears or fear . . ." (480). At the end, there is neither the quiet optimism of The Stand or the abysmal darkness of Pet Sematary; there is only a deep sense of loss that nearly overpowers the possibility of a threat renewed. Lives change; Dennis and Leigh emerge fully as adults. The children they were--the child that Arnie was--are lost forever.

Christine has been criticized as heavily as any of King's novels. It is too long, many reviewers argued, almost submerging the narrative in King's gush of unnecessary words. The language is more consistently harsh than in other novels, in part because of the characters' ages; obscenity seems one of the few outlets our society provides for youth trying to emulate what they consider adults to be. Still, as justifiable as it might be in the context of plot, character, and theme, the language does invite criticism.

In addition, the self-absorption with rock 'n' roll throughout also draws from the main story. Again, the allusions function on one level as thematic connectors, linking present time with King's (and his readers') past. Occasionally, however, that thematic function seems inadequate to support the weight of intrusion and allusion King insists upon.

And finally, Christine undergoes a narrative shift. King has indicated that he originally intended that the novel be told from Dennis' point of view throughout. Only when Dennis suddenly wakes up in the hospital did it become clear that something had to change. The result is an unevenness of texture unusual in King's novels, a shifting of the reader's peceptions that threatens the continuity of narrative and of empathy. Coupled with the ambiguous nature of the narrator, a young man of twenty-two looking back at a critical point in his life, the narrative shift creates an odd disruption.

In spite of all of this, however, reading Christine makes critical comments seem ephemeral. My first contact with the book resulted in a mara-

thon session lasting until well after midnight. The book entranced me, the characters interested me, even the supernatural elements came to seem inevitable in the context of King´s fictional world.

If Christine represents one extreme of King´s use of machine-monsters, the computer in "Word Processor of the Gods" (1983; SC 1985) represents the other. Published the same year as Christine, the story is much closer to "The Reach" (1981: SC 1985), more optimistic and upbeat than horrifying. Where Christine, the mangler, Uncle Otto´s truck, and assorted other maleficent devices disrupt order with chaos, the word processor restores order to the chaos of Richard Nordhoff´s life, deleting his monstrous wife and son, inserting his true love (stolen by his brother Roger, a vicious good-for-nothing) and the nephew who should have been Richard´s son. Another variant on the three-wishes motif common in fairy tales and explored in Pet Sematary, "Word Processor of the Gods" does much to restore a sense of harmony and balance between humanity and the machines we have created (See SW 147-148).

Chapter VII

EXPLORING TANGENTIAL WORLDS

The Stand, The Dark Tower, The Eyes of the Dragon, The Talisman

While King is best known as a writer of horror fiction, he has also worked in other genres, including science fiction. Several critics, in fact, have argued that novels such as Cujo, The Dead Zone, and Firestarter belong more to science fiction than to horror. Depending upon the definitions one uses, such an assertion in part rings true.

Even within science fiction, however, King includes his own twists, often nearly overpowering the science fictional plots, settings, or characters with touches of the fantastic. In "Beachworld," a seemingly straightforward space adventure transforms into something quite different as the sand planet is gradually revealed to be a sentient creature as amorphous and unexplainable as the black blob in "The Raft."

King is not alone in this attitude toward the two genres, of course. Film versions of science fiction novels frequently emphasize the horrific, blurring the distinctions between the two; what Mary Shelley intended as a discussion of responsibility and morality in Frankenstein, for example, degenerated first into an image of horror and finally into self-parody. As Brian Aldiss says in Billion Year Spree:

> The cinema has helped enormously to disseminate the myth while destroying its significance . . . . There were short silent versions, but the monster began his true movie career in 1931, with James Whale's Universal picture Frankenstein, in which Boris Karloff played the monster. The dials in the castle labor-

> atory have hardly stopped flickering since. The monster has spawned Sons, Daughters, Ghosts, and Houses; has taken on Brides and created Woman; has perforce shacked up with Dracula and Wolf Man; has enjoyed Evil, Horror, and Revenge, and has even had the Curse: on one occasion it met Abbott and Costello. (23n)

King's expriences with film show a similar movement. What was originally at least partially grounded in scientific explanation becomes a showcase for visual horror, most explicitly in the film versions of Cujo, which discounts almost entirely the references to a revenant Frank Dodd, or of Firestarter, with its concentration of images of destruction and fiery death.

This tendency to tinge science fiction with horror extends beyond film re-creations of King's fiction and into his prose itself. What may be King's most complete attempt at science fiction, "The Jaunt" (1981, SC 1985; see SW 141-142), is ostensibly based on the development of almost instantaneous transport between Earth and Mars. Gradually, however, the tale shifts into subjectivity and insanity, with its final images falling within the traditions of horror.

The technique is certainly not original with King, of course. In March 1939, Robert Bloch, one of the most important influences on King's fiction (Grant, "Jugular" 21), published "The Strange Flight of Richard Clayton" in Amazing. The story recounts Clayton's experiences in a subjective time-distortion. He survives what he believes a years-long flight to Mars, coupled with a total loss of his time-sense and aggravated by hallucinations:

> Ghosts howled, in the dark depths of space. Visions of monsters and dreams of torment came, and Clayton repulsed them all. Every hour or day or year--he no longer knew which--Clayton managed to stagger to the mirror. And always it showed that he was aging rapidly. His snow-white hair and wrinkled countenance hinted at incredible senility. But

> Clayton lived. He was to old to think any longer, and too weary. He merely lived in the droning of the ship. (72)

Finally returning to earth, he stumbles from the capsule into the arms of his assistant . . . who does not recognize the aged figure.

And then the truth. Clayton manages to ask, "How long was I in the Future?":

> Jerry Chase's face was grave as he stared again at the old man and answered, softly.
> "Just one week." (73)

The connections between "The Strange Flight of Richard Clayton" and "The Jaunt" are obvious; the differences between them are equally obvious. Bloch explains the time distortion. Clayton had broken his chronometer; because of a malfunction, the ship had never taken off, yet the crew could not approach it for a week. The "droning of the ship" had merely been the vibrations of its engines. And throughout, Bloch re-creates (as best he can in a short story, using the conventions of time and language) Clayton's subjective experiences. The reader is startled by the surprise ending, but not specifically horrified.

King, on the other hand, refuses to explain. He takes his characters only as far as the moment they enter the subjectivity of the Jaunt, then resumes his narrative as they emerge on the other side. If they jaunt in an unconscious state, they arrive safely; but if they are conscious . . . :

> How long in there, in terms of years? 0.000000000067 seconds for the body to Jaunt, but how long for the unparticulated consciousness? A hundred years? A thousand? A million? A billion? And how long with your thoughts in an endless field of white? And then, when a billion eternities have passed, the crashing return of light and form and body. Who wouldn't go insane? (SC 223)

Bloch defines and describes; the result is primarily science fiction. King implies, leaving the

reader to imagine what happens; the result is primarily horror.

This is not to say that King cannot write science fiction. Both The Long Walk (1979) and The Running Man (1982) are, strictly speaking, science fiction: they take place in a future America, they depend upon new technologies for the narrative to succeed, and they examine how those technologies change the lives of individuals (see SK/RB 46-69, 92-114). Even there, however, images of horror rest just beneath the surface.

In works such as "The Mist" and "Crouch End," King approaches the boundaries between dark fantasy and science fiction from the opposite direction. In each, the thrust of the story is overtly horror: creatures emerge from the darkness to terrify and destroy. Also in each, however, King provides a marginal explanation. Beyond the universe of the story exist other universes; in "The Mist," scientists at the Arrowhead Project may have punctured the barriers between this universe and others, allowing unnamed and unnameable monsters to spill through. In "Crouch End," the monster, while amorphous and ill-defined, nonetheless belongs to the eldritch worlds of Lovecraftian Great Old Ones. A temporary opening between the two universes allows characters from ours to become lost within alien time and space.

The Stand

Perhaps the most intriguing explorations of alternatives, of worlds tangential to our own, occur in might be called the "Dark Man" narratives: The Stand (1978), The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger (1982), The Eyes of the Dragon (1984), and The Talisman (1984; with Peter Straub). While they are not all explicitly connected by a repeating character as The Stand and The Eyes of the Dragon are, they do explore connections between our world and others.

In terms of genre, The Stand is problematical, since it lacks the monsters and creatures of traditional horror, except for Randall Flagg's occasional shape-shifting. It begins within a science-fictional framework, detailing with the care and precision of hard science fiction the consequences of an escaped super-flu virus; yet

just as the characters begin to adjust to the new world technology has forced upon them, they must confront something essentially fantastic--their dreams of Mother Abagail and the Dark Man. Again and again, King shifts between dark fantasy and science fiction as the novel turns from the flu to Randall Flagg (see Collings, "The Stand"). At the same time, its length and scope link it with the epic quest, as Ben Indick argued recently in "Stephen King as Epic Writer" as he points out a number of thematic and topical resemblances to Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

In a 1981 interview with King for Twilight Zone Magazine, Charles L. Grant asked about possible mystical overtones in The Stand, whether the novel might not be a "Christian allegory," complicating the question of genre even further. King answered that

> The Stand starts with a plague that wipes out most of the world's population, and it develops into a titanic struggle that Christianity figures in. But it's not about God, like some of the reviews claimed. Stuart Redman isn't Christ, and the Dark Man isn't the Devil. . . . The important thing is that we are dealing with two elemental forces --White and Black--and I really do believe in the White force. Children are part of that force, which is why I write about them the way I do. There are a lot of horror writers who deal with this struggle, but they tend to concentrate on the Black. But the other force is there, too; it's just a lot tougher to deal with. Look at Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings; he's much better at evoking the horror and the dread of Mordor and the Dark Lord than he is at doing Gandalf. (23)

Besides the reference to Tolkien, the passage is important for its definition of what King attempted in the novel. Indick notes that The Stand is "disconcerting" since it abruptly shifts "from the initial horror, hopelessness and death, into adventure and hope" ("Epic" 57); that shift signals

King's transition from the almost mandatory pessimism of a science-fictional view of contemporary technology and morality into the cautious optimism of the epic quest. The characters themselves are aware of a subtle alteration in their world, beyond the overt, extreme changes engendered by the superflu. Frannie Goldsmith speculates on one possibility:

> I don't know what to think, except I don't like any of the things that have been happening. Visionary dreams. An old woman who's the voice of God for a while and then walks off into the wilderness. Now a little boy who seems to be a telepath. It's like life in a fairy tale. Sometimes I think the superflu left us alive but drove us all mad. (565)

Rationality versus irrationality, sanity versus madness, a scientific world-view versus overt fantasy--The Stand works through each of these oppositions, testing characters and their assumptions about reality.

That ambivalence lies at the center of The Stand, highlighting its position as a transitional work. For the first time, King allows his novel to transcend reality without depending upon either traditional horror motifs or upon scientific explanations. What little we discover about the superflu explains the deaths of 99.6% of the human population and consequently is important in creating verisimilitude during the early chapters of the novel. Later, however, as King moves from the initial objectivity into the subjectivity of dreams, visions, and the irrational, he refuses to explain. Randall Flagg appears. King suggests that Flagg's personality has taken over someone's body, but insists that Flagg is himself paranormal. He is likened to a vampire but is not one of the immortal undead, at least not as far as that tradition is concerned. Instead, Flagg simply exists; he appears without reason, engages in his game of destruction and despair, and disappears when the game turns against him. At the end, Larry Underwood watches the Dark Man closely as Trashcan Man approaches with the atomic device.

Larry senses something monstrous standing in front of where Flagg had stood, something "slumped and hunched and almost without shape--something with enormous yellow eyes slit by dark cat's pupils" (766) . . . and then the shape disappears, reminiscent of the manta-like darkness that erupts from the Presidential Suite in The Shining.

Randall Flagg, King clearly states, cannot be explained or defined. He is not the devil; nor is he werewolf or vampire or ghost. The most one can say is that he manifests the Black power, as he will do later in The Eyes of the Dragon.

