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Autobiography, Doppelgänger, and Alcoholism in Stephen King's *The Shining*

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Abstract

Stephen King is the best-known writer for popular horror novels, yet lately, literary academics have dealt more thoroughly with it. Simultaneously, most studies concentrate on horror themes and the interaction between Good and Evil. This paper discusses the Importance of character and their psyche in Stephen King's most famous novel, *The Shining*. As usual, the introduction provides a historical background of Stephen King as an author of popular horror fiction. The main argument addresses two topics relevant to his protagonists: doppelgänger, alcoholism. Both are incorporated with the writer's real-life experiences because like many writers out there king portrays his subconscious minds into his world of literature and which is almost unnoticed by him. Studying the author's characters and their doppelgänger exposes the unconventional approach that King holds in his mind, which shows the way to explore the author's sub consciousness and genius, especially one of the most interesting subgenres of gothic literature; gothic duality. The rest of the research discusses the author's identity triggered by alcohol and supernatural sources. Stephen King is renowned for deliberately putting his personality and his memories into his novels.

Keywords: Horror, Gothic Duality, Doppelgänger, Prophecy, and Alcoholism.

Introduction

Fear has been a big part of our lives since the dawn of time. Everybody is friendly with the annihilating sense of terror and is intuitively associated with negative connotations in people's minds. It is quite understandable why people believe that shaking down their spines is uncomfortable and prefer to stop it always. The impulse to remove them from this strange feeling is quite natural. It is understandable. However, Stephen King is not part of this party. King was associated with this horror genre for over 40 years, often famous by the alias Richard Bachman. Stephen King is one of the most famous American horrors and mystery writers, many of them have been converted into criticism work, films, and TV shows. Throughout

his extensive literary career, he has profoundly influenced the genus of mystery and horror.

The Shining, Stephen King's third released book, Published in 1977, was Stephen King's first best seller. Nearly everything Stephen King has published since then—from short story collections and other novels to manuals on writing and books about baseball—have found their way to the best-seller list. They have all helped to make Stephen King America's Storyteller, one of the most recognizable living authors in the American canon. But ask any King fan, or any literary critic who takes this writer seriously, or any film aficionado with an appreciation for either the horror genre or Stanley Kubrick's cinematic canon, and it's likely that he or she will tell you there is something special about *The Shining*. If my various academic colleagues who teach King in high schools and universities around the world are an accurate barometer, this novel remains the King text most likely to find its way into the contemporary classroom. I believe it will be the representative Stephen King book that will endure as the writer's legacy one hundred years from now. More than three decades after its publication, the novel remains arguably the most terrifying work in King's prodigious collection of ghosts, ghouls, and spectral phenomena.

Gothic Hero

Jack Torrance is the protagonist of the novel. Torrance's job is the winter-time caretaker of the famous Overlook, Overlook is a luxury Hotel. Jack is a caring father and husband at heart, demonstrated by his relentless care for his son's welfare and well-being. His desire is for a better career.. He needs an isolated place to focus on his novel. Unfortunately, Jack's true identity is skewed and warped by the omen and the ghostly Overlook Hotel. That Overlook hotel is full of ghosts and ill omen; all the past owners are cursed by its spell and turned into evil spirits. Its primal motive is to turn a good one into bad. Jack's identity as an author and his battle with alcoholism renders him vulnerable to horrors at work inside the Overlook and close comparison with Jack Torrance's and the author Stephen King. However, Stephen King was not wholly conscious of it until years after *The Shining's* publication. Although Stephen King's later novels, *Misery* and *The Dark Half*, are even more self-conscious, *The Shining* contains less deliberate autobiographical details. Although this book was not King's aim to express his life, Jack Torrance is a direct mirror of King's character as a family man, a journalist, and an alcoholic. In the magazine *The Guardian*, James Smythe clearly explained the flow of new ideas comes from real life experiences and it's easy to gather ideas from day to day life unlike seeking for extraordinary moments or miracles which may lead a writer to depression and writer's block:

The most famous writing tip you can find anywhere is to compose what you know. It is nonsense, actually, and if we all did it we will end up with incredibly dull novels about authors looking out of windows hoping for

inspiration to reach them. (Incidentally, if you want those, head straight for the nearest bookshop's literary fiction section.) But King knows that knowledge is something that can be channeled through your job, and should be at any chance. Addiction, coaching, his near-fatal auto crash, rock and roll, aging, facets of his life have surfaced again and over in his work, in ways that are not often apparent, yet also help to propel the narrative. It is something that should be used by any artist, for it is through these details that true feelings can be recorded on the paper. (Smythe1)

