

Charting Habitus: Stephen King, the Author-Protagonist and the
Field of Literary Production

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Abstract

While most research in King studies focuses on Stephen King's contribution to the horror genre, this thesis approaches King as a participant in American popular culture, specifically exploring the role the author-protagonist plays in his writing about writing. I have chosen Bourdieu's theoretical construct of *habitus* through which to focus my analysis into not only King's narratives, but also into his non-fiction and paratextual material: forewords, introductions, afterwords, interviews, reviews, articles, editorials and unpublished archival documents. This has facilitated my investigation into the literary field that King participates within, and represents in his fiction, in order to provide insight into his perception of the high/low cultural divide, the autonomous and heteronomous principles of production and the ways in which position-taking within that field might be effected. This approach has resulted in a study that combines the methods of literary analysis and book history; it investigates both the literary construct and the tangible page.

King's part autobiography, part how-to guide, *On Writing* (2000), illustrates the rewards such an approach yields, by indicating four main ways in which his perception of, and participation in, the literary field manifests: the art/money dialectic, the dangers inherent in producing genre fiction, the representation of art produced according to the heteronomous principle and the relationship between popular culture and the Academy. The texts which form the focus of the case studies in this thesis, *The Shining*, *Misery*, *The Dark Half*, *Bag of Bones* and *Lisey's Story* demonstrate that there exists a dramatisation of King's *habitus* at the level of the narrative which is centred on the figure of the author-protagonist. I argue that the actions of the characters Jack Torrance, Paul Sheldon, Thad Beaumont, Mike Noonan and Scott Landon, and the situations they find themselves in, offer an expression of King's perception of the literary field, an expression which benefits from being situated within the context of his paratextually articulated pronouncements of authorship, publication and cultural production.

Contents Page

ABSTRACT	II
CONTENTS PAGE	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IV
DECLARATION	V
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	V
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Historical Contextualisation: Herman Melville</i>	12
<i>Method and Structure</i>	23
CHAPTER 1 – ON WRITING	35
<i>Concerning Capital</i>	38
<i>Textual Entrapments</i>	47
<i>Commercial vs. Folk Cultural Production</i>	57
<i>King and the Cultural Custodians</i>	67
CHAPTER 2 – THE SHINING	79
<i>Controlled, Corrupted and Consumed</i>	83
<i>Staging Literary Anxiety</i>	94
<i>Poète Maudit or Hired Scribe?</i>	105
CHAPTER 3 – MISERY AND THE DARK HALF	117
<i>A Miserable Entrapment</i>	122
<i>A Tale of Two Halves</i>	130
<i>Caught in the Carnavalesque</i>	139
CHAPTER 4 – BAG OF BONES	154
<i>Writing for Mass Market? I Prefer Not</i>	157
<i>Folk Culture, the Carnavalesque and the Negation of Hierarchy</i>	167
<i>The Two Ages of Reproduction: Maternal and Mechanical</i>	178
CONCLUSION - LISEY’S AND OTHER STORIES	193
<i>King and the Incunks</i>	196
<i>Duma Key and the Artist-Protagonist</i>	209
<i>Just After Sunset and The Best American Short Stories</i>	216
WORKS CITED	224

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

..... 30 January 2009

List of Abbreviations

BASS	Best American Short Stories 2007
BB	The Bachman Books
BoB	Bag of Bones
DH	The Dark Half
DK	Duma Key
DM	Danse Macabre
DS	Different Seasons
GM	The Green Mile
EE	Everything's Eventual
JAS	Just After Sunset
LS	Lisey's Story
M	Misery
ND	Nightmares and Dreamscapes
OW	On Writing
SC	Skeleton Crew
SL	'Salem's Lot
TG	The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger
TS	The Shining
TSt	The Stand

Introduction

Bridges can be built between the so-called popular fiction and the so-called literary fiction (King, 2003).

In 2003 an event occurred which not only shocked the author at the centre of the controversy, but also his fans, his publishers, his critics and his contemporaries: Stephen King was awarded a National Book Award for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.¹ The decision of the National Book Foundation² elicited a variety of responses. For instance, Jeff Zaleski, forecasts editor for *Publishers Weekly*, stated that the decision had ‘divided the publishing community like no previous board action’ (Zaleski, 2003), but went on to state his conviction ‘that our literary heritage has benefited markedly from the work of this master storyteller’ (Zaleski, 2003). Harold Bloom, on the other hand, damned the decision as ‘another low in the shocking process of dumbing down our cultural life’ (Bloom, 2003) and condemned the publishing industry for stooping ‘terribly low to bestow on King a lifetime award that has previously gone to the novelists Saul Bellow and Philip Roth and to playwright Arthur Miller’ (Bloom, 2003). King, in his acceptance speech, made it clear that he was aware there were those ‘who have spoken out passionately about me receiving this medal’ (King, 2003) and that there were some ‘who think it’s an extraordinarily bad idea’ (King, 2003)³ and some ‘who think it’s an

¹ In an interview with Esther B. Fein for the *New York Times* (1992), King states that ‘No one ever gave any of my books to Martin Amis to review... And you can’t entirely ignore that attitude. In a way, sales are transient. Opinions last’ (Fein, 1992), leading Fein to speculate that King ‘knows, for example, that he will probably never be sitting on a stage, waiting to hear himself named the winner of a National Book Award’ (Fein, 1992).

² It should be recognised that by choosing to award King this honour, the board had increased ‘the buzz about the NBA ceremonies, something the publishing industry has been desperately trying to do for years’ (Milliot, 2003).