In The Stand, King depends upon imagery to develop the struggle between Black and White. The Dark Man, of course, presents the Black; but the symbolic overtones attain a higher complexity in the novel. In a dream, Frannie perceives the Black force. She sees a tablecloth moving toward her:

> It wasn't her father under there. And what was under there was not dead. Something--someone--filled with dark life and hideous good cheer was under there . . . (163)

Five hundred pages later, King enters into the dying mind of Harold Lauder to find memories of Moby Dick being written in long hand, along with The Scarlet Letter and Paradise Lost. The reference to Milton's epic echoes throughout The Stand, not only in narrative terms of a confrontation between ultimate good and ultimate evil but in more specific stylistic terms. King's comments about Tolkien of the most intriguing characters in The Stand recall that same complication. Randall Flagg fascinates. Trashcan Man moves with a febrile energy unlike anyone else in the novel. Lloyd Henreid may seem rat-like, but he has entered into levels of darkness that elevate his smallness beyond expectation (and even he knows this). Even more complex are characters like Harold Lauder and Nadine Cross, initially capable of great things but later choosing the darkness.

This complexity parallels King's choice of symbols. Extending the oxymoron implicit in "dark life" and "hideous good cheer" and capitalizing on a technique Milton exploited in the "darkness visible" and related images in Paradise Lost, King

This complexity parallels King's choice of symbols. Extending the oxymoron implicit in "dark life" and "hideous good cheer" and capitalizing on a technique Milton exploited in the "darkness visible" and related images in Paradise Lost, King conflates White with Black. Mother Abagail, spiritual leader of the White force, is black . . . proudly, stridently, intensely Black. Nadine Cross, on the other hand, reverses the image; as she consummates her relationship with the Dark Man, her hair turns starkly white. King is not satisfied with a Star Wars level of symbolic interpretation, with Luke Skywalker in white and Darth Vader in black. While there may indeed be a conflict between White and Black, the terminators between the two may blur, just as the boundaries between reality and unreality, rationality and irrationality, truth and falsehood blur throughout King's novels.

Many themes and images King uses elsewhere recur in The Stand. Sexuality appears as a threat, as it did in Carrie, Rage, Firestarter and a number of short stories. Frannie's pregnancy signals her entrance into the adult world while coinciding with an external threat to humanity itself. The perverted sexuality shared by Nadine Cross and Harold Lauder reflects their decision to join the Black; neither feels fulfillment through their actions. Ultimately, their union destroys both of them.

On the other hand, King acknowledges the rejuvenative force of sexuality as well. Frannie's child is the first to survive birth into the new world. In the strictest sense, The Stand transmutes from tragedy into comedy; according to classical definitions, the birth of a child can be sufficient to overcome a flood of sorrow and death. By closing the novel with Frannie, Stuart, and their son safely on their way back to Maine, King emphasizes the positive values of adulthood and sexuality. There may be more horror in store for humanity; after all, others may find bombs that will lead to radiation and sickness and death. But for now, there is regeneration and peace and rest.

The Stand also incorporates allusions to contemporary politics, as do so many of King's other narratives. Again, the allusions are ambivalent.

Power and politics are deadly. "We used to watch Presidents decay before our very eyes from month to month and even week to week on national TV," the Judge recalls, adding "except for Nixon, of course, who thrives on power the way that a vampire bat thrives on blood" (387-388). Connecting Nixon even imagistically with vampires reinforces the attitudes toward politics common in King's fiction. That sense expands as King details Boulder's emergence into a re-creation of contemporary society. When Stuart Redman returns from Las Vegas, he finds things changed: sheriffs carry weapons, laws have begun to encroach on individual liberty.

But the obverse is also true. Without law, without the Constitution and Bill of Rights at the foundation of Boulder as a community, without sheriffs and jails, Boulder would not have been able to stand against the Dark Man. For every vampiric politician, there is a Judge, ready to sacrifice all to insure the survival of Boulder and its opposition to the dark. As with sexuality, there are no clear, easy distinctions; politics is potentially both good and evil. The individual must choose which it is to be.

Even the atomic weapons that figure so prominently in the conclusion of the novel are ambiguous. Clearly intended as an image of evil in the hands of the Dark Man, the atomic device itself becomes a mystical focus of power. As Trashcan Man brings the device into Las Vegas, his physical state indicates that a critical change has taken place; he is literally a walking dead man, appearing "like some grim vision out of a horror tale" (765). As Flagg confronts Trashcan, the Dark Man suddenly becomes "the pale man" (766), the electrical bolt he had himself released turns against him. Forming the shape of a gigantic hand, the power sweeps down to touch the device. As Lloyd Henreid screams his fear and Larry Underwood reiterates his faith, the bomb explodes: "And the righteous and the unrighteous alike were consumed in that holy fire" (767).

The bomb destroys, but it also cleanses.

As impressive as the scene is, however, the destruction of Las Vegas is not the climactic moment in The Stand. As the name implies, the novel concentrates on the moment of decision each indi-

vidual makes, whether to stand with the White or with the Black. The amgibuities of theme and image suggest that the decisions cannot be made easily, nor can one individual decide for another. What brings regeneration and peace to one can destroy another. Glen Bateman's reactions to meeting the Dark Man face to face may in fact provide the closest thing to a single moment of climax. Secure in his own decisions, Bateman can look in the face of evil and laugh (753). Bateman penetrates Flagg's pretentions, sees the lack of substance beneath the surface horror, and laughs. Death holds no fear for Bateman. Echoing Christ's words from the cross, Bateman whispers, "It's all right, Mr. Henreid . . . You don't know any better" (754).

The Stand is powerful, one of King's most teachable works. It is not perfect, of course. Many readers find the length and complex interweaving of characters difficult; one can only wonder what reactions would have been had the entire manuscript been published. Style occasionally jars with context, as when Tom Cullen recites the Lord's Prayer. He gets the first lines right, then slips into an oddly distracting diction: "He greases up my head with oil. He gives me kung-fu in the face of my enemies" (704). Later, in describing Trashcan Man just before the atomic blast, King notes that he had never "flagged" in his determination (767). While there is nothing inherently inappropriate about the pun, the positioning seems at best awkward.

In spite of the potential problems, however, The Stand remains ambitious and satisfying. While it may be intriguing to see where materials were deleted, should an unexpurgated version ever make it through the layers of contractual disputes that have delayed it so far, the novel as published stands on its own. In terms of moving beyond the narrow limits of horror fiction, The Stand indicates what King is capable of; in The Dark Tower, The Eyes of the Dragon, and The Talisman he amplifies those powers.

The Dark Tower

While The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger does not overtly continue the adventures of Randall Flagg

in tangential worlds, it connects with structural and thematic elements in The Stand, specifically through the atmosphere of apocalypse pervading the five stories. Although King never defines explicit relationships between our world and the world of the Gunslinger, he suggests a science fictional time-displacement that allows characters to move from one to another. The boy Jake dies in what appears to be our world, only to reappear at the way station in time to meet the Gunslinger, accompany him on part of his quest, and make possible the climactic meeting with the Dark Man.

The Dark Man also moves between worlds, slipping into Jake's reality to orchestrate the boy's death, returning to tempt Roland into the wilderness as part of a grander plan associated with the Dark Tower, the three, and a restoration of time and space. While the opening fragment King gives us in The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger does not even define clearly the final quest, it strongly suggests both the wasted world of The Stand and the alternative worlds King would develop in The Eyes of the Dragon and The Talisman.

The gunslinger's name, Roland, links The Dark Tower with The Eyes of the Dragon. In both, King concentrates on the dissolution of kingdoms through the machinations of evil incarnate: Marten's manipulations of the Lord of Light in the first, Flagg's control over and eventual murder of another Roland in the second. The court scenes in both works are near enough in broad details to be re-constructions of the same world--as if King's years-long work with the Dark Tower stories stimulated Eyes. It seems feasible that eventually, additional narratives could link the two; at least twice in Eyes, King hints of new tales to be told, of new encounters between humans and the faceless man, Flagg.

As fascinating and frustrating as The Dark Tower is (see SW 99-118), it is of interest here primarily as an early sketch for the alternative worlds, balanced between reality and fantasy, at the center of The Eyes of the Dragon and The Talisman. In these two novels, published in 1984, King refines his interest in high fantasy as he creates a "wonderful/terrible tour" of lands that never were (Philtrum).

The Eyes of the Dragon

The Eyes of the Dragon has stirred up controversy since the announcement of its forthcoming publication. Since Philtrum limited the press run to 1,000 copies (plus 250 copies printed in red ink and reserved for the author), demand for the book intensified even before its appearance in late 1984, in spite of the original $120 price. As recently as March, 1985, Philtrum was still working out details of the lottery system that would allow as much objectivity as possible in distributing copies; at the same time, the price among collectors and dealers had reached $350. By September, 1985, well within a year of its publication, Eyes was being offered at figures ranging from $650 to $800, with at least one astronomical bid of $1200--while many readers were still unaware of its existence at all.

George Beahm's "Collecting Stephen King Limiteds" and King's "The Politics of Limited Editions" discuss reactions to this publication arrangement, the first from a reader's perspective, the second from the author's. King's responses are particularly important in this case, since there is a close connection between King and Philtrum Press. Charles De Lint's review refers to Eyes as the "first book from a new publishing company"; the descriptive bibliography in Fear Itself, however, lists The Plant among King's books, noting that it was published by Philtrum as "the opening segment of an ongoing work" (255), which King has identified as IT. My own correspondence with Philtrum confirms the close link with King; the signator of one letter was Shirley Sonderegger, secretary to Stephen King and Philtrum Press. The limited appearance of Eyes seems, then, a considered action on King's part, with him determining at least in part both cost and press run. For all but King collectors and completists, however, the issue will become moot within the next year or so; The Eyes of the Dragon is one of four novels scheduled for trade release between 1986 and 1987.

Those among King's fans who have not yet read Eyes have a pleasant experience in store; it is among his best, self-consistent, understated at times, tightly plotted and exciting. Originally

intended as a children's story, Eyes speaks as well to adults, approaching the universality of the finest children's literature. At the same time, it develops the intimacy of a story-teller speaking to a rapt audience. Only occasionally does King allow an intrusive word, phrase, or image to break the spell he weaves; most of the distractions are on the level of crudities--"snot" or "booger" or "turd"--rather than the harsher language many readers expect from him. For the most part, as De Lint says, he

> concentrates on the people, on how the events of the story affect their lives. There is little magic, except for that used by Flagg, but the book retains a sense of wonder that too many current fantasy novels lack. It has, as well, sibling rivalry, regicide, a doomed prince in a tower, an off-stage dragon, and appearances by Peter Straub's son Ben and King's own daughter Naomi in supporting roles--the latter as a spunky, cigar-chomping dog-sled driver. The voice of the book is that of an oral story-teller's, straight-forward, yet with a lyricism that will surprise many King detractors.

Eyes shows what King can do without the shock value of obscenity, strongly arguing that when such language does appear--as in Christine, for example--it does so for specific purposes. The bluntness that has led many readers to question King's language, it seems, is a conscious part of the narrative structure where it occurs. Given the audience and the genre of Eyes, that language would be inappropriate, and King avoids it.

Originally, King referred to the novel as The Napkins, a title pointing directly to a specific point in the narrative. As the narrator frequently reminds his readers (perhaps "listeners" is a better term, since part of the fiction of Eyes is the sense of the narrator telling a bedtime story to children), Peter insists upon using napkins. When the imprisoned Prince requests napkins with each meal, they become more central, culminating with the escape itself. Still, there is a juvenile

sense to the title, a suggestion of something light and almost frivolous.