Like the writer Paul Sheldon in King's *Misery*, is indeed an American psychiatric suspense thriller book. The novel tale is focused upon the connection between the famous author Paul Sheldon and the insane fan Annie Wilkes, two of its key characteristics. When Paul is critically wounded in a traffic crash, Annie takes him home, to Paul where he gets the counseling and pain-drug doses. Paul eventually understands that he is a captive and has to engage in the desires of his captor. Jack Torrance has left alone in Colorado's winter, but willingly. He lost his past job as a English teacher because of his alcoholic condition and his attacks on a student. But this new work allows a complete separation with all humanity other than Jack's wife and son. Jack is stuck in Colorado's snow. Though physically imprisoned, he is still imprisoned by his desire for alcohol, and his shortcoming for alcohol becomes more significant than ever before. However, Jack faces more than a human urge to do the wrong thing. Overlook Hotel is a wicked and supernatural framework that provides Jack Torrance with dreams and feelings, not before. With excessive alcohol supply, the Overlook takes over Jack's body, converting the troubled family man into screaming and murdering psychopaths. Under the omen's spell and the Overlook's spirit, Jack becomes a new being, a spirit in Jack's body that is just devil. Jack has been irreversibly held captive by both the Overlook and the alcoholism.

Gothic Duality

The novel discusses, mainly through flashbacks, Jack's past disastrous association with alcoholism affected his writing and family. Alcohol causes aggression and distance within the Torrance home and can break the family apart. One event, in particular, sticks out and is listed in several mentions in the book. Danny, as a very young boy, had poured alcohol on his father's play manuscript. For Jack, the alcohol clouded his mind, and "This was all impossible to recall by the cloud of frustration," and his voice was "weak and drunk, slurry" (*The Shining* 17). Jack became angry, "His tremendous adult fingertips grasped the scarce flesh of the kid's forearm, met in immediate contact and the crack of a fractured bone was not silent, loud, not thunderous, Massive, but not too loud..." (*The Shining*17). While some discipline may have been expected for Danny, Jack lost hold of himself, quickly breaking his little son's arm as though it were a twig, and barely recalling the experience of his substance addiction. While Danny forgives his father when his arm is fractured because of his alcoholic father, and not only this there was a serious strain in Jack and Wendy marriage. Although the

novel's dialogue indicates that their relationship is tested, alcohol's occupant on his father is better viewed from Danny's eyes. Danny, who can perceive and read feelings, it's a supernatural power called shine and with that special power he can read human minds and communicate with people like him. With his special power Danny experiences tension in his parent's relationship, thinking, "DIVORCE was frightening in that it seemed the word...swirls across the mind of his kid, often diffuse and reasonably far, often as dense and dark and dangerous as thunderstorms." (*The Shining* 27). For Danny, this is more severe than the accident that happened earlier. While Jack's wife and Danny both love Jack, alcohol transforms him into a different person, a person who destroys relationships and becomes violent against his family.

Alcoholism changed his true nature and misdirected his writing capacity to compose new ideas to his novel so Jack drained out of good behavior. While legendary writers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway glamorized the fusion of artistry and alcohol, but Jack Torrance is a troubled addict; he could neither teach nor compose, and "In his underwood Jack did not create anything but mainly blank balls of paper which gradually came to rest." (*The Shining* 38). Jack's writing suffers terribly. Ironically, *The Shining*, an in-depth, successful, and widely praised text has been published under alcohol influence. Stephen King also says that the book *Cujo* was published under the circumstance of so many narcotics and drink that King could not even remember to compose any of it (*On Writing* 99). However, King never says that drugs and alcohol have influenced his work's content; King insistently protests against any drug and liquor in his novels and writing. Simultaneously, his history with substance abuse does not reflect this belief that drugs are necessarily harmful to a writer's imagination. Reflecting King's pessimistic perception of drugs and alcohol, Jack cannot compose with the influence of alcohol. Both his success at work and his bonding with his family suffer.