³ In an interview in 2006 for *The Independent* (2006), King singled out Harold Bloom for his condemning of King’s recognition, stating that:

extraordinarily good idea' (King, 2003). But after acknowledging the controversy, King moved to take the role of peacemaker; he stated: 'I want to say it doesn't matter in a sense which side you were on. The people who speak out, speak out because they are passionate about the book, about the word, about the page and, in that sense, we're all brothers and sisters' (King, 2003).

This conciliatory note became the dominant theme of King's speech as he championed the cause of bridge building 'between the popular and the literary' (King, 2003); and it is this statement that provides the impetus for what follows in this thesis, as I propose a new way in which to view King's work and his strategies for position-taking within the field of literary production. Building on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, my study has at its centre an exploration of the writer's *habitus*, and considers the way in which King's *habitus* is dramatised in his fiction, in particular, through the recurrent figure of the author-as-protagonist. I do not suggest that this is achieved consciously by King, as the *habitus* is 'collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor' (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 53); it generates and organizes 'practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them' (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 53). As Randall Johnson, the editor of Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993), explains, *habitus* is that which 'inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious

I'm just a creature of my culture, and there are people who've damned me for that. Harold Bloom is one of them. He's described me as desperately inadequate, but then there are people who see the culture itself as desperately inadequate. I think if you love Stephen King then you'll love the culture and if you hate Stephen King you probably hate the culture (Thorne, 2006).

obedience to rules. Rather, it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions' (Johnson, 1993, p.5). *Habitus* is both 'the historical and cultural production of individual practices... since contexts, laws, rules and ideologies all speak through individuals' and 'the individual production of practices... since the individual always acts from self-interest' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 14). For my purposes, *habitus* is a way of understanding the construction of knowledge and the adoption of 'attitudes, values or ways of behaving' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 38), 'constituted in moments of practice' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 38). It explains why King perceives 'the possibilities from which' he chooses, as 'necessities, common sense, natural or inevitable' and why other 'possibilities are ruled out precisely because they are unthinkable' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, pp. 38-39). By employing this theoretical construct in my analysis of King's work, I move away from past research that has sought to position King as a horror writer, in order to approach his fiction as textual products of popular culture.

In assuming the role of bringing together the two 'sides' of the literary divide, King confirms his belief in the divide while simultaneously recognising his position within the hierarchical organization of the field of literary production. In Bourdieu's terms, he recognizes that the literary 'field is at all times the site of a struggle between the two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle... and the autonomous principle' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). Authors who produce according to the 'heteronomous' principle, Bourdieu argues, 'dominate the field economically and politically' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40), while those who produce according to the 'autonomous' principle 'identify with degree of

independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success a sign of compromise' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). I would suggest that the autonomous/heteronomous dialectic has been a feature of King's work and intrinsic to his understanding of his own career from the outset.⁴ As I demonstrate through the chronological ordering of my analysis, King has adopted many strategies for position-taking within the field of literary production both within and outside the text, from experiments with genre and authorial pseudonymy, to forays into e-publishing, serial novels and limited editions. When directly questioned by Christopher Lehmann-Haupt for the *Paris Review* (2006), if these phenomena amounted to 'any kind of larger strategy at play' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 92), King responded: 'No, I'm just curious to see what happens, like a kid with a chemistry set: What if I pour these two together...it's a way of keeping things fresh' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 92).

That denial notwithstanding, it is possible to discern within King's work and career a concerted and consistent interest in the question of his own status and position within the 'field' as it is constituted culturally, economically, and institutionally. Decisions that King has made throughout his career, from the artistic to the commercial, from the choice of narrational point-of-view to the choice of dustjacket,⁵ can be read, I would suggest, as strategies which reflect the author's own understanding of the field of literary production, his position within it, and the

⁴ It has also featured in his interviews, reviews and articles and it is present in those documents chosen for inclusion in the Stephen King archive at Fogler Library as demonstrated by the presence of a 1978 transcript of a review written for the *Maine Times* in which reviewer David Chute suggests 'What makes... authors seem respectable, while others are consigned to some sub-literary oblivion, may only be a certain elevated tone, a dryness or elegance, which suggest an affinity with high art' (Chute, 1978, p. 1).

⁵ In an extensive discussion with Bhub Stewart (1980), King revealed his thoughts about the dustjackets of *Carrie* (1974), *The Shining*, *Salem's Lot*, *The Stand*, *Night Shift* (1978) and *The Dead Zone* (1979), largely admitting his dissatisfaction with Doubleday publications.

ways in which such position-takings are effected. In Bourdieu's terms, these decisions, and the textual products which evolve from them, are emanations of King's *habitus*: that is, the set of dispositions, which generates practices and perceptions' (Johnson, 1993, p.5) of which, the author is only partly conscious, and that determines his textual practice within the field of literary production. Unlike Bourdieu, however, I am also interested in the extent to which that *habitus* is discernible at the level of narrative, and specifically in the figure of the author-protagonist⁶ who appears so frequently as the central character or narrating intelligence of King's fiction.

The figure of the author-protagonist first materializes in King's second novel '*Salem's Lot* (1975), and reappears, in various guises, in *The Shining* (1977), *The Stand* (1978), *The Tommyknockers* (1987), *Misery* (1987), *Desperation* (1996), *The Regulators* (1996), *The Dark Half* (1989), *It* (1986), *Bag of Bones* (1999), and *Lisey's Story* (2006) as well as in his novellas and short stories, including 'Secret Window, Secret Garden' (1990), 'The Body' (1982), 'Umney's Last Case' (1993) and 'Word Processor of the Gods' (1983). My argument is that through these author-protagonists King stages an analysis (and at times a self-justifying critique) of the field of literary production in which he himself participates. In the chapters that follow, I suggest that through characters such as Jack Torrance, Paul Sheldon and Gordon Lachance,⁷ King dramatises the work of writing and textual production as a means of explicating his own position in the field. The kinds of questions we find King repeatedly asking in his editorials, afterwords, forewords, introductions and acceptance speeches, as well as his two extended non-fiction texts, *Danse*

⁶ By using the term 'author-protagonist,' I am referring to the central character who is either in the process of becoming an author or who has already established a career as a published writer.