The title King finally chose for publication, however, has broader ties with the narrative. The Eyes of the Dragon refers to the "off-stage dragon" killed by King Roland and mounted on the wall of his private chamber. Through the yellow-green faceted eyes, Flagg and Thomas spy on Roland, and Thomas sees Flagg poison the King. Because so much of the narrative uses convoluted flashbacks, frequently involving the eyes of Niner, the later title fits nicely. Imagistically, it is more satisfying as well. When Thomas looks through the eyes of the dragon, he sees everything tinged with the yellow-green cast of the eyes. After his first experience in the hidden chamber behind the dragon's head, Thomas feels ill because, as he tells himself, "you were seeing the way dragons must see the world--as if everything was dried out and ready to burn" (77). The colors are significant; again and again in King's fiction, yellow or green eyes are associated with monsters, with aliens, with evil itself (SK/RB 143).

Thomas does in fact see things through a dragon's perceptions; Flagg, the incarnation of evil incessantly associated with smoke and fumes and yellow-green fire, colors what Thomas sees and thinks. Like Harold Lauder in The Stand (and the parallels between the two are frequent and insistent), Thomas pivots between two worlds. He has the potential for great good or great evil; his choice will determine not only his own fate but the fate of his kingdom. And like Harold Lauder, Thomas proves a weak vessel. Even knowing that Peter is innocent of patricide and that Flagg is in fact guilty, Thomas allows fear and pride and greed and little-mindedness to sway his actions. He remains silent, thereby condemning himself to tortures of conscience, his brother to five years imprisonment in a cell, and his kingdom to increasing disorder and danger. By seeing through the eyes of the dragon that Flagg is, Thomas becomes a paradoxically passive agent of chaos and disorder.

On another level, the eyes of the dragon seem even more important to the narrative. In the final confrontation with Flagg, beneath the head of Niner and within view of its yellow-green eyes,

Thomas finally sees clearly. Dressed in his father's robe, holding his father's weapons, sitting in his father's chair, he decides to speak truth, breaking the spell Flagg has woven around him and the Kingdom of Delain. He shoots Foe-Hammer, the great arrow. It strikes Flagg's eye, the eye of another kind of dragon, as destructive as old Niner but malevolent and unnatural. As in The Stand, Flagg disappears. Evil cannot be destroyed, but it can be disrupted.

Flagg's presence in the novel is one of the most remarkable things about it. In an interview with David Sherman, King spoke of the forthcoming novel as

> a book-length comic, almost like a fairy tale. And the bad guy in that book is Randall Flagg. His name's changed a little bit, but his last name's the same--Flagg. It's him! He turned up in this other book. In this other world. (20)

Flagg connects The Eyes of the Dragon with The Stand, and by doing so emphasizes the other-worldliness of the story. The narrator constantly cross-references between the world of Delain and the world of his listeners. The "featherex," we are told, is Delain's analogue to our Phoenix (75). Delain's inhabitants fear the Baby Death (54) and Wet Lung (55); we have crib death and pneumonia.

Yet the narrator also goes out of his way to establish the "reality" of Delain. The novel may be, as King commented, "almost like a fairy tale," but if so, the operant word is almost. Magic exists in Delain, but a carefully controlled and circumscribed magic; as the narrator says, "real magic is hard, and although it is easier to do evil magic than good, even bad magic is tolerably hard" (61). The traditional fairy tale ending is conspicuous by its absence; although Eyes begins with a variant on the formulaic "once upon a time," even to the equally conventional figure of the King with two sons, the conclusion explicitly denies the fairy tale:

> Did they all live happily ever af-

ter?

> They did not. No one ever does, in spite of what the fairy tales may say. (312)

More importantly, the narrator consistently refers to fairy tale motifs as similes and metaphors, as vehicles for understanding rather than the things themselves. As Dennis tells his story to Ben and Naomi, they listen "as spellbound as children hearing the tale of the talking wolf in the gammer's nightgown" (271). The great storm that engulfs Delain (as external conditions mirror inner turmoil and chaos) blows over farmhouses as easily as "the wolf's hungry breath in the old story" (274). And Castle Delain is twice referred to as a "fairy-tale castle" (221).

It is as if the narrator were forcing his listeners to discriminate between reality and fantasy, between his narrative and the fairy tale. Delain may not exist in our world but it does exist. There may be magic but not the simplistic magic of fairy-tales. There may have been dragons once but now they are dead; the only "dragons" left are men made evil and perverse by the power of Darkness.

Additionally, the narrator frequently creates moments of hesitation. One definition of fantasy notes that the characters (and the reader) undergo an experience that requires a decision: either an inexplicable event actually occurred, in which case the characters must re-formulate their understanding of reality to account for ghosts, vampires, or other intrusions of the irrational; or it did not occur, and the characters have experienced a hallucination of some sort but the laws of the universe remain intact. Only during the moment of hesitation, when the characters have not yet decided which explanation is correct, can the fantastic exist, according to Tzvetan Todorov.

The narrator of Eyes frequently uses this technique, creating an interesting texture of uncertainty as he provides the listeners with two explanations for a given event, one entirely possible and one requiring magic or the supernatural. Each time, the narrator refuses to choose between the two, leaving the final decision up to his listeners and by doing so creating precisely the sort

of hesitation that Todorov defines. Dennis does not enter the sewer pipes still contaminated by the Dragon Sand; had he done so he would have died and the story would have had a different ending. But whether luck, fate, or the gods saved him, the narrator refuses to say. Peter, Anders Peyna, Dennis, Ben, and Naomi all feel that things are moving to a crisis; whether their sense of urgency resulted from assessing events in Delain or from the movement of deeper powers within them, again the narrator does not say. Instead he forces his characters' uncertainty and hesitation upon his listeners.

That hesitation is crucial to the text. As in The Stand, the confrontation in Eyes takes place between the forces of White and the forces of Black. Some of the characters are obviously allied with one side or the other. Flagg, of course, represents archetypal darkness, even to his ability to become "dim," his hiding his face in shadow, his living in deep darkness beneath the Castle. Others belong to the White: Peter, always valiant, never despairing, never falling for any of Flagg's strategems--always and ever the true Prince and rightful King. At the risk of drawing too specific an analogy, he is Peter the Rock, true heir to the kingdom, tempted, tested, and triumphant. Imprisoned at the top of the Tower, he is imagistically Christ-like, as high as Flagg is low in the dungeon-like chambers; even in his isolation, Peter discovers the locket that leads in part to Flagg's undoing. Ben Staad and Naomi Reechul (already mentioned as reflecting Peter Straub's son and King's daughter) are equally steadfast, never doubting. Anders Peyna stands for law and justice, even when those decisions bring pain. Later, as he understands how completely the Black has subverted law, he stands just as adamantly for justice in the face of law, restoring order and avoiding chaos. (His name, incidentally, suggests the Spanish "pena," with its overtones of embarrassment. Peyna is embarrassed, caught up by his own pride and ridiculed by an inner voice for his part in Peter's trial [219, 222]; but that flaw does not keep him from fighting for right, even at his own expense).

Between the extremes stands Thomas. Just as in The Stand, the central action in Eyes consists

of a series of choices by individuals. Evil is not overturned by a single heroic act; Roland's slaying of the dragon Niner, for example, does not rid the land of danger, as it might have in a more traditional fairy tale. Instead, each person is tested. Within each person, King says, struggle the desire for good and the desire for "blackness and secrets" (126). The strong hold firm; the weak falter, and Flagg either destroys them or marks them for destruction.

As the beneficiary of Roland's death and Peter's imprisonment, Thomas undergoes special temptation. Already weak and frustrated by his father's preference for Peter, Thomas develops into another Harold Lauder, fat and marked by pimples, his outward appearance an accurate indication of his inner failings. He is not evil, the narrator assures us (and we believe him), but he is weak. And he is the king.

Thomas tries once to assert himself, but almost immediately falls to Flagg's persuasions. He joins the side of the Black. In an imagistic inversion reminiscent of King's treatment of Mother Abagail (the leader of the White is black) and Nadine Cross (the bride of the Dark Man has white hair), the boy becomes Thomas the Light-Bringer, destined to immerse Delain in greater darkness than it has ever known. Again, the name is symbolic. "Light-bringer" could translate as "Lucifer," the name of the son of the morning who led a third of heaven's hosts with him into hell. When King conflates "Light-Bringer" with "Tax-Bringer" (179), he signals Flagg's near-absolute control over Thomas.

Eyes ends more optimistically than The Stand, however. Harold Lauder is destroyed by the darkness he chooses; Thomas, on the other hand, retains enough of his humanity to stand against Flagg. Like a "doubting Thomas" juxtaposed to Peter the Rock, he never forgets what he has seen or his distrust and fear of Flagg, in spite of momentary vacillations. When the critical moment arrives, as Flagg moves to destroy Peter and his supporters, Thomas speaks up, acknowledges his own guilt, and destroys Flagg's physical shape. The tool Flagg has prepared to disrupt Delain turns on Flagg instead; as the narrator says several times in the novel, evil ultimately defeats itself by

its own intricate machinations. The essence of evil escapes, as it did from the Overlook in The Shining, but Thomas has earned his own restitution. Through him, Peter returns to the throne.

The Eyes of the Dragon, like so many of King's works, reaches beyond itself to touch other novels. Frisky, the dog who tracks Dennis to Castle Delain and makes it possible for Ben and Naomi to save Peter's life, reminds us of the sane Cujo, even down to the way King re-creates the dog's thoughts. Flagg's mad ravings as he climbs the three hundred stairs to Peter's cell recall Jack Torrance's threats to Danny: "Here I come, Peter . . . . Here I come, dear Peter, to do what I should have done a long, long time ago" (287). (In fact, King's descriptions of Flagg struggling up and down the steps, battle-axe in hand, shattering doors and skulls, may owe as much to Jack Nicholson's interpretation of Torrance in Kubrick's The Shining as to any other single source, an interesting possibility for an influence from film back to text.) The Stand contributes not only Flagg but also a number of details that bring the world of Delain to life: blue fire from Flagg's fingertips; the analogue to Harold Lauder; monitory dreams that afflict both the good and the evil.

In addition, Eyes alludes to two seminal fantasists. Lovecraft appears only tangentially, in a reference to a book "written on the high, distant Plains of Leng by a madman named Alhazred" (60). Still, there is a faintly Lovecraftian sense about the novel, particularly in the episodes in Flagg's chambers as he delves into forbidden knowledge and eldritch secrets.

Tolkien, on the other hand, contributes several important touches to Eyes. The great arrow Foe-Hammer, dragon-bane and destroyer of evil, recalls Tolkien's elven sword. Dennis's experiences in the fields west of Castle Delain similarly recall Frodo's on the high seat of kings in The Lord of the Rings; in each instance, the character senses the eye of evil passing over him as it casts outward in its restlessness. Even more importantly, in both The Lord of the Rings and The Eyes of the Dragon, evil cannot be permanently defeated. Sauron is, after all, only a discorporate force in Tolkien's tale, physically destroyed

eons before by Isuldur, now once again spreading his darkness outward from Mordor. The destruction of the Ring of Power cripples him but does not destroy him entirely. Flagg is similarly more elemental force than human. He has endured for centuries, suffering momentary setbacks at the hands of a Valera, a Kyla the Good, a Sasha, or a Peter; he may be forced from Delain, but his influence remains.

The parallels with Tolkien also explain the elegaic ending of Eyes. Although repentant and contrite, Thomas is wise enough to realize that he has no place in Delain; even under Peter's protection, he would be in danger from a populace infuriated by his actions as King. So Thomas leaves. In a scene remarkably reminiscent of Frodo's farewell to Hobbiton at the beginning of The Lord of the Rings, Thomas sets out on his own quest to find Flagg. Like Frodo, he too is accompanied by a simple rustic, Dennis, a character who makes up in loyalty and perseverence what he might lack in intellect. And, as the narrator says in closing,

> Thomas and Dennis had many strange adventures, and . . . they did see Flagg again, and confront him.
>
> But now the hour is late, and all of that is another tale, for another day. (314).