When for the very first time Jack appeared at the place, Jack and Wendy decided that the Overlook welcomed Jack and his narrative skills. Soon after arriving, Wendy notices Jack's writing and realizes she has never seen him compose faithfully for an extensive time. She was settled down by this discovery, saying, "Her husband seemed to shut a massive gate on a whole host of monsters steadily" (*The Shining* 121). Wendy is happy to see everything goes well again, a symbol of triumph over the writer's block caused by drink, without any unique worry about what he reveals. However, no one in the family believes that the hotel will provide the same outcome in principle as they visit. Wendy remembered just before the edge of the season: "Many of Jack's drinking symptoms have returned, one by one... not everything of them... prolonged breaks in the typewriter and more paper in the garbage basket" (*The Shining* 191). While Jack's condition appears promising at the initial of their residence, Ignore stifles his writing skills and causes the same alcohol issues. Jack is stuck and feels the intoxicated one under the hotel's power without even possessing a cocktail. Unlike Paul Sheldon, who uses writing to avoid his entrapment with Annie Wilkes, Jack

cannot manage writing to avoid the Overlook grip. On the opposite side, the Ignore tends to overwhelm Jack and his attitude.

Sedative Hotel

Moreover, before the Overlook offers Jack alcohol, the hotel imitates alcohol's power to suppress imagination in the writer and break families apart. The hotel, which hopes to push its occupants crazy, often switches Jack's position to the awful experiences, throwing him on the brink, to get him even more distraught. The first indication of Jack's behavioral change is Danny's early treatment, as Jack attempts to craft his novel, and Danny unintentionally locks himself inside the restroom. Enormously harmed by the hotel's wrongs and some cabin fever, Jack soon got annoyed by Danny. However, Wendy noticed him. She thinks with terror, "He loses his temper... Since two years earlier that night he had not touched Danny in rage, but then Jack was frustrated enough to do so" (*The Shining* 124). While alcohol is not involved, Jack's wife, Wendy, is quick to link this specific instance with her previous encounters with Jack's alcohol abuse. Like alcohol has quickened Jack to rage and aggression, the Ignore has now created the same result. When the Overlook's evil works eventually take over Jack with the influence of some well-placed alcohol, Jack is not anymore accountable for his decisions. After the hotel spirits convinced Jack that his wife and kid had turned against him, so it forced Jack to destroy his son and wife with a Roque mallet with a surprisingly limited claim. When the result of the evil Overlook, alcohol, and cabin fever later converge to bring Jack to murder his own family.

Jack becomes an entirely different human, identifiable solely by his physical characteristics. The concept of a doppelgänger is obviously at play in King's book, and also, it is a part of King's book *The Dark Half*. Under both his own name and his alias, George Stark, whom he used to write simple thrillers, Thad Beaumont has successfully published novels. The author holds a mock funeral for Stark as news comes out that they are one and the same. But Thad and his mom, Liz, learn that Stark is actual and accountable, and must partner with local Sheriff Pangborn to stop him, after a series of murders eerily close to those in the Stark novels., there are lots of similarities between *The Shining* and *The Dark half*, especially the Doppelgänger concept but *The Shining* is the best psychological thriller too. King creates a big difference between the caring parents, the husband and the instructor Jack Torrance and the alcohol-affected Jack Torrance controlled by the Overlook Hotel. King points specifically to the doppelgänger as Jack suddenly emerges sober from the regular drinking bout with his pal Al Shockley. Jack's wife Wendy cannot remember her husband, who was not drunk; King writes that "It almost seemed like she had never come back last night with her Jack after six years—as if an unearthly Doppelgänger had substituted her, she might never recognize or be very sure about." (*The Shining* 51). Wendy's reflections make it evident that there are absolutely no parallels between the intoxicated Jack Torrance and the sober Jack Torrance other than their look.

All the alcoholic behaviors of Jack are now reformed inside him with the stimulation of the Overlook hotel and that kind of behavior residents permanently, which renders him a murderous and insane beast. Somehow, two opposite identities can reside inside Jack, inspiring "Easily one of the most dichotomous and terrifying characters that King makes. He is a devoted father, husband and drunken homicide psychopath all about the same time." (Holland-Toll 134). However, Holland-Toll indicates the signs of Jack's propensity for the dichotomy in his conversations with the Overlook owner, Mr. Ullman, as early as the opening of the novel. While Jack sits as Ullman explains, Jack's inner monologue displays entirely different emotions than his face indicates which shows his instabilities in real life. When he nastily insults Ullman in his low voice. The plunge later illustrates this separation of selves into chaos triggered by the Hotel and its alcohol. While the madman runs inside the hotel with a harmful weapon roque mallet, it tends to be the same caring father and husband that Wendy and his son Danny know, Danny is smart enough to understand the distinction between his Dad and the person attempting to kill him. Danny contrasts the mystery about his father's identity with the deceitfulness. As he said the transition his father had created, Danny figured, "It was a mask, so it was one He was concealed behind Papa's head, he imitated the voice of Papa, he wore Daddy's clothes. But it was not his dad. It was not his dad" (*The Shining* 420). Jack does not only become like anyone else controlled by alcohol and the supernatural. Danny's perspective reveals Jack's full transition into a guy who appears and sounds like his father but has little much in common with him, so his ideas about his father are always awful.