⁷ The author-protagonists in *The Shining*, *Misery* and 'The Body'.

Macabre (1981) and *On Writing* (2001), are recycled in fictional form through the figure of the author-protagonist - questions such as what it means to write popular, bestselling fiction? How is the authenticity of a cultural product retained when mass-produced? Is it possible to write genre fiction and be considered a serious author? Can a text survive commodification and gain cultural legitimisation? How should a novelist best engage with the Academy in order to attain their work's sacralisation? Should one forsake the quest for one kind of capital for another, or could one demonstrate the enviable capability of attracting both? By reflecting on these questions, and on the answers to them that King's fiction provides, it becomes possible to release King from the confines of the horror genre and regard him instead as a writer of popular fiction who is deeply preoccupied with exploring and questioning the cultural forces and processes that give rise to such designations as 'popular' or 'literary' writing in the first place.

In displacing King from the potentially limiting context of the horror genre,⁸ my thesis builds on the recent work by Linda Badley, Andrew Schopp, and Kathleen Lant, among others, but goes much further than these critics in exploring the cultural-commercial domain in which King's work occurs and to which it so frequently makes reference. Badley, for example, in *Writing Horror and the Body: The Fiction of Stephen King, Clive Barker and Anne Rice* (1996) argues that King 'literalizes the notion of the text as a body and the body as text' (Badley, 1996, p.

⁸ In his article, 'Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition,' published in *A Companion to the Gothic* (2000), Clive Bloom proposes that the 'horror tale proper refuses rational explanation, appealing to a level of visceral response beyond conscious interpretation... Horror is the literature of disjunction (Bloom, 2001, p. 165). King himself has stated that the horror genre, 'beneath its fangs and fright wig, is really as conservative as an Illinois Republican in a three-piece pinstriped suit; that its main purpose is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands' (DM, pp. 442-443). In this way, the horror genre conforms to the principle that all popular generic fictions 'are produced according to the criteria of profitability and marketability, and provide what audiences are familiar with, although not in ways which are completely predictable' (Strinati, 1995, p. 77).

12), and yet despite this acknowledgement of the importance of the material text in the work of King, she does not engage in any analysis of the process of textual production. Similarly Andrew Schopp, in his article, 'Writing (with) the Body: Stephen King's *Misery*' (1994), also chooses to concentrate his analysis on horror and authorial control being exacted upon the body, by arguing that horror is evoked in those scenes in which 'Annie uses Paul's body as a means of appropriating authority; scenes in which Paul's body becomes the text that reflects Annie's lack of access to male power' (Schopp, 1994, p. 41). His approach engages with the issue of an author/reader relationship; however, his analysis focuses on the gendering of this relationship as it is articulated in *Misery*, an approach which is further explored in the edited collection, *Imagining the Worst: Stephen King and the Representation of Women* (1998), by Kathleen M. Lant and Theresa Thompson.

In Lant's own contribution to the collection, 'The Rape of Constant Reader: Stephen King's Construction of the Female Reader and Violation of the Female Body in *Misery*', she suggests that *Misery* 'is probably King's most thorough and complex exploration of the powers of his own mind, of the powers of the artist, of the pressures of the audience, and of the workings of creativity' (Lant, 1998, p. 162). While Lant recognises Paul Sheldon's situation as an expression of anxiety pertaining to his status as a popular author of genre fiction, and that this anxiety can similarly be found in King's paratextual enunciations regarding his own popularity, she, too, takes a necessarily limited approach which does not seek to view *Misery* as a literary product, or to position the publication of *Misery* in the context of King's oeuvre. One book length study that does provide contextual analysis of the sort I am pursuing is Jonathan P. Davis' *Stephen King's America* (1994), which takes into

account ‘recurrent American themes’ (Davis, 1994, p. 117) present in King’s fiction. He claims that his ‘research began... with the intent of proving Stephen King’s literary greatness’ but that he then ‘decided to centre [his] thesis on [King’s] American themes’ (Davis, 1994, p. 117). In this way his work agrees with King’s statement that ‘my novels taken together, form an allegory for a nation that feels it’s in a crunch and things are out of control’ (Peck, 1990, p. 132), by exploring themes such as capitalism, childhood and technology throughout King’s work. However, surprisingly, there is no reference to the theme of literary production, which, I argue, is prominent in many of King’s texts.⁹

There are other studies, too, which position King’s fiction in a variety of different contexts with most choosing to situate King’s work within a specifically gothic context. This is evident in works such as Joseph Gixti’s chapter ‘Language, Modes of Seeing, and the Magic – The Covenant of Stephen King’ in *Terrors of Uncertainty: the Cultural Contexts of Horror Fiction* (1989) in which he recognizes that King ‘writes in a gripping and calculatedly popular manner’ (Gixti, 1989, p. 46) before asserting the ‘mixture of “camp” taste and concern for the genre maintaining or achieving some sort of intellectual or “cultured” respectability’ that King displays, ‘is symptomatic of the ambiguous standing of contemporary horror fiction in general and of King’s approach and attitudes in particular’ (Gixti, 1989, p. 47). While Gixti makes a point of illuminating this ‘mixture’ his attention remains on King’s contribution to the horror genre. Another example is present in David Punter’s article ‘Problems of Recollection and Construction: Stephen King’