Delain has changed. Even without Flagg's physical presence, it suffers the depredations of evil and darkness. Peter remains behind; his duty is to be King, to reign long and well and restore order. But Thomas cannot stay. Like Frodo at the conclusion of The Lord of the Rings, he has been through too much, has suffered too much, and has no place in the new world. There are important differences, of course; Frodo was a Ring-bearer and Gandalf's ally, while Thomas had accepted Flagg's evil passively, if not willingly. But at the end, the heroic surfaces, and Thomas sets forth on his own quest.

The Eyes of the Dragon establishes King's ability to make his own way, not only in "contemporary thrillers and dark fantasy," to quote De Lint, but in high fantasy as well. The novel stands on its own as an engaging narrative; and at

the same time, it bridges King's two most ambitious fictions, The Stand and The Talisman, bringing new depths of meaning to each.

The Talisman

Alan Warren's "Has Success Spoiled Stephen King?" approaches the knotty question of commercialism and artistic integrity, noting that of the ten novels published under King's own name after Carrie, only two deserve oblivion: The Dark Tower and The Talisman (16).

Unfortunately for both books, Warren's is not an isolated criticism; but the reactions to the latter novel do tend to greater stridency and harshness than the responses to The Dark Tower. That, after all, was an admitted experiment, a beginning toward a grander vision perhaps not possible to capture on paper. The Talisman, on the other hand, was the work of two accomplished novelists who, according to a number of critics, should have known better.

Charles Leerhsen's review in Newsweek epitomizes this reaction. After several paragraphs devoted to backgrounds, Leerhsen launches into his critique. Viking has distributed a record one million hardcover copies of the book, he notes,

> meaning that many people who normally get books for Christmas will instead get "Talismans." No one who wears glasses is absolutely safe, and those who do can start practicing their frozen smiles ("Gee, thanks, Aunt Sophie!"). (61)

Later, he refers to Straub as seeming "as unphony as the $3 bill he and his collaborator split for each book." When he actually discusses the novel itself, his tone and language leave no question as to his attitude: the "jarring plot-twists that King and Straub are famous for are, in this case, telegraphed meathandedly"; the novel is almost "glacial" in pace; and it reads like a novelization of a film (61).

After a single paragraph discussing the literary merits (or demerits) of The Talisman, he moves again into the realms of publicity budgets and the details of composition.

Leerhsen's approach emphasizes the unevenness of responses to the novel. Hailed as a landmark by two leading writers, it was simultaneously condemned roundly (even before publication) for being commercial, exploitative, and (worse yet!) boring. King has cited a review in People magazine that read: "Watch out for these guys, they have written two of the worst novels of 1983 on their own, and in 1984, they are teaming up to do a book together" (cited in Winter, "Quest" 68). After The Talisman appeared, People published an additional note. The "Worst of Pages" section of the "Picks & Pans" column comments that "in horror fiction, two heads are better than one only if they're on the same body" (24-31 December 1984).

Yet like each of King's recent novels, The Talisman swept to the top of national bestsellers lists, recouping Viking's publicity budget in the first day of sale. Within a month of the "Picks & Pans" note, People devoted three pages to "America's current No. 1 best-seller," calling it a "644-page fantasy about a 12-year-old boy's odyssey in a netherworld filled with vicious werewolves and killer trees"--at best a skewed representation of the novel, concentrating on minor characteristics that occur within the first 150 pages and suggesting closer affinities to Tolkien than actually exist. Still, the article claims, it is a "triumph of terror" (Small 51).

A number of situations might account for this extraordinary diversity of opinions.

Several are external. The authors' reputations might have made it difficult for either to gain a fair hearing from mainstream reviewers, particularly in light of the influx of films from King's novels over the preceding year, King's publication of The Eyes of the Dragon less than two months after The Talisman, and the increasingly solid rumors about Thinner, published in the same month as Eyes.

In addition, the publication arrangements for the novel were themselves extreme, inviting both skepticism and charges of overt commercialism. Even before publication, booksellers advertised the novel at a reduced, advance-order rate. Then, in one of the largest press runs in publishing history, Viking printed 600,000 copies, with 502,000 sequestered in secret warehouses around

the country, including General Electric distribution centers. On publication day, October 8, 1984, all half million plus were released simultaneously, creating the illusion of a flooded market ("502,000 Copies" 25). Outlets could almost literally cover their walls with The Talisman in its distinctive black, red, and yellow dust jacket.

As impressive as the distribution system was --and Daniel W. Murphy, executive vice-president of Publishers Shipping Cooperative Association called it a "milestone" for the industry--it also created a visual over-kill; seeing stacks and stacks of novels in bookstore after bookstore for weeks afterward almost defeated the purpose of the arrangements in the first place. Nevertheless, the initial run of 600,000 sold out, as did a second run of 75,000; recent records indicate over one million copies in print.

To add fuel to the fire, advertisements for the book announced that it would not be available through Book Clubs; readers would have to pay full cover price of $18.95. In an interview with Paul S. Nathan of Publishers Weekly, King defended the decision:

> Once your books sell a certain number of copies . . . you become important as an instrument to bring in future members. Not that present members won't buy your book, but membership turnover is high and your book becomes one of those where people say, "I really want to read that and I don't want to wait for the paperback." They can join and get four books for a dollar. If the Guild is going to do this, they should be required to pay for it.

In this case, "pay for it" meant increasing the Guild's offer of $400,000 to $700;000, which the Guild declined to do. King insists that he is not opposed to Book Club editions; Skeleton Crew, published after The Talisman, will be offered through the Book-of-the-Month Club. "Clubs are an integral part of the industry," King continues in the interview. "I'm not out to bust them. But I think the climate that spawned clubs has changed

radically" (28).

As if the unusual distribution arrangements and the furor over Club sales were not enough, King and Straub also had to contend with a backlash stemming from the sale of film rights to Steven Spielberg. Some reviewers saw the negotiations as another way to capitalize on the authors' inordinate popularity. People spoke of the novel being "snapped up" by Spielberg (Small 51). Leerhsen's article was more critical; the book reads like a novelization, he says,

> a charge that Straub finds "obscene"--the authors' just-completed deal with Universal Pictures and Steven Spielberg notwithstanding. (61)

A film contract for a King novel (or even a Straub novel) should raise few eyebrows; by the time The Talisman appeared, film versions of almost every book published under King's name (plus two of the Bachman novels) were either completed, in production, or planned. That a work the magnitude of The Talisman might come to the attention of one of the premier names in fantasy films seems understandable. The negotiations were long and difficult, primarily because Spielberg wanted to work with the novel in spite of a number of other projects; he was, as King puts it, "determined to have his own way about this . . ." (Wiater and Anker 12). Given the intensely visual sense King has developed in his novels over the past decade, it is as if The Talisman were being faulted for succeeding in precisely what it set out to do.

In addition to these external complications, there are a number of internal difficulties as well.

To begin with, reviewers have charged that the novel is too long. The complaint stems in part from an abuse by some writers who, as Parke Godwin says, give readers "seven hundred pages of a three-hundred page book." The reader, he argues, will resent such an intrusion, in spite of the current popularity of verbosity. Concerned about the trend to longer novels afflicted with "literary elephantiasis" (a term King uses as well to define his own style), Godwin suggests that readers have undergone a change in standards, from

the "time of faster-paced drama and prose" Godwin recalls to

> an attempted return to the indulgent rambling of the nineteenth century without the Victorian values or the subtle craft of, say, a James or Le Fanu. Evidently this new generation of readers will sit and digest 750 flabbily written pages without cavil. Certainly they'll sit through a space opera too long by forty-five minutes of visuals if there's big Dolby sound and a John Williams score soaring and sobbing from the speakers. Or a decayed corpse or two in close-up just to keep things gemütlichkeit [sic]. (11)

The reason, he concludes, may stem from television; readers babysat by television when they were children may have transferred a willingness to follow simple action to their reading.

Godwin does not mention King specifically; nor does he need to. It is almost a critical commonplace that King's novels are frequently longer than the plot requires. Some have estimated that Christine is a third longer than necessary; passages in "Apt Pupil" might be shortened. The Stand, long as it is (823 pages in the Doubleday hardcover) was pared by 20% from King's manuscript. And, as noted above, King himself recognizes the wordiness in his style ("Afterword" to SC, 508).

This is not to suggest, however, that King simply indulges himself in a technique he finds questionable. Quite the contrary. King addressed the issue in "Love Those Long Books," one of his reviews for Adelina (November 1980). Ostensibly about the Dover reprint of Wilkie Collins' No Name, the article argues:

> There was an age--it ended around 1950, I should judge--when the long novel was accepted on its own terms and judged upon matters other than its length: there was a time before that when the long novel was the rule rather than the exception. Since 1950--about the time

> that these same mainline critics finished walling poetry off from the greater mass of American readers by convincing them they couldn't understand it--the novel has been more and more discriminated against on the grounds of length alone. Many critics seem to take a novel of more than 400 pages as a personal affront.

One such critic, he notes, wished that the author of The Dead Zone had developed a "case of permanent dyslexia"; another said of The Stand that "Given enough rope, any writer will hang himself . . . and in this novel, King has taken enough rope to outfit an entire clipper ship."

Even granting a certain defensiveness in the Adelina review, it seems clear that King approaches the craft of storytelling from a radically different angle than many of his detractors. His imagined worlds, however close they may be to what his readers consider reality, require careful construction. The intrusion of the supernatural works most effectively against a solidly structured illusion of reality; if The Stand intends to convince its readers that Randall Flagg exists, the fact of his essentially irrational and supernatural nature may require a meticulously built up background. In The Talisman, King and Straub must make not only our world believable, but the Territories as well--and at the same time convince the reader that sufficient time has passed for the episodes in the narrative to be credible. Much of Moby Dick (to refer to a nineteenth-century example) could be considered extraneous to the straight plot line; a number of non-narrative chapters seem as important for creating a sense of temporal duration as for moving the plot forward.

Other complaints about The Talisman seem outgrowths of the first: it is a collaboration by two "Big Names," and therefore almost automatically a target for sharpshooters. Even before publication, it was optioned by a film producer whose commercial successes have made history. It is long--designedly so--and therefore "glacial," tedious, or boring.

On the other hand, a number of objections to The Talisman ignore one important element: genre.

Readers coming to the novel expecting more of what they found in Christine, Pet Sematary, Shadowland or Floating Dragon are bound to be disappointed, just as readers approaching Tolkien's Silmarillion expecting a reprise of The Lord of the Rings will be disappointed.

The comparison is apt and important. In both instances, the authors shift genres, radically and fundamentally. In spite of the presence of elves and wizards in The Silmarillion, it does not just continue The Lord of the Rings. Instead, it is a creation epic, requiring different techniques and structures. Vocabulary and narrative voice change; episodes become more abstracted and generalized; time dilates; length becomes a matter of creating the illusion of eons passing, rather than merely months or years. This is not to say that either approach is necessarily better, only that they are different, with different ends, different characteristics, different effects on the readers.

The same situation exists in The Talisman. Warren's comparison of the novel with The Dark Tower is appropriate in at least one sense: both represent King moving away from the traditions and expectations he has established for himself. Both blend the surface characteristics of horror or dark fantasy with the structures, purposes, and tones of epic quest and high fantasy. To condemn the novels for succeeding in what they attempted, while failing in what they carefully eschewed, seems unreasonable and unfair.

The question of genre is particularly important in The Talisman since it encompasses so much, becoming virtually an encyclopedia of possibilities as it explores science fiction, fantasy, horror, and fairy tale.