Mirror Image

The notion of the Doppelgänger is often discussed by Danny, who has an "imaginary friend" called Tony. When Danny goes into trances that cause him to see what could be in his future, Tony emerges as a dark and remote figure that brings him to these dreams. It was later discovered that Danny's middle name was Anthony, implying that his buddy had been part of himself all along. While Tony is not a Hyde to Danny's Jekyll, the concept of a doppelgänger is also present inside Danny, a secondary character. King uses not one but two doppelgänger roles in *The Shining*, proving that he deliberately uses this notion. Jack, an addict, becomes an unrecognizable beast under the control of alcohol and the hotel. The darker side of him requires a disturbingly low amount of convincing to commit to killing, as much the "real" Jack Torrance might never have dreamed of it. Alcohol and Ignore allow Jack Torrance to appear as a doppelgänger, revealing the "inhuman monsters" (*The Shining*) alcohol can create. Although Jack's double is terrible, Danny's double is much more obscure and mysterious, but it is beneficial to Danny. Danny has a split inside himself as his daddy, but Danny's doppelgänger proves that one's double is not always evil and that it was his dad's decisions that make him bad.

Jack is unlikely to obtain an entity through his work. However, like Paul Sheldon, Jack's life is imitated in his work, creating conflict between fiction and fact. In the play named *The Little School*, Jack tries to compose the teacher, Denker, and Gary Benson. This is probably somehow influenced by Jack's real-life background when he previously was a teacher. However, his career ended when he beat his pupil harshly. While Jack does not see the link between himself and the instructor character in his play, it is plain to every reader that his play intends to discuss Jack's unresolved feelings regarding the student who caused him to lose his work. However, it does not seem to be associated with Denker's position, initially his enemy, until late in his tenure at the Summary. Jack understands that because his writer's block is related to his failure to recognize his protagonist accurately, thinking of Gary Benson, a student who was:

Externally straight as Gary Benson squeezed and worked inside Denker. Denker, who never had much to do with Gary. Denker, who had to compete to be head of a tiny kindergarten all his life. Now, who is the demise of this lovely, innocent, wealthy boy....the debacle was not the intellectual rip-off of Gary Benson, but the destruction of a kindly elderly instructor? (*The Shining* 259)

Moreover, Torrance does not realize the sum of his existence that disrupts his job with these feelings. Inadvertently, Jack created a double of himself in his narrative, enabling his history to influence his characters in ways he never expected. The character Denker portrays Jack's feelings of anger towards his former student, George Hatfield. It shows how the protagonist's history may substantially affect his works, even without his knowledge or permission. Despite Jack's wishes, Denker has been Jack's character and rage representation.

In precisely the same manner as Jack expresses through his character, Denker, without becoming completely conscious of it, Stephen King has something in common with Jack Torrance. King's character Jack did not feel his comparisons with Denker, and, ironically, King does not appear to know that the same occurrence happens in his novels. Since this is one of Stephen King's earlier characters, the autobiographical reflection inside Jack Torrance is visible whether or not King was completely conscious of this at the time of writing. Like Torrance, King taught English, but at a university rather than a prep school, he was a recovering alcoholic. While King acknowledges that he did not realize the importance of these comparisons at the time of the book's publishing, he later says, "I was ... the guy who wrote *The Shining* without even realizing... that I was writing about myself" (*On Writing* 95). Stephen King is reported to render his novels autobiographically, producing protagonists representing themselves or are put in circumstances that King himself has encountered. The specifics of King's existence are conveniently positioned, such as the bookshop clerk who exposed George Stark's identity part. However, in *The Shining*, there are similarities between Jack and Stephen King is accidental, implying that even though he wished to, the