⁹ Davis does, however, include four interviews that he conducted with Tony Magistrale, Carroll Terrell, Burton Hatlen and Gary Hoppenstand, academics who ‘have either had personal contact with King or have performed extensive scholarship on his fiction’ (Davis, 1994, p. 117), which prove useful to my own research.

in *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (1996) in which he concentrates his analysis on King's 'hidden master narrative' (Punter, 1996, p. 121). He argues that this 'master narrative' 'hinges psychologically on a swing between two different world-views' (Punter, 1996, p. 121). However, while Punter attributes these two 'world views' to 'the child and the adult' (Punter, 1996, p. 121), I contend that the master narrative present in King's work stems from his preoccupation with the high/low dialectic. James Egan's 'Sacral Parody in the Fiction of Stephen King' (1989) similarly adopts a decidedly gothic perspective stressing that 'Stephen King's habits as a Gothicism have been much discussed, but his consistent development of Gothicism's parodic tendencies and the direction of his parody deserve more attention' (Egan, 1989, pp. 125-126).

Heidi Strengell, however, does explore King's participation in the literary production of other genres in *Dissecting Stephen King: From the Gothic to Literary Naturalism* (2005), but her emphasis is still on King as a 'genre author'. Darryl Jones' 'Stephen King: Writer's Block' in *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film* (2002) is perhaps the most relevant of these all studies as he directly addresses King's early author-protagonists while still remaining firmly within the horror genre, despite engaging with the importance of popular cultural production to the work of King as a whole. Jones states that time 'and time again, King's novels foreground his truest subject: himself, or more specifically his calling and career as a writer' (Jones, 2002, p. 139); however, he moves from this consideration of King's writing about writing to focus on King's writing as 'a subject for horror' (Jones 2002, p. 141). Even Michael R. Collings' *Scaring Us To Death: The Impact of Stephen King on Popular Culture* (1997), while detailing King's impressive sales

figures from 1976 through to 1996, does not define King's texts as manifestations 'of the field as a whole', and instead maintains a focus on King's effect upon popular culture. My own research establishes a focus on authorial *habitus* and the structure of the field of literary production as essential to an understanding of King's work, his decisions pertaining to publication, and his paratextual enunciations in which he frequently returns to issues of authorship.

That being so, it is from the study of 'book history,' rather than criticism of the horror genre, that my thesis takes its theoretical and conceptual bearings. In his 1986 lecture to bibliographers on 'The Book As An Expressive Form' (1986), D.F. McKenzie confesses that he does not believe in the existence of a border 'between bibliography and textual criticism on the one hand and literary criticism and literary history on the other' (McKenzie, 2002, p. 34). Rather, he asserts, 'we move from the most minute feature of the material form of the book to questions of authorial, literary and social context' (McKenzie, 2002, p. 34) and that these 'all bear in turn on the ways in which texts are then re-read, re-edited, re-designed, re-printed, and re-published' (McKenzie, 2002, p. 34). In such a spirit does one read William Charvat's work on nineteenth-century American authors in *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870* (1968), a key moment in the development of 'book history' in the American context and the branch of literary studies within which I situate my own research. To use Leah Price's terminology, Charvat addresses texts as 'a tangible object' and 'a verbal structure' (Price, 2002) in order to analyse the form and the content of the narrative alongside its production, publication, distribution, circulation and reception. Charvat claims that it is necessary to take into account all the agents involved in a text's publication when

conducting analysis, as ‘most scholars assume that literary history can be adequately represented by a line – with the writer at one end and the reader at the other’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 284). Instead, Charvat proposes that ‘instead of being merely linear, the pattern is triangular. Opposite both the writer and the reader stands the whole complex organism of the book and magazine trade’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 284). He claims that, within ‘this triangle, cultural force or influence runs in both directions. The book trade is acted upon by both writer and reader, and in receiving their influence the book trade interprets it and therefore transmutes it (Charvat, 1968, p. 284), with the result that both ‘writer and reader dictate to, and are dictated to by, the book trade’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 284).

More recently, Lawrence Rainey has, in *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (1998), broadened the focus of ‘book history’ to engage with what one might call the ideology of the commercial, arguing as he does that ‘modernism, among other things, is a strategy whereby the work of art invites and solicits its commodification’ (Rainey, 1998, p. 3). In positing that the modernist text ‘becomes a commodity of a special sort, one that is temporarily exempted from the exigencies of immediate consumption prevalent within the larger cultural economy’ and as such becomes ‘integrated into a different economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation, and investment – activities that precisely in this period begin to encroach upon and merge into one another in unexpected ways (Rainey, 1998, p. 3), Rainey is able to engage with both the textual product and the mode of literary production in the modernist period, an approach I propose to emulate here. Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell, likewise, have become proponents for this method of literary analysis which embraces not only the words

upon the page, but the page itself. In the introduction to their co-edited volume, *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture* (2005), they state that the essays of which their text is composed ‘ask not just how the systems of producing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating information developed over the past two centuries have changed ideas about authorial agency, attribution, and originality’ but also ‘how that interplay... has in turn changed understandings of the relation between verbal texts and material objects’ (Price and Thurschwell, 2005, p. 2). In all these critics, there is a conscious attempt to merge the methods of ‘book history’ with literary criticism and history. The significance and value of such an approach to the study of King will, I hope, become obvious as my discussion unfolds, but as an initial exemplification it is useful to consider how the methodology I am proposing can help elucidate King’s work in the context of a specifically American cultural history.