Most immediately, it entails alternate universe fiction in the reciprocality between Jack Sawyer's world and the Territories, yet Morgan Sloat refers to Phil Sawyer's story of another world as "science-fiction crapola" (70). And in spite of frequent references to science fiction, particularly in the form of similes, the novel rejects many of its key elements, critiquing that genre as it does others. In the final third, Richard Sloat becomes increasingly important, even though he has rejected "any sort of fantasy, even science fiction"; Jack comments that "techies"

such as Richard usually consumed large quantities of Heinlein, Asimov, Clarke, or Niven, while avoiding the "metaphysical bullshit" of a Malzberg or a Silverberg (412). What surprises him is that Richard seems incapable of accepting any representation of paranormal reality, no matter how firmly based in scientific fact or technological innovation. As Jack's quest for the talisman becomes Richard's as well, it also becomes a means of expanding Richard's imagination as it expands the reader's. Whatever The Talisman is, it is not traditional science fiction; instead, it more closely resembles Piers Anthony's conflation of science fiction and fantasy in the Proton/Phaze novels, Split Infinity, Blue Adept, and Juxtaposition, in which alternate worlds serve as analogues to each other, one based on science and rationality, the other on magic and the fantastic. What elements of science fiction exist in The Talisman relate best to what C. S. Lewis termed mythopoeic fiction. In "On Science Fiction," Lewis defined five sub-types of the genre, the fifth and last being the most important and for Lewis the only valid sort, derived from a "wish to visit strange regions in search of such beauty, awe, or terror as the actual world does not supply" (68).

Lewis's definition lies close to J. R. R. Tolkien's in "On Fairy-Stories," as he discusses the basic functions of fantasy: recovery, escape, and consolation. Even more to the point, he introduces "Mooreeffoc, or Chestertonian fantasy." The word is "fantastic," Tolkien says,

> but it could be seen written up in every town in this land. It is Coffee-room, viewed from the inside through a glass door, as it was seen by Dickens on a dark London day; and it was used by Chesterton to denote the queerness of things that have become trite, when they are seen suddenly from a new angle. (58)

Limited though this form of fantasy might be, it relates to what King and Straub work toward in The Talisman; early in the novel, in fact, Jack Sawyer looks up and sees "DLROWNUF AIDACRA" written against the sky (32)--a specifically mooreeffocian moment. Later, as Jack Sawyer flips into the Ter-

ritories, he has "an experience of remarkable sensory impact, seeing and hearing and smelling things which were brand-new to him, while other sensory input to which he had grown utterly accustomed was missing for the first time" (189).

If King's earlier works were grounded in Poe and Lovecraft, The Talisman (as perhaps befits its collaborative composition) looks to other fantasists for its underlying imagery and patterns. References to Poe and Lovecraft are fewer and less critical than in other of King's works, functioning more as allusions than as structural or thematic devices. Instead, works such as Lewis's Narnia novels are deeply embedded in The Talisman, particularly as the narrative concentrates on an alternative world reached at first through magic and later through desire; the plot line of The Talisman in fact parallels the action of The Magician's Nephew closely--a young man moves into an alternate reality to find a talisman that will heal his dying mother. In doing so, he comes to understand his own reality more completely and confirms the need for right choice in both worlds; he learns simply to do a good thing.

King and Straub make no secret of how important Lewis and Tolkien were to the narrative conception of The Talisman. In addition to Straub's comment made in January of 1983 that The Talisman was "a quest novel with fantasy elements" and that it would "be the size of The Lord of the Rings if it goes on much longer," King and Straub incorporate allusions to Lewis and Tolkien throughout. The Lord of the Rings not only contributes references to Ents, for example, but also the tone of Jack's walking song. Appropriately enough, Wolf's terror in the shopping mall theater stems from Ralph Bakshi's version of The Lord of the Rings.

As a result, The Talisman seems in some ways a gentler work than either King or Straub usually offer. It is not without violence, cruelty, and terror, of course; Lewis and Tolkien also frequently crossed into similar territory. But even its most horrific moments seem touched with a quiet optimism. The episodes with Wolf at the Sunlight Home or Richard Sloat at Thayer School may include gruesome and horrifying elements, but they owe more to memories of Frodo and Sam on the trek to Mount Doom than to Ben Mears and Mark

Petrie battling vampires, particularly in the relationships Jack develops toward Wolf and Richard. The Blasted Lands are closer to Tolkien's dead marshes than to Trashcan Man's desert in The Stand, in spite of references to radioactivity. On the whole, The Talisman moves with a steadier, more deliberate pace, its horrific episodes ameliorated by tone and treatment.

Even more importantly, the novel concentrates on a key element in both Tolkien's and Lewis's theories of the fantastic. Tolkien calls it the "eucatastrophe," the consolation of the happy ending. Lewis is more generalized, referring in his critical and biographical works to "Joy," to an emotion deeper than reason or logic. In The Talisman, Jack Sawyer experiences both--explicitly in the episode of the flying men in the Territories, who are sustained by an almost visible joy; and implicitly in his desire for "moreness" (385). There may be pain in Jack Sawyer's world, and loss and death; but there is also restoration. Just as Frodo emerges from his quest changed, or Ransom from his in Lewis's space novels, Jack Sawyer is changed. He has the power to heal and uses it wisely; in doing so, he heals himself as well. Only in the final paragraphs of the novel does he return to anything near what he was before. Tolkien has his hobbit depart from the Grey Havens with the elves and wizards; Lewis's Ransom travels to Perelandra to live with Arthur. Having accomplished his task, Jack Sawyer receives perhaps a greater reward: through the power of the talisman, he returns to his "ordinary life of school and friends and games and music" (644).

In addition, the literary allusions that color The Talisman also tend toward light fantasy. Except for several paraphrases from Straub's Shadowland ("When we all lived in California and no one lived anywhere else. . ." [159]) and Floating Dragon, or such occasional reminders from King's novels as the Rainbird Towers or the haunted Black Hotel, readers are more likely to see echoes from The Wizard of Oz than from The Colour Out of Space, or "The Masque of the Red Death." The image of George Romero's shambling walking dead is countered by the inherent comedy of An American Werewolf in London as Wolf undergoes his transformation in a mall theater. Even the name "Jack

Sawyer" diverts the novel from horror. While the first name might be construed as a backward glance at Jack Torrance, the surname connects The Talisman with Mark Twain. Thomas Woodbine ("Uncle Thomas") dies early, as if to insure more to the book than a rehashing of Twain. Still, occasional echoes lend The Talisman additional support: Jack's constantly having to tell the Story recalls humorous parallels in Huckleberry Finn; Speedy Parker recalls Jim; the unlikely duo of Jack Sawyer and Richard Stoat and their equally incredible adventures read like something out of Tom Sawyer's imagination.

Although both King and Straub have acknowledged the influence of Twain, Tolkien, Lewis, and others on it, the novel transcends its sources. It may be an encyclopedic treatment of science fiction and the fantastic, yet it extends beyond either, weaving intricate patterns of shifting realities in which science fiction provides images for fantasy, as when the smiling werewolf reminds Jack of the creature in the film Alien (262). Horror is both literal and figurative; Lori, the waitress at Oatley's Tap, looks like a vampire, for example, as does Morgan of Orris. Jack Sawyer's fictional aunt, Helen Vaughan, emerges from the horror fiction of Arthur Machen. Mainstream fiction appears in the guise of Sunlight Gardener and Smokey Updike, who were named "with tongue firmly in cheek" after John Gardener and John Updike, "two writers lionized by the critical establishment that has so often discounted horror and fantasy fiction" (Winter, "Quest" 67).

The alternate worlds of the novel are reciprocal. Burying an apple core in the Territories can manifest in this world as an earthquake; a political assassination there results in World War II here. Underground testing in Nevada results in the Blasted Lands with their mutated horrors. And the genres that blend to create The Talisman are equally reciprocal, as King and Straub highlight fantastic elements by endowing them with science-fictional rationale, and give science-fictional elements greater depth by allying them with traditional fantasy. Even the fairy tale enters into the novel at the level of metaphor and simile, as Jack recalls the door of a root cellar, "set into a grassy mound like a door in a fairy

tale" (265).

Religion is also a strong element in the novel, both as object of scrutiny (the false religion of Sunlight Gardener) and as image. When Jack sets out on his quest, he parallels Christ in Gethsemane; the cup cannot pass from him, however, he accepts the quest, and ultimately becomes Jason, a god-image in the Territories. Later, the ironically named Sunlight Gardener urges Jack to confess. In an inversion typical of King's strategies in The Stand and The Eyes of the Dragon, Gardener serves the Black force while dressed in stainless white--he is the "White Man" to Wolf. When he plays with a heavy key ring during Jack's interrogation, he becomes a perverted Peter, holding the keys to the nether kingdom, literally guarding the entry to Gehenna.

Cancer remains a central threat--both the physical cancer killing Lily Cavenaugh and the figurative cancer afflicting our world and the Territories. Politics enter in as well. Straub refers to King's vision of "Reagan's America" (cited in Winter, "Quest" 68), while references to Nixon and Agnew reiterate the theme of corrupted power. Sexuality likewise appears, but more as potential homosexual assault than anything else. Jack Sawyer's increasing physical beauty (coupled with the absence of continuing female characters except for the invalid Lily Cavenaugh and the dying Queen of the Territories) makes his encounters with homosexuality inevitable. During the episodes at the Sunlight Home, such references increase, parallelling the boys' sublimated sexuality and providing an outlet for Gardener's sadism.

On the deepest level, however, The Talisman remains true to King's concerns from his earliest works. Chaos intrudes upon order; the hero must restore balance. To an extent, The Talisman reads like anti-Carrie; Jack Sawyer accepts his powers, wielding them responsibly and triumphing over them. The struggle between Black and White central to The Stand, The Dark Tower, and The Eyes of the Dragon continues to a more positive conclusion. In the beginning, Jack defines his quest in terms of "NIGHT and DAY, MOON and SUN; DARK and LIGHT" (25); at the end, a rainbow of light dispels the darkness around Lily Cavenaugh, even as

the radiance of the talisman fades--another imagistic inversion. The novel ends with the victory of the White force: in her white bedroom, the Queen of the Territories opens her eyes.

The Talisman repays a second reading. The pace remains steady, but the narrative moves with a quiet inexorability that makes Leerhsen's reference to "glacial" pacing inappropriate. It is long; yet it requires length as it forces the reader out of easy thought patterns and into tangential worlds where alternatives multiply until, with Phil Sawyer, the reader realizes that there may yet be Territories even beyond the Territories.

Chapter VIII

. . . AND BEYOND

In the September 6, 1985 issue of Publishers Weekly Leonore Fleischer wrote:

> I got a postcard from one of my favorite people, a bestselling author, who demanded, in a tone so plaintive it could be heard on a postcard, "Now I want to know about Stephen King's $10-million, two-book deal. Is it true?" Yes, J., it's true . . . .

The books in question--Misery and The Tommyknockers--will be the last of four to be published between September 1986 and November 1987, the first two (already under contract) being It and the trade edition of The Eyes of the Dragon. In light of King's track record to date, these four are almost certain to be back-to-back bestsellers, but they have generated interest beyond that single fact.

The decision to publish all four within just over a year represents a major shift on the part of publishers. After all, King resorted to the Bachman pseudonym at least in part because of the restriction placed on him not to publish more than a single major work each year . . . and now he plans on releasing four.

In addition, the terms of the agreement are unique. Although NAL receives paperback rights to Misery and The Tommyknockers, the contract specifies a fifteen-year expiration date for the hardcover rights going to Viking for Misery and to Putnam for The Tommyknockers (Foltz). After that, hardcover rights revert to Stephen King.

Taken in conjunction with a record-breaking press run for The Talisman; innovative pre-publication sales at reduced cost through B. Dalton's nation-wide book chain; and at least three feature films and several television productions based on

King's works and scheduled for release over the next months, the contract for Misery and The Tommyknockers indicates that King is indeed, and will probably continue to be, a publishing phenomenon.

The four novels promise to generate further interest, and possibily further controversy.

It is King's magnum opus, a work "about kids. It's like a gigantic overexposition from 'The Body' from 'Different Seasons.' . . . 'It' has had me obsessed for for years" (Brown, "Shining Through"). A long novel even by King's standards, It promises a full range of horror effects, including "every monster you could think of" ("Stephen King's Torrent of Horror").