author could not resist bringing himself into his writing. Jack's accidental introduction of himself also evidences this into his character, Denker. Jack knows only late in *The Shining* that he connects with a too intimate nature and only partly knows that. While King knows *The Shining* to be incredibly self-referential, it took a long time before he recognized Jack's issues to be his own. Jack admits that he has an alcohol problem and attempts to correct it, recognizing that stress has adversely influenced every aspect of his life. While Jack learned that both the Overlook Hotel and his drinking addiction had a significant impact on his work, King kept the opposite opinion and excused his alcoholism, fearing to compose creatively unless under the occupation of narcotics or alcohol. However, from Jack's character, the reader will see that, on a subconscious level, Stephen King considered the contrary to be original. Jack's experience with drug addiction is reflective of King's own. Although trying to say his drug addiction strengthened his creativity instead of damaging it, he said in his autobiographical work, *On Writing*, "The part of me that writes stories, the deep part that knew I was addicted to an alcoholic as early as 1975 when I wrote *The Shining*, would not accept that" (*On Writing* 18) Although Stephen King may have refused to understand the potential consequences of his substance addiction, Jack Torrance, by way of his alcoholism, reveals that King has expressed both his conscience of what might happen to a writer under the control of alcohol at least on a subconscious basis. Despite King's claims of ignorance, Jack Torrance is Stephen King's twice as coincidence in too many ways. Jack is the dark side of the poisonous scribe, revealing how a normal man can become a beast and, sadly, how Stephen King might become the beast.

Autobiographical Elements

Jack's liquor experiences make it apparent that Jack can be two completely different individuals, both a caring parent and a murdering psychopath. The most critical duality in the novel resides between the narrator Jack Torrance and the writer Stephen King. Whether Stephen King meant it or not, Jack is a direct mirror of King because he aspired to become the ideal father, husband, and editor. While he suggests the evils of drinking and the incredibly detrimental impact it has on the surrounding and the desire to compose, when the book was published, he rejected these facts to himself, creating excuses for his drug addiction and for the way his relationship and writing had deteriorated. Jack reflects the aspect of Stephen King, who knows the evils of alcohol and how he can transform a decent guy into another iteration of himself who does not quite resemble the original. While the notion of a doppelgänger is explicitly discussed in the book, Stephen King insists that he never expected Jack Torrance to become a doppelgänger who reflects the darkness inside him. Ironically, he is unwittingly writing his character from his life. *The Shining* indicates that most of the authors use their own experience as a reference and central idea of the work. Despite the reality that Jack Torrance acts as a mirror of King in several apparent respects, King never recognizes that his double intoxication may be a sign of an issue inside himself. For both Torrance and Stephen King, the true reflection of their

protagonists is lost on them. King's Doppelgänger Torrance represents his psychological torment in a way that he was unwilling to confront at the time of the book's release.

The literature may create the notion that every serious literary novel has its importance in an arena beyond the author's biography. The abundance of meanings has little to do with its purpose. Mathias Clasen, in his article "Hauntings of Human Nature: An Evolutionary Critique of King's *The Shining*," delineates his perspective on Stephen King as stated:

The powers of darkness or bad may be described as divine forces in the King's creation. In the end, though, they are embedded in human existence as egoistic motivations that clash with parental treatment and interpersonal affection. King never informs us just what the supernatural powers of the Overlook seek or who they have been. However, the hotel's dreams are defined by an abusive, power-hungry, status-looking, violently mighty powers that provide Jack with alcohol to pull out the same forces. (Clasen 83)

Stephen King is infamous for deliberately inserting his personality and his experiences into his novels. Defying Barthes' theories, articulated in his essay "*The Death of the Author*," King sees his history and work as inseparable, giving his texts a significant and more profound significance as the reader uses awareness of King's life and experiences. By trying to produce too many authors, King crosses this line and makes it almost difficult to grasp his protagonists without referring them to the creator.

Conclusion

He deals with the notion of the author's demise deliberately and in a particular manner, making his writer's characters portray himself to a severe degree and without apologizing. Not only does King consciously try to contradict this idea by his writing, but he also does so unwittingly, as Jack Torrance has seen in his novel *The Shining*. While Stephen King deliberately makes Jack a writer and instructor, like himself, he unwittingly links them to the battle with alcohol, inserting his history inside the plot. These sections of Stephen King's biography by his author characters, whether deliberately or accidentally, not only work toward the demise of the author's theory but also suggest something regarding writing itself. In his books, King reveals that it is almost difficult to distinguish between fantasy and fact and sometimes intertwine together. Whether deliberate or not, King's novels indicate that fact can still infiltrate the realm of fantasy, exposing facts regarding the protagonist and his existence that he or she might not be completely conscious of. A text cannot exist since a writer pours into his writing, and he writes it.

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