Historical Contextualisation: Herman Melville

Herman Melville and Stephen King may seem an unlikely pairing, and yet the two authors were linked by King in his foreword to the illustrated edition of *Salem’s Lot* (2005):

Did I really think I could combine *Dracula* and *Tales from the Crypt* and come out with *Moby-Dick*? I did. I really did. I even planned a section at the front called “Extracta,” where I would include notes, clippings, and epigrams about vampires, as Melville does about whales at the front of his book. Was I daunted by the fact that *Moby-Dick* only sold about twelve copies in Melville’s lifetime? Not I; one of my ideas was that a novelist takes the long view, the *lofty* view, and that does not include the price of eggs. (My wife would not have agreed, and I doubt Mrs. Melville would have, either) (*Salem’s Lot: Illustrated Edition*, p. x).

This view of Melville as one who was distanced from the economic realities of literary production corresponds to his position as a canonical author: his

disinterestedness is portrayed as key to his success in producing literature worthy of gaining symbolic capital. This view of Melville is familiar to those living in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, due to the recuperation of Melville's reputation in the early twentieth century, which Paul Lauter addresses in his article 'Melville Climbs the Canon' (1994). Lauter looks specifically at the process through which Melville enters into the American canon, and asks 'what the critics who were reviving Melville in that period had at stake in constructing his image as they did: into what contest of cultural authority was Melville being conscripted?' (Lauter, 1994, p. 1). He argues that the canonical vision of Melville 'was constructed in the 1920s as part of an ideological conflict which linked advocates of modernism and of traditional high cultural values' (Lauter, 1994, p. 6), and that this construction was posited 'against a social and cultural "other," generally, if ambiguously, portrayed as feminine, genteel, exotic, dark, foreign and numerous' (Lauter, 1994, p. 6).

Lawrence Levine in *Highbrow - Lowbrow: Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in the History of America* (1990)¹⁰ connects this hierarchical agenda to the period of mass immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, during which between '1901 and 1920 over 14.5 million immigrants' (Lauter, 1994, p. 4) arrived in America.

According to Levine:

these worlds of strangers did not remain contained; they spilled over into the public spaces that characterized nineteenth-century America and that included theatres, music halls, opera houses, museums, parks, fairs, and the rich public cultural life that took place daily on the streets of American cities. This is precisely where the threat lay and the response of the elites was a tripartite one: to retreat into their own private spaces whenever possible; to transform public spaces by rules, systems of taste, and canons of behaviour of their own choosing; and, finally, to convert the strangers so that their modes of behaviour and cultural predilections emulated those of the elites (Levine, 1988, p. 177).

¹⁰ Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow - Lowbrow: Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in the History of America* (1988) offers further reading on the bifurcation of popular and serious culture throughout late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in American society.

Melville's adoption by the modernists, through which he could be 'deployed as a lone and powerful artistic beacon against the dangers presented by the masses' (Lauter, 1994, p. 6), resulted in a celebration of his role 'not as a transparently approachable chronicler of sea tales, but as a densely allusive composer whose most precious treasures would be yielded up, as with other modernist texts, only to learned initiates' (Lauter, 1994, p. 18). This view of Melville's work chimes with Jose Ortega y Gasset's proposal, set out in *The Dehumanisation of Art* (1925) and summarised by John Carey in *Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligensia, 1880-1939* (2002), that 'it is the essential function of modern art to divide the public into two classes – those who can understand it and those who cannot. Modern art is not so much unpopular, he argues, as anti-popular' (Carey, 2002, p. 17). In this sense, 'Melville's difficulties appear not as problems to be overcome but as virtues which place him in the camp of modernist poets' (Lauter, 1994, p. 15).

By engaging with this canonical figure, King demonstrates the struggle between 'artistic generations' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 122) that he dramatises in *The Shining* through Jack Torrance's play *The Little School*.¹¹ In 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' (1988), Frederic Jameson points out that 'the classics of high modernism are now part of the so-called canon and are taught in schools and universities' (Jameson, 1998, p. 143), and argues that 'high modernism and its dominant aesthetics [have] become established in the academy and are henceforth felt to be academic by a whole new generation' (Jameson, 1998, p. 143). King, as

¹¹ The importance of Jack's play will be analysed further in the section Staging Literary Anxiety in the case study on *The Shining*.

one of the ‘new generation’, effectively denies Melville’s ‘unapproachability.’ This denial is perceptible in his attempt to bridge the divide between *Moby Dick*, ‘classic of high modernism,’ and his own ‘*Salem’s Lot*, ‘popular best-seller’, in which he claims:

My own belief about fiction, long and deeply-held, is that story *must* be paramount over all other considerations in fiction; that story *defines* fiction, and that all other considerations – theme, mood, tone, symbol, style, even characterization – are expendable. There are critics who take the strongest possible exception to this view of fiction, and I really believe that they are the critics who would feel vastly more comfortable if *Moby Dick* were a doctoral thesis on cetology rather than an account of what happened on the *Pequod*’s final voyage. A doctoral thesis is what a million student papers have reduced this tale to, but the story still remains – ‘This is what happened to Ishmael’ (DM, p. 346).