Winter describes the first draft as over eleven hundred pages long, a complex work told from multiple perspectives and using two variant narrative times, based loosely on a theme from his earlier story, "The Boogeyman," that perhaps the monsters we feared as children really existed; in It belief in the creature is sufficient to give the creature life. As is usual with King, the novel is set in Maine; six characters return to the town where they had lived as children, each apparently impelled to discover exactly what happened to them in the sewer in Derry, Maine, in 1958. Roughly parallelling Straub's Floating Dragon, the novel works from the thesis that "It" is calling the characters together, forcing a final confrontation (Art 153-155). As early as 1983, Straub noted that he and King seemed to be "collaborating unconsciously already," since "Steve's novel It and my novel Floating Dragon are strangely parallel" ("King New Novel Advance").

Little more need be said of the next novel, The Eyes of the Dragon, except to applaud King's decision to give the work wider distribution than it received as a limited edition. Unlike The Dark Tower, Eyes is a complete work, strong enough to stand against his other publications in spite of its being intended originally for a juvenile audience.

The third novel, Misery, has been described as "Sort of a realistic horrifying story of the price paid by a novelist's fame . . . a dark fantasy drawn from King's experience with fame and popularity" (Winter, cited in "Stephen King's Torrent of Horror"). Also a transitional novel,

it has more the sense of a Richard Bachman novel than the other three. In fact, King has intimated that had Thinner not forced him to acknowledge the pen-name, he would have published Misery as a Bachman; it has, he notes, "a Bachman feel to it" (Brown, "Shining Through").

The fourth, The Tommyknockers, examines our infatuation with gadgetry. Readers interested in a sneak preview have an unusual opportunity with The Tommyknockers, since "The Revelations of 'Becka Paulson," published in Rolling Stone (July 19/ August 2, 1984), is an excerpt from the novel. In that story, 'Becka Paulson runs afoul of a television set; she becomes so absorbed in it and its apparent revelations about her husband, her neighbors, and herself, that it destroys her and her husband (see SW 179-181). Elsewhere, King has referred to a passage he has been working on for some time, about a Coca-Cola vending machine that comes to life; from what he has said about The Tommyknockers, that might also be an episode from the novel.

Even this brief look at the forthcoming novels indicates that King is remaining true to the kind of fiction he does best while simultaneously stretching beyond what he has achieved to date. The novels seem almost assured to reach bestseller status; and with them coming so quickly, it seems equally possible that King might repeat his unique achievement in being the only American writer to have three books on the lists simultaneously.

Thus far, this series has concentrated on King as writer: the Bachman novels in Stephen King as Richard Bachman: the short stories in The Shorter Works of Stephen King; his novels in this volume. There is much more to King, however. A subsequent volume will examine the relationship between King and film: films made from his novels and stories; films produced from King's scripts or directed by King; even a brief look at King as actor. Another will consider King as social critic, literary critic, and cultural phenomenon, continuing what was begun here . . . an assessment of the many facets of Stephen King.

CHECKLIST OF WORKS BY AND ABOUT STEPHEN KING

This checklist is based on bibliographic studies by Stephanie Leonard (CR), Douglas Winter (Art), Marty Ketchum, Daniel J. H. Levack, and Jeff Levin (FI), and Marshall Tymn (DSK); on materials provided by other collectors and King enthusiasts, especially Barbara Bolan of Second Edition Books, Ted Dikty of Starmont House, Dan Klamkin of DMK Books, and Sandy Parigan; and on my own research.

Primary Bibliography

I. BOOK-LENGTH FICTION

Carrie. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1974 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1976 [paperback].

Christine. West Kingston RI: Donald M. Grant, 1983 [limited edition]; New York: Viking, 1983 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1984 [paperback].

Cujo. New York: Mysterious Press, 1981 [limited edition]; New York: Viking, 1981 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1982 [paperback].

Cycle of the Werewolf. Westland MI: Land of Enchantment, 1983 [limited edition]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1985 [trade paperback]. Illustrated by Bernie Wrightson.

The Dead Zone. New York: Viking, 1979 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1980 [paperback].

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The Long Walk. New York: NAL, 1979 [paperback].

Pet Sematary. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1983 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1984 [paperback].

Rage (Richard Bachman). New York: NAL, 1977 [paperback].

Roadwork (Richard Bachman). New York: NAL, 1981 [paperback].

The Running Man (Richard Bachman). New York: NAL, 1982 [paperback].

'Salem's Lot. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1975 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1976 [paperback].

The Shining. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1977 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1978 [paperback].

The Stand. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1978 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1979 [paperback].

The Talisman (with Peter Straub). West Kingston RI: Donald M. Grant, 1984 [limited edition]; New York: Viking and Putnam, 1984 [hardcover]: New York: Berkley, 1985 [paperback].

Thinner (Richard Bachman). New York: NAL, 1984 [hardcover].

Scheduled for publication:

It. New York: Viking, 1986-1987 [hardcover]; New York: NAL [paperback].

Misery. New York: Viking, 1987 [hardcover]; New York: NAL [paperback].

The Tommyknockers. New York: Putnam, 1987 [hardcover]; New York: NAL [paperback].

Unpublished manuscripts:

Sword in the Darkness (also referred to as Babylon Here)
Blaze
The Corner (incomplete)
Milkman (incomplete)
Welcome to Clearwater (incomplete)

In various interviews and studies, two other works are also mentioned: The Cannibals, a completed novel (FI 268); and 'Salem's Lot II, a sequel to SL King has discussed several times as a possible future project.

II. COLLECTIONS

The Bachman Books: Four Early Novels by Stephen King. New York: NAL, 1985 [hardcover]; NAL/Plume, October 1985 [paperback].
Includes:
Introduction: "Why I Was Richard Bachman"
Rage
The Long Walk
Roadwork
The Running Man

Creepshow. New York: NAL/Plume, 1982 [paperback]. Comic book adaptation; artwork by Bernie Wrightson.
Includes:
"Father's Day"
"The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill"
"The Crate"
"Something to Tide You Over"
"They're Creeping Up on You"

The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger. West Kingston RI: Donald M. Grant, 1982 [limited edition]. Illustrated by Michael Whelan.
Includes:
"The Gunslinger"
"The Way Station"
"The Oracle and the Mountains"
"The Slow Mutants"
"The Gunslinger and the Dark Man"
"Afterword"

Different Seasons. New York: Viking, 1982 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1983 [paperback].
Includes:
"Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption"
"Apt Pupil"
"The Body"
"The Breathing Method"
"Afterword"

Night Shift. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1978 [hardcover]; New York: NAL/Signet, 1979 [paperback].
Includes:
"Introduction," by John D. MacDonald
"Foreword"

"Jerusalem's Lot"
"Graveyard Shift"
"Night Surf"
"I Am the Doorway"
"The Mangler"
"The Boogeyman"
"Gray Matter"
"Battleground"
"Trucks"
"Sometimes They Come Back"
"Strawberry Spring"
"The Ledge"
"The Lawnmower Man"
"Quitters, Inc."
"I Know What You Need"
"Children of the Corn"
"The Last Rung on the Ladder"
"The Man Who Loved Flowers"
"One for the Road"
"The Woman in the Room"

Readings from Night Shift are available on Walden Tapes, including "Strawberry Spring," "The Boogeyman," "Graveyard Shift," "The Man Who Loved Flowers," "One for the Road," "The Last Rung on the Ladder," "I Know What You Need," "Jerusalem's Lot," and "I Am the Doorway." Stuart Leigh, Director. Warner Audio, 1985. $34.95 for six tapes.

Skeleton Crew. New York: Viking, 1985 [hardcover]; Santa Cruz CA: Scream Press [limited edition].

Includes:
"Introduction"
"The Mist"
"Here There Be Tygers"
"The Monkey"
"Cain Rose Up"
"Mrs. Todd's Shortcut"
"The Jaunt"
"The Wedding Gig"
"Paranoid: A Chant" (poem)
"The Raft"
"Word Processor of the Gods"
"The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands"
"Beachworld"
"The Reaper's Image"

"Nona"
"For Owen" (poem)
"Survivor Type"
"Uncle Otto's Truck"
"Morning Deliveries (Milkman #1)"
"Big Wheels: A Tale of the Laundry Game (Milkman #2)"
"Gramma"
"The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet"
"The Reach"
"Notes"

The Scream Press limited edition will also include "The Revelations of 'Becka Paulson," a fragment of a novel, The Tommyknockers, scheduled for publication in 1986-87.

Stephen King. New York: William Heinemann, Inc. and Octopus Books, 1981 [hardcover].

Includes:
The Shining
'Salem's Lot
Night Shift
Carrie

III. SHORT FICTION AND POETRY

"Apt Pupil: Summer of Corruption." DS, 1982.

"The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, June 1984; SC, 1985.

"Battleground." Cavalier, September 1972; NS, 1978.

"Beachworld." Weird Tales, 1985; SC, 1985.

"Before the Play." Whispers, August 1982.

"Big Wheels: A Tale of the Laundry Game." New Terrors, 2, ed. Ramsey Campbell (London: Pan, 1980); New Terrors, ed. Ramsey Campbell (New York: Pocket Books, 1982); SC, 1985.

"The Bird and the Album." A Fantasy Reader: The Seventh World Fantasy Convention Program Book, eds. Jeff Frane and Jack Rems (Berkeley, CA: The Seventh World Fantasy Convention, 1981). Excerpt from It.

"The Blue Air Compressor." Onan, January 1971; Heavy Metal, July 1981.

"The Body: Fall from Innocence." DS, 1982. Incorporates "Stud City" and "The Revenge of Lard Ass Hogan."

"The Boogeyman." Cavalier, March 1973; Gent, December 1975: NS, 1978.

"The Breathing Method: A Winter's Tale." DS, 1982.

"Cain Rose Up". Ubris, Spring 1968; SC, 1985.

"The Cat from Hell." Cavalier, June 1977; Tales of Unknown Horror, ed. Peter Haining (London: New English Library, 1978); The Year's Finest Fantasy, ed. Terry Carr (New York: Putnam, 1978; New York: Berkley, 1979); Magicats!, eds. Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois (New York: Ace, 1984); New Bern Magazine, March-April 1984; Top Horror, ed. Josh Pachter (Munich, West Germany: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag).

"Children of the Corn." Penthouse, March 1977; NS, 1978; Cults! An Anthology of Secret Societies, Sects, and the Supernatural, eds. Martin H. Greenberg and Charles C. Waugh (New York: Beaufort, 1983).

"The Crate." Gallery, July 1979; Fantasy Annual III, ed. Terry Carr (New York: Pocket, 1981); The Arbor House Treasury of Horror and the Supernatural, comps. Bill Pronzini, Barry N. Malzberg, and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Arbor House, 1981); Creepshow, 1982.

"Crouch End." New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos, ed. Ramsey Campbell (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1980).

"Cujo." Science Fiction Digest, January/February 1982 (excerpt from Cujo).

"Cycle of the Werewolf." Heavy Metal, December 1983 (excerpt from Cycle of the Werewolf).

"The Dark Man." Ubris, Spring 1969 (poem).

"Do the Dead Sing?" Yankee, November 1981; as "The Reach," SC, 1985.

"Dolan's Cadillac." Castle Rock, February through June 1985.

"The Fifth Quarter" (John Swithen). Cavalier, April 1972.

"Firestarter." Omni, July-August 1980 (excerpts from Firestarter).

"For Owen." SC, 1985 (poem).

"The Glass Floor." Startling Mystery Stories, Fall 1967.

"Gramma." Weirdbook, Spring 1984; SC, 1985.

"Graveyard Shift." Cavalier, October 1970; NS, 1978; The 21st Pan Book of Horror Stories, ed. Herbert Van Thal (London: Pan, 1980).

"Gray Matter." Cavalier, October 1973; NS, 1978; The Arbor House Necropolis, ed. Bill Pronzini (New York: Arbor House, 1981; New York: Priam, 1981).

"The Gunslinger." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, October 1978; The Year's Finest Fantasy, Volume Two, ed. Terry Carr (New York: Berkley, 1980); DT, 1982.

"The Gunslinger and the Dark Man." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, November 1981; DT, 1982.