In reclaiming the importance of story, over and above ‘theme, mood, tone, symbol, style, even characterization’, King endeavours to reposition Melville by emphasising his popular appeal, and discounting his reputation as it has become enshrined within the process of academic sacralization.¹²

However, this tension between popular appeal and sacralization is far closer to the reality of Melville’s participation in the literary field than the modernist appropriation of Melville with which King engages. While Melville, and the canonical authors he is taught alongside, now represent the institution with which King maintains an agonistic relationship, their position as producers of high culture was not always so assured, as Melville’s own participation in the nineteenth-century field of literary production in America confirms. Although the literary field has

¹² Sacralization is an important term derived from Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. The process of sacralization refers to the results of a move away from shared culture to one in which ‘audiences were to approach the matters and... works’ of serious cultural producers, such as classical orchestras, ‘with proper respect and proper seriousness, for aesthetic and spiritual elevation rather than mere entertainment was the goal’ (Levine, 1990, p. 146).

changed dramatically from Melville's time to King's, Melville was, in fact, plagued with many of the same insecurities pertaining to his work as King. He was writing during a period in which authorship was only beginning to be professionalized in America. William Charvat, in his posthumously published collection of papers relating to the economic realities of producing text in the nineteenth century, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*, explains the specificity of the American context through a comparison of the relationships between authors and publishers in both Britain and America. He claims that 'the major cause of the disparity between the fortunes of British and American authors at the time was the contrasting maturity of the British system' (Charvat, 1968, p. 40). This meant that by maintaining 'retail prices high through collusion' (Charvat, 1968, p. 40), enjoying a 'predictable market for every type of book' (Charvat, 1968, p. 40), practicing 'good publicity methods' (Charvat, 1968, p. 40) and benefiting from 'all the advantages of a geographically small and homogenous market' (Charvat, 1968, p. 40), British publishers were able to control competition, thus providing their authors with a financial security unavailable to their American counterparts.

Charvat goes on:

In America, by contrast, no publisher could reach directly all markets in the country; few firms had sufficient capital to take the whole risk on their titles; and money and credit were so underdeveloped that the mere process of paying and getting paid was difficult. The result was a system of distribution so complicated that the publishers were almost as confused as the historian who tries to read their surviving records and correspondence (Charvat, 1968, p. 40).

The relative infancy of the American publishing industry, the lack of an established monetary system and the difficulties related to the logistics of distribution all combined to create an exceptionally difficult economic climate for authorship. This, Charvat explains, had the effect of successful authors using 'publishers only as

agents and direct[ing] the business of manufacture and distribution themselves' (Charvat, 1968, p. 48), and that, until 'the 1850's those of our writers who had the capital took over many of the functions of the publisher in order to protect their profits' (Charvat, 1968, p. 48). These economic difficulties were undeniably an intrinsic component in the production of many of the texts which came to form an American national literary identity.

To return to *Moby Dick*, many critics have argued for the text to be read with an awareness of Melville's own economic struggles, Charvat among them:

Moby Dick, Herman Melville's one unquestionably great full-length book, has never been properly understood as the work of a writer who was in a state of creative tension with a reading public whose limitations he had at last defined. Many of its devices, and to some extent its form and its greatness, can be explained in terms of that tension – a tension which was a crucial factor in the creation of Poe's major tales, Hawthorne's novels, Emerson's lectures, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Turn of the Screw*. All were products of a balance of the author's wish to express himself and yet be bought and read and taken seriously (Charvat, 1968, pp. 240-241).

Melville, in his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* (1837), articulates this 'creative tension', through his claim that 'great geniuses are part of the times; they themselves are the times; and possess a correspondent colouring' (Melville, 1987, p. 246) and by reminding readers that 'in his own lifetime, Shakespeare was not Shakespeare, but only Master William Shakespeare of the shrewd, thriving business firm of Condell, Shakespeare & Co., proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London' (Melville, 1987, p. 246). Melville recognized that all authors now considered 'great geniuses' once operated within specific fields of literary production in which there prevailed always the necessity of accruing both economic and symbolic capital. This creative tension is also present in Melville's fiction where he dramatises the figure of 'the writer as a kind of alienated worker,

turning out texts from which his individuality has been erased' (Gilmore, 1985, p. 52). This is perhaps most evident in his short story 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' (1853): a text which I address in my case study on *Bag of Bones* (1999). It is the figure of the alienated worker, also present in *Moby Dick*, who facilitates an articulation of 'Melville's own disaffection from the text as commodity, an object produced for sale on the market' (Gilmore, 1985, p. 130). Despite this affinity with the alienated worker, Melville readily embraced contemporary popular culture: his 'compositional practices reveal[ing] an author indebted to antebellum trends' (Post-Lauria, 1996, p. xv) through the incorporation of 'topical forms, themes, and styles' (Post-Lauria, 1996, p. xv). In this way, Melville, 'attempted both to profit from and to serve as [prophet] of the literary word' (Post-Lauria, 1995, p. xi).

This is not to say, however, that Melville was indifferent to the mechanisms by which his work might accrue symbolic capital, as his participation in Evert A. Duyckinck's Young America movement¹³ suggests. In fact, it is this desire to create literature worthy of accruing symbolic capital through inclusion in an American literary nationalism, that problematizes Melville's writing for a popular audience. The need to establish an American literary tradition in opposition to Europe's was famously articulated by Emerson:

Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant... And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the

¹³ For further information, the history of the Young America movement is explored in great depth in Perry Miller's *The Raven and the Whale: Poe, Melville and the New York Literary Scene* (1956), originally published as *The Raven and the Whale: The War of Words and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville*.

government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also (Emerson, 2001, p. 134).

Emerson's call for the American artist to produce a literature, which breaks free from the imported aesthetics of old Europe, by writing that which is specifically American in both its form and subject matter, is comparable to Melville's outburst against 'literary flunkeyism' in his article 'Hawthorne and His Mosses' (1850):

no American writer should write like an Englishman, or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American. Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkeyism towards England. If either must play the flunky in this thing, let England do it, not us (Melville, 1987, p. 248).