"Harrison State Park '68." Ubris, Fall 1968 (poem).

"Here There Be Tygers." Ubris, Spring 1968; SC, 1985.

"I Am the Doorway." Cavalier, March 1971; NS, 1978.

"I Know What You Need." Cosmopolitan, September 1976; NS, 1978; Isaac Asimov's Magical World of Fantasy (New York: Signet, 1985).

"I Was a Teenage Grave Robber." Comics Review, 1965; as "In a Half-World of Terror," Stories of Suspense 1966.

"In a Half-World of Terror." Reprint title for "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber."

"It Grows on You." Marshroots, 1975; Whispers, August 1982; Death, ed. Stuart David Schiff (New York: Playboy, 1982).

"The Jaunt." Twilight Zone Magazine, April 1981; Gallery, December 1981; Great Stories from Twilight Zone Magazine, September 1982; SC, 1985.

"Jerusalem's Lot." NS, 1978; The World Fantasy Awards, Volume Two, eds. Stuart David Schiff and Fritz Leiber (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980).

"The Last Rung on the Ladder." NS, 1978.

"The Lawnmower Man." Cavalier, May 1975; NS, 1978; Bizarre Adventures, December 1981 (comic book adaptation).

"The Ledge." Penthouse, July 1976; NS, 1978.

"The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill." Retitling of "Weeds" for Creepshow, 1982.

"The Man Who Loved Flowers." Gallery, August 1977; NS, 1978.

"The Man Who Would Not Shake Hands." Shadows 4, ed. Charles L. Grant (Garden City NY: Doubleday 1981, 1985); Fantasy Annual V, ed. Terry Carr (New York: Pocket, 1982); SC, 1985.

"Man With a Belly." Cavalier, December 1978; Gent, November/December 1979.

"The Mangler." Cavalier, December 1972; NS, 1978; The 21st Pan Book of Horror Stories, ed. Herbert Van Thal (London: Pan, 1980); The Arbor House Celebrity Book of Horror Stories, eds. Martin H. Greenberg and Charles Waugh (New York: Arbor House, 1982; New York: Priam, 1982).

"The Mist." Dark Forces, ed. Kirby McCauley (New York: Viking, 1980; New York: Bantam, 1981); SC, 1985.

"The Monkey." Gallery, November 1980; Fantasy Annual IV, ed. Terry Carr (New York: Pocket, 1981); Horrors, ed. Charles L. Grant (New York: Playboy, 1981); Modern Masters of Horror, ed. Frank Coffey (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1981; New York: Ace, 1982); The Year's Best Horror Stories Series IX, ed. Karl Edward Wagner (New York: DAW, 1981); SC, 1985.

"The Monster in the Closet." Ladies' Home Journal, October 1981 (excerpt from Cujo).

"Morning Deliveries (Milkman #1)." SC, 1985.

"Mrs. Todd's Shortcut." Redbook, May 1984: SC, 1985.

"The Night of the Tiger." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, February 1978; More Tales of Unknown Horror, ed. Peter Haining (London: New English Library, 1979); The Year's Best Horror Stories Series VII, ed. Gerald W. Page (New York: DAW, 1979; Chamber of Horrors (London: Octopus, 1984).

"Night Surf." Ubris, Spring 1969; Cavalier, August 1974; NS, 1978.

"Nona." Shadows, ed. Charles L. Grant (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1978; New York: Playboy, 1980); The Dodd, Mead Gallery of Horror, ed. Charles L. Grant (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1983); SC, 1985.

"One for the Road." Maine, March/April 1977; NS, 1978.

"The Oracle and the Mountains." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, February 1981; DT, 1982.

"Paranoid: A Chant." SC, 1985 (poem).

"The Plant." Self-published, 1982, 1983.

"Quitters, Inc." NS, 1978; Best Detective Stories of the Year, ed. Edward D. Hoch (New York: Dutton, 1979); The Science Fiction WeightLoss Book, eds. Isaac Asimov, George R. R. Martin, and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Crown, 1983).

"The Raft." Gallery, November 1982; Twilight Zone Magazine, May/June 1983; SC, 1985.

"The Reach." ("Do the Dead Sing?"); SC, 1985.

"The Reaper's Image." Startling Mystery Stories, Spring 1969; The 17th Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories, ed. R. Chetwynd-Hayes (London: Fontana, 1981); SC, 1985.

"The Return of Timmy Baterman." Satyricon II Program Book, ed. Rusty Burke (Knoxville, TN: Satyricon II/DeepSouthCon XXI, 1983). Excerpt from Pet Sematary.

"The Revelations of 'Becka Paulson." Rolling Stone, July 19/August 2, 1984. Excerpt from The Tommyknockers. Included in the Scream Press limited edition of Skeleton Crew.

"The Revenge of Lard Ass Hogan." The Maine Review, July 1975; incorporated into "The Body," DS, 1982.

"Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption: Hope

Springs Eternal." DS, 1982.

"The Shining." Ramada Reflections, June 1977 (excerpt from The Shining).

"Skybar." The Do-It-Yourself Bestseller, eds. Tom Silberkleit and Jerry Biederman (New York: Doubleday, Dolphin 1982).

"Slade." The Maine Campus, June-August 1970.

"The Slow Mutants." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, July 1981; DT, 1982.

"Sometimes They Come Back." Cavalier, March 1974; NS, 1978.

"Squad D." Unpublished; accepted for The Last Dangerous Visions, ed. Harlan Ellison.

"The Star Invaders." Self-published; Durham, ME: Triad, Inc. and Gaslight Books, 1964.

"Strawberry Spring." Ubris, Fall 1968; Cavalier, November 1975; Gent, February 1977; NS, 1978; An International Treasury of Mystery and Suspense, ed. Marie R. Reno (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

"Stud City." Ubris, Fall 1969; incorporated into "The Body," DS, 1982.

"Suffer the Little Children." Cavalier, February 1972; Nightmares, ed. Charles L. Grant (New York: Playboy, 1979); The Evil Image: Two Centuries of Gothic Short Fiction and Poetry, eds. Patricia L. Skarda and Nora Crow Jaffe (New York: New American Library, Meridian, 1981); 65 Great Spine Chillers, ed. Mary Danby (New York: London: Octopus, 1982).

"Survivor Type." Terrors, ed. Charles L. Grant (New York: Playboy, 1982); SC, 1985.

"Trucks." Cavalier, June 1973: NS, 1978.

"Uncle Otto's Truck." Yankee, October 1983; The Year's Best Horror Stories Series XII, ed. Karl Edward Wagner (New York: DAW, 1984).

"Untitled Poem." Onan, 1971.

"The Way Station." The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, April 1980; DT, 1982.

"The Wedding Gig." Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, December 1, 1980; SC, 1985.

"Weeds." Cavalier, May 1976; Nugget, April 1979; as "The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill," Creepshow, 1982.

"The Woman in the Room." NS, 1978.

"The Word Processor." Playboy, January 1983; as "Word Processor of the Gods," SC, 1985.

IV. SELECTED NON-FICTION AND CRITICISM BY KING

1. Book-length criticism:

Danse Macabre. New York: Everest House, 1981 [limited and trade hardcover]; New York: Berkley, 1982 [paperback].

2. Articles, reviews, and other non-fiction:

"Afterword." DT, 1982.
"Afterword." DS, 1982.
"Afterword." Firestarter, 1982 [paperback].
"Black Magic and Music." Bangor Historical Society, 1983. Concert program.
"Between Rock and a Soft Place." Playboy (January 1982).
"Books." Adelina (June-November 1980). Review column, with discussions of:
Burnt Offerings by Robert Marasco (June 1980)
The Brave and the Free by Leslie Waller (June 1980; July 1980)
Mayday by Thomas M. Block (August 1980)
Cold Moon Over Babylon by Michael McDowell (August 1980)
No Name by Wilkie Collins (November 1980).
"The Cannibal and the Cop." Washington Post Book World, 1 November 1981; Shadowings. Ed. Douglas E. Winter. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, 1983.
"Cat from Hell." Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter (June 1985). Discussion of how King wrote "The Cat from Hell."
"The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury." Chicago Tribune Bookworld, 10 October 1980.
"Danse Macabre." Book Digest (September 1981). Condensed version.
"Digging the Boogens." Twilight Zone Magazine (July 1982).
"Dr. Seuss and the Two Faces of Fantasy." Presented to the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, 24 March 1984; Fantasy Review, No. 68 (June 1984).
"The Doll Who Ate His Mother." Whispers, No. 11/12 (October 1978).
"Don't Be Cruel." TV Guide, 30 April-6 May 1983. Letter to editor.
"The Evil Dead." Twilight Zone Magazine (November

1982).

"Favorite Films." Washington Post, 24 Juune 1982.

"Foreword." NS, 1978.

"Foreword." In Stalking the Nightmare. By Harlan Ellison. Huntington Woods MI: Phantasia Press, 1982 [limited edition]; New York: Berkley, 1984 [paperback].

"Foreword." In Tales from the Nightside. Ed. Charles L. Grant. Sauk City WI: Arkham House, 1981 [hardcover].

"The Fright Report." Oui (January 1978).

"Garbage Truck." See "King's Garbage Truck."

"Guilty Pleasures." Film Comment (May/June 1981).

"The Horror Market Writer and the Ten Bears." Writer's Digest (November 1973).

"Horrors!" Games (October 1983). Crossword puzzle with clues by King.

"Horrors!" TV Guide, 30 October-5 November 1982.

"The Horrors of '79." Rolling Stone, 27 December 1979-10 January 1980.

"How to Scare a Woman to Death." In Murderess Ink. Ed. Dilys Winn. New York: Bell, 1979 [hardcover]; New York: Bell, 1980 [paperback].

"Imagery and the Third Eye." The Writer (October 1980); Maine Alumnus (December 1981); The Writer's Handbook. Ed. Sylvia K. Burack. Boston MA: The Writer, Inc., 1984.

"Introduction." The Arbor House Treasury of Horror and the Supernatural. Comps. Bill Pronzini, Barry Malzberg, and Martin H. Greenberg. New York: Arbor House, 1981 [hardcover]; New York: Arbor House/Priam, 1981 [paperback].

"Introduction." The Blackboard Jungle. By Evan Hunter. New York: Arbor House, Library of Contemporary Americana, 1984 [paperback].

"Introduction." Frankenstein/ Dracula/ Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde. By Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, and Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: NAL/Signet, 1978 [paperback].

"Introduction." The Shapes of Midnight. By Joseph Payne. New York: Berkley, 1980 [paperback].

"Introduction." Tales by Moonlight. Ed. Jessica Salmonson. Chicago IL: Robert Garcia, 1983 [hardcover]; New York: Tor, 1984 [paperback].

"Introduction." When Michael Calls. By John Farris. New York: Pocket Books 1981 [paperback].

"Introduction: The Importance of Being Forry." Mr. Monster's Movie Gold. By Forrest J. Ackerman.

Virginia Beach/Norfolk VA: Donning, 1982 [paperback].

"Introduction to the Marvel Edition of Frankenstein." Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus. By Mary Shelley. New York: Dodd Mead, 1983 [limited edition, hardcover, paperback].

"The Irish King." New York Daily News, 16 March 1984.

"King's Garbage Truck." The Maine Campus, 20 February 1969-21 May 1970. Weekly column.

Letter. Fantasy Review (January 1984): 45. Discussion of anthologies and reprint publishing.

Letter. Fantasy Review (May 1985): 11. Repudiation of hoax-review (Love Lessons).

Letter. TV Guide. 30 April-6 May 1983. Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll.

"Lists That Matter (Number 7)." Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter (August 1985). List of King's ten favorite films.

"Lists That Matter (Number 8)." Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter (September 1985). List of ten worst movies of all time.

"The Ludlum Attraction." Washington Post Book World, 7 March 1982. Review of The Parsifal Mosaic.

"Market Writer and the Ten Bears." Writer's Digest (November 1983).

"Mentors." Rolling Stone College Papers, 15 April 1982.