This expression of nationalist opposition to the established European literary canon found its focus in the figure of E.A. Duyckinck,¹⁴ co-founder, along with Cornelius Matthews,¹⁵ of the Young America movement, which Melville supported.

His support did not preclude his endeavours to gain popular success through a 'democratic openness to wild forces within his contemporary popular culture' (Reynolds, 1988, p. 276). However, as David Reynolds points out, Melville's 'openness to sensational popular culture was not shared by his fellows in the Young America literary movement' (Reynolds, 1988, p. 276), leading Reynolds to surmise that 'Melville's literary friends became progressively more elitist in their literary aims, while Melville was virtually alone in his openness to irrational forces within American popular culture' (Reynolds, 1988, p. 277). Melville was required to write texts which negotiated a path between the financial demands of his family, on the

¹⁴ Perry Miller describes Duyckinck thus:

Evert Augustus Duyckinck, as publisher's reader and as editor, did more than any man in his time to get authors published and books reviewed; he was midwife to much of the best writing and more of the competent, and he helped the cause of literature by giving out of his no more than adequate income, considerable sums to struggling artist (Miller, 1997, p. 71).

¹⁵ Cornelius Matthews (1817-1889) was a novelist, poet and playwright, whose novel *Behemoth: A Legend of the Mound-Builders* (1839) is said to be another of Melville's influences in the writing of *Moby Dick*.

one hand,¹⁶ and the literary nationalist demands of his peers on the other. As he famously wrote to Nathaniel Hawthorne, ‘Dollars damn me...What I feel most moved to write, that is banned, - it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches’ (Melville, 1993, p. 191). While the emphasis appears to rest upon Melville’s reference to his books as ‘botches’, William Charvat points out that the ‘important word here is not *botches* – his books may or may not be that – but *hash*, which asserts that he tried to write both ways at once’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 266). It is this sort of ‘hash’ that King hoped to achieve through the writing of *Salem’s Lot*. The creation of a narrative which draws upon popular cultural references and canonical texts was a clear attempt to write for money and cultural kudos, in much the same way as Melville struggled to appease the twin drives of the heteronomous and autonomous principles. Both authors are clearly responding to economic struggles: the desire to write professionally and the need to compete in order to function within capitalist society. However, they are also engaging in differing agonistic struggles, as they both attempt to produce literature capable of accruing symbolic capital. Melville, in his efforts to break away from European literary tradition, and King, in his attempt to gain legitimacy as a serious author, are both subject to the anxiety of influence.

In Melville’s case, he chose to articulate this agonistic struggle to produce ‘an identifiable national literature to rival that of the “old world”’ (Sturges, 2004, p. 141), through challenging the prevalence of Shakespeare within antebellum

¹⁶ Melville’s financial situation is explored in detail in William Charvat’s *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*, in the chapter, ‘Melville’s Income’, pp. 190-203, first published in 1943 in the journal *American Literature*.

American culture.¹⁷ He decries those ‘who, to teach all noble-souled aspirants that there is no hope for them, pronounce Shakespeare absolutely unapproachable’ (Melville, 1987, p. 245). In fact, he states:

You must believe in Shakespeare’s unapproachability, or quit the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature, as well as into Life? Believe me, my friends, that men not very much inferior to Shakespeare, are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio. And the day will come, when you shall say who reads a book by an Englishman that is modern? The great mistake seems to be that even those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth’s day, - be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history, or the tales of Boccaccio (Melville, 1987, pp. 245-246).

Rather than cleave to this principle of ‘Shakespeare’s unapproachability’, Melville actively appropriates elements of Shakespeare’s work following his study of the plays while completing his manuscript of *Moby Dick* (1851). Evidence of this appropriation can be found in Melville’s ‘personal copy of Shakespeare [in which] it is still possible to read the numerous marginalia he made, including notes about characters to be developed in *Moby Dick*’ (Sturgess, 2004, p. 159), and in the narrative of *Moby Dick* itself, replete with its ‘multilayered dramatic interludes and Shakespearean soliloquies, as well as the metaphysical speculations with which the text is larded’ (Giles, 1998, p. 232).

Melville’s appropriation of Shakespeare, which simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically strives to cultivate public support for American authorship, provided him with a way of developing a strategy through which to accrue economic and symbolic capital. Unfortunately for Melville, *Moby Dick*, upon publication, was not

¹⁷ For more on Shakespeare’s prevalence in American antebellum culture, see Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow-Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Michael D. Bristol’s *Shakespeare’s America, America’s Shakespeare* (1990) and Frances Teague’s *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage* (2006).

a successful book and it failed to garner either forms of capital. The reviews were bad, and previous supporters of Melville ‘turned against [him] or radically qualified their praise’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 242). The southern states’ magazine trade had grown increasingly partisan and consequently condemned the book. What is more, as Charvat argues, by ‘1851 women had become the chief consumers of fiction in America, and it may well be that their mouths may have settled the fate of *Moby Dick*’ (Charvat, 1968, p. 242) due to its emphasis on masculine pursuits. In fact, Charvat goes so far as to say that he believes this to be the reason for Melville’s ‘conspicuously increased attention to the female world in his next book, *Pierre*, and in his magazine stories of what has been called the “feminine fifties”’ (Charvat, 1968, pp. 243). However, this attentiveness to the market does not correspond to the canonical figure with whom King is engaged in an agonistic struggle. King’s denial of Melville’s unapproachability, demonstrated in *Danse Macabre* as he allies his literary production with Melville’s to underscore Melville’s populism and in *Salem’s Lot*, in an effort to advance his fiction’s literariness, illustrates his perception of the literary field, his own position within that field as compared to those authors who form a part of the American literary canon, and his belief in the way in which position-takings can be effected. King’s direct invocation of Melville’s literary reputation reflects his appreciation of the literary hierarchies which structure, and which are structured by, the literary field. It is this appreciation, that stems from ‘a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions’ (Johnson, 1993, p. 5), which becomes dramatised in King’s fiction, and it is this process of fictionalising his own understanding of the literary field that forms the focus of my research.