"A Message from Stephen King to Waldenbooks People." Waldenbooks Booknotes (August 1983).

"My First Car." Gentlemen's Quarterly (July 1984). Brief mention of Cujo and Christine.

"My High School Horrors." Sourcebook: The Magazine for Seniors, 1982.

"1984, a Bad Year If you Fear Friday the 13th." New York Times, 12 April 1984.

"Not Guilty." New York Times Book Review, 24 October 1976.

"Notes on Horror." Quest (June 1982). Excerpts from Danse Macabre.

"On Becoming a Brand Name." Adelina (February 1980); Fear Itself: The Horror Fiction of Stephen King. Eds. Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller. San Francisco CA/Columbia PA: Underwood-Miller, 1982 [limited edition and hardcover]; New York: NAL/Plume, 1984 [paperback].

"On The Shining and Other Perpetrations." Whis-

pers, No. 17/188 (August 1982).
"Peter Straub: An Informal Appreciation." World Fantasy Convention '82. Ed. Kennedy Poyser. New Haven CT: The Eighth World Fantasy Convention, 1982.
"A Pilgrim's Progress." American Bookseller (January 1980).
"The Politics of Limited Editions." Castle Rock: The Stephen King Newsletter (June-July 1985).
"A Profile of Robert Bloch." World Fantasy Convention 1983. Ed. Robert Weinberg. Oak Forest IL: Weird Tales Ltd., 1983.
"Ross Thomas Stirs the Pot." Washington Post Book World, 16 October 1983. Review of Missionary Stew.
"The Sorry State of TV Shows." TV Guide, 5 December 1981. Excerpt from Danse Macabre.
"Scare Movies." Cosmopolitan (April 1981).
"Special Make-Up Effects and the Writer." Grande Illusions. By Tom Savini. Pittsburgh PA: Imagine, Inc., 1983 [paperback]; reprinted as Bizarro. New York: Crown, 1983 [paperback].
"Stephen King." A Gift from Maine. By Maine's Foremost Artists and Writers and James Plummer's Sixth Grade Class. Portland ME: Gannet, 1983. Biographical sketch.
"Stephen King's 10 Favorite Horror Books or Short Stories." The Book of Lists #3. Comps. Amy Wallace, David Wallechinsky, and Irving Wallace. New York: William Morrow, 1983 [paperback].
Untitled. Dreamworks (Summer 1981). Description of a recurring dream.
"Visit with an Endangered Species." Playboy (January 1982).
"What Went Down When Magyk Went Up." New York Times Book Review 10 February 1985. Review of Glitz, by Elmore Leonard.
"When Is TV Too Scary for Children?" TV Guide, 13-19 June 1981.
"Why I Am for Gary Hart." The New Republic, 4 June 1984.
"Why We Crave Horror Movies." Playboy (January 1981).
"Writing a First Novel." The Writer (June 1875).
"The Writing Life: An Interview with Myself." Writer's Digest (January 1979).
"You Gotta Put on the Gruesome Mask and Go Booga-Booga." TV Guide, 5-11 December 1981.

V. FILM VERSIONS OF KING'S FICTION

The Boogeyman. Tantalus, 1984.
Jeffrey C. Schiro, producer.
Jeffrey C. Schiro, director.
Jeffrey C. Schiro, screenwriter.
Cast: Michael Reid, Bert Linden.

Carrie. United Artists, 1976.
Paul Monash, producer.
Brian de Palma, director.
Lawrence D. Cohen, screenwriter.
Cast: Sissy Spacek, Piper Laurie, Amy Irving, William Katt, Nancy Allen, John Travolta.

Cat's Eye. MGM/United Artists, 1984.
Dino de Laurentiis, executive producer.
Martha Schumacher, producer.
Lewis Teague, director.
Stephen King, screenwriter.
Cast: Drew Barrymore, Candy Clark, Joe Cortese, Robert Hayes, Alan King, Patti LuPone, Kenneth McMillan, James Wood.

Children of the Corn. New World Pictures, 1984.
Donald P. Borchers and Terrence Kirby, producers.
Earl Glick and Charles K. Weber, executive producers.
Fritz Kiersch, director.
George Goldsmith, screenwriter.
Cast: Peter Horton, Linda Hamilton, R. G. Armstrong, John Franklin, Courtney Gains, Robby Kiger, AnneMarie McEvoy, Julie Maddalena.

Christine. Columbia Pictures, 1983.
Richard Kobritz, producer.
Kirby McCauley and Mark Tarlov, executive producers.
John Carpenter, director.
Bill Phillips, screenwriter.
Cast: Keith Gordon, John Stockwell, Alexandra Paul, Robert Prosky, Harry Dean Stanton.

Creepshow. Warner Brothers, 1982.
Richard P. Rubenstein, producer.
George A. Romero, director.
Stephen King, screenwriter.

Cast: Adrienne Barbeau, Hal Holbrook, Viveca Lindfors, E. G. Marshall, Leslie Nielsen, Carrie Nye, Fritz Weaver, Ted Danson, Robert Harper, Ed Harris, Don Keefer. Jon Lormer, Elizabeth Regan, Gaylen Ross, Warner Shook.

Cujo. Warner Brothers, 1983.
Daniel H. Blatt and Robert Singer, producers.
Lewis Teague, director.
Don Carlos Dunaway and Lauren Currier, screenwriters.
Cast: Dee Wallace, Danny Pintauro, Daniel Hugh-Kelly, Christopher Stone, Ed Lauter, Kaiulani Lee, Mills Watson.

The Dead Zone. Paramount Pictures, 1983.
Debra Hill, producer.
Kirby McCauley, executive producer.
David Cronenberg, director.
Jeffrey Boam, screenwriter.
Cast: Christopher Walken, Brooke Adams, Tom Skerrit, Herbert Lom, Martin Sheen, Anthony Zerbe, Colleen Dewhurst, Nicholas Campbell.

Firestarter. Universal Pictures, 1984.
Frank Capra, Jr., producer.
Mark Lester, Director.
Stanley Mann, screenwriter.
Cast: David Keith, Drew Barrymore, Freddie Jones, Heather Lockyear, Martin Sheen, George C. Scott, Art Carney, Louise Fletcher, Moses Gunn.

'Salem's Lot. Warner Brothers, 1979 (television mini-series).
Richard Kobritz, producer.
Tobe Hooper, director.
Paul Monash, screenwriter.
Cast: David Soul, James Mason, Lance Kerwin, Bonnie Bedelia, Lew Ayres, Julie Cobb.

The Shining. Warner Brothers, 1980.
Stanley Kubrick, producer.
Stanley Kubrick, director.
Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson, screenwriters.
Cast: Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Danny Lloyd, Scatman Crothers, Barry Nelson, Joe

Turkel.

The Woman in the Room. Darkwoods, 1984.
Gregory Melton, producer.
Douglas Venturelli, executive producer.
Frank Darabont, director.
Frank Darabont, screenwriter.
Cast: Michael Cornelison, Dee Croxton, Brian Libby

The Word Processor. Laurel Productions (George A. Romero and Richard Rubenstein), for Tales from the Darkside television series, 1984.
Richard Rubenstein, executive producer.
David E. Vogel, producer.
Michael Gornick, director.
Cast: Bruce Davison

Films in Production

Silver Bullet. Based on Cycle of the Werewolf. North Carolina Film Corporation (Dino de Laurentiis). Scheduled release date: October 1985.
Martha Schumacher, producer.
Dan Attias, director.
Stephen King, screenwriter.
Cast: Corey Haim, Everett Mcgill, Gary Busey.

Maximum Overdrive. Based on "Trucks" (NS). North Carolina Film Corporation (Dino de Laurentiis).
Dino de Laurentiis, producer.
Stephen King, director.
Stephen King, screenwriter.
Cast: Emilio Estevez, Pat Hingle.

The Body. Based on "The Body" (DS). Scheduled to begin filming July 1985.
Rob Reiner, director.

Gramma. Teleplay by Harlan Ellison. Scheduled for The Twilight Zone, CBS television, 1985.
William Friedkin, director.
Cast: Barret Oliver.

The Running Man. Scheduled to begin filming in

October, 1985, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
George Cosmatos, director (Rambo)
Cast: Christopher Reeve

Pet Sematary. Screenplay by Stephen King. With George A. Romero. Filming site: Maine. Scheduled to begin production, March 1986.
Richard Rubenstein, producer.
George A. Romero, director.

The Stand. Screenplay by Stephen King. With George A. Romero. An early draft called for a two-part film: The Stand, I would deal with the flu epidemic; The Stand, II, with the struggle against the Dark Man. The third draft incorporates both into a three-hour film. Filming site: Texas.

The Talisman. Optioned by Stephen Spielberg.

The Long Walk.

King's screenplays (not produced)

Battleground
Children of the Corn
Cujo
The Dead Zone
Night Shift
The Shotgunners
The Shining
Something Wicked This Way Comes (Bradbury)

King has been involved in a number of other film possibilities:

Creepshow II, a sequel to Creepshow. The project is critical if not dead.

Martin Poll Productions optioned "Battleground," "Strawberry Spring," and "I Know What You Need" for an NBC-TV anthology. The project died.

Milton Subotsky optioned "The Lawnmower Man," "Trucks," and "The Mangler" for an anthology film, plus rights to "The Ledge," "Quitters, Inc.," and "Sometimes They Come Back." King arranged with Subotsky for rights to produce Cat's Eye. King has said that every story in NS except "Jerusalem's Lot" has been discussed as a film.

VI. SELECTED CRITICISM AND REVIEWS

1. Full-length studies of King's works:

Collings, Michael R. The Films of Stephen King. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, (in progress).

---------- The Many Facets of Stephen King. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, 1985.

---------- Stephen King as Richard Bachman. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, 1985.

---------- The Stephen King Concordance. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, (in progress).

---------- The Stephen King Phenomenon. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, (in progress).

Collings, Michael R. and David A. Engebretson. The Shorter Works of Stephen King. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, 1985.

Schweitzer, Darrell, ed. Discovering Stephen King. Mercer Island WA: Starmont House, 1985.

Ben P. Indick, "What Makes Him So Scary."

Alan Warren, "Has Success Spoiled Stephen King?"

Don Herron, "The Biggest Horror Fan of Them All."

Gary William Crawford, "Stephen King's American Gothic."

Chet Williamson, "The Early Tales: Stephen King and Startling Mystery Stories."

Bernadette Bosky, "Stephen King and Peter Straub: Fear and Friendship."

Michael R. Collings, "The Stand: Science Fiction into Fantasy."

Debra Stump, "Stephen King With a Twist: The E.C. Influence."

Randall D. Larson, "Cycle of the Werewolf and the Moral Tradition."

Robert M. Price. "Stephen King and the Lovecraft Mythos."

Don D'Ammassa, "Three by Bachman."

Debra Stump, "A Matter of Choice: King's Cujo and Malamud's The Natural."

Leonard G. Heldreth. "The Ultimate Horror: The Dead Child in Stephen King's Stories and Novels."

Darrell Schweitzer, "Collecting Stephen King."
Sanford Z. Meschkow, "Synopses of Stephen King's Fiction."
Marshall B. Tymn, "Stephen King: A Bibliography."

Underwood, Tim and Chuck Miller, eds. Fear Itself: The Horror Fiction of Stephen King. San Francisco CA: Underwood-Miller, 1982 [limited, hardcover]; New York: NAL/Plume, 1984 [paperback].

Peter Straub, "Meeting Stevie."
Stephen King, "On Becoming a Brand Name."
Burton Hatlen, "Beyond the Kittery Bridge: Stephen King's Maine."
Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, "Cinderella's Revenge--Twists on Fairy Tale and Mythic Themes in the Work of Stephen King."
Don Herron, "Horror Springs in the Fiction of Stephen King."
Fritz Leiber, "Horror Hits a High."
Bill Warren, "The Movies and Mr. King."
Deborah L. Notkin, "Stephen King: Horror and Humanity for Our Time."
Charles L. Grant, "The Gray Arena."
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