Method and Structure

‘It would be fair enough to ask, I suppose, if Paul Sheldon in *Misery* is me. Certainly *parts* of him are... but I think you will find that, if you continue to write fiction, every character you create is partly you’ (OW, p. 225).

In this thesis, my first chapter focuses on Stephen King’s *habitus* and the way in which he has participated within the field of textual production to date; in subsequent chapters, I focus on five novels, *The Shining*, *Misery*, *The Dark Half*, *Bag of Bones* and *Lisey’s Story*, which all have literary production as one of their central themes.¹⁸ All of these case studies revolve around the figure of the author-protagonist. Stephen King has not created a series of literary equivalents to himself; to make a case for this would, I believe, be fundamentally flawed. In this thesis, I explore the extent to which King’s *habitus*, as delineated in the first chapter, underpins the function of his author-protagonists, in order to examine precisely the relation between *habitus*, and the fictional representations of authorship and the production, circulation and reception of texts. I show that King’s anxiety about the divide between the popular and the literary is expressed through the figure of the author-protagonist. As Michel Foucault states in his essay ‘What is an Author?’ (1969), ‘the author function is... characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 108), and it is this representation of the author function, through the figure of the author-protagonist, that will provide this argument’s perspective.

¹⁸ King lamented the perception of critics towards his returning to subjects already explored in his previous texts stating that:

If you’re taken seriously as somebody who’s practicing literature as art, you’re allowed to return to what you’ve done before: you’re amplifying previous themes. But if you write popular literature and you repeat a theme, the idea is that your head is so empty it’s produced an echo (Peck, 1990, p. 135).

Foucault argues that an author's name 'performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function' in that it can 'group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others' (Foucault, 1991, p. 107). Rather than the author's name signifying the presence of authority in the text, that presence which determines the text, its reception and its interpretation, the author's name functions in a more practical sense in that it acts as a unifying factor. It provides the umbrella under which a selection of texts can be placed and become differentiated from others. As Foucault confirms,

the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization (Foucault, 1991, p. 107).

It is this fact which, I would like to suggest, is key to understanding the ways in which the author's name, and by extension, the author-protagonist's name, functions with respect to their role in literary production. One last point before I continue on to define the shape my argument will take: the author's name does not only function so as to demarcate a group of texts as a work through its function as a categorising agent, but it also serves to 'characterize a certain mode of being of discourse' (Foucault, 1991, p. 107). According to Foucault, this discourse 'is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status' (Foucault, 1991, p. 107). The author's name plays a crucial role in their discourse's legitimisation and its longevity, and yet it is simultaneously controlled by that name's cultural significance. The attribution of an author's name to a text, affects the way in which that text circulates within culture, and this phenomenon becomes

more pronounced as the output of an author increases.¹⁹ King has often spoken of being ‘typed’, as I explore in depth in the first chapter, and so it is clear that he has an understanding of the way his fiction either suffers or benefits from the affiliation with his name. I propose that, rather than attempting to position Paul Sheldon, or any of the other author-protagonists that I address in the following pages, as a fictional substitute for Stephen King himself, the author-protagonists allow King to question the ways in which an author’s name characterizes his texts’ ‘mode of being’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 107). The author-protagonists are necessarily rooted in King’s *habitus*, and therefore their narratives dramatise the systems of textual production and cultural classification as King perceives them, and it is this which allows us to approach the correspondence between the author and the author-protagonist.

However, other than to discern the existence of this correspondence, how can this delineation of the author-protagonist’s function allow a greater understanding of the individual texts themselves, and ultimately, the work of Stephen King? I propose that the plots in which these author-protagonists are embroiled, function to undermine the high/low divide which the development of King’s *habitus* has sought to embed in his understanding of the literary field; they question the validity of the divide, and therefore subvert the acceptance of its existence. The narratives destabilise the regular structure of traditional literary hierarchies resulting in an

¹⁹ An example of this in relation to King is his practice of writing blurbs. Stephanie Leonard, writing for *The Castle Rock Newsletter* (1986), points out that publishers ‘feel that a well-known author’s “kiss” or stamp of approval, especially an author from the same genre, can sell the books of a lesser-known writer’ (Leonard, 1986, p. 2). She quotes Stuart Applebaum of Bantam Books claiming that King was one ‘of the great blurb-meisters’ (Leonard, 1982, p.2) due to his prolific blurbing. By attaching King’s name to texts authored by other ‘lesser-known’ writers, publishers are recognising the way in which this particular author’s name can positively affect the sales of whichever texts it becomes connected with.

altering of perspective concerning one's own literary production. In the texts which form the focus for the four case studies, the author-protagonist enters a carnivalized space in which they experience degradation, ambivalence and the grotesque which all conspire to invert the hierarchical norms which King's *habitus* asserts. Mikhail Bakhtin declares that carnival time necessitated the 'suspension of all hierarchical precedence' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 10). This temporary effacement of all hierarchical structure is the condition into which the author-protagonist is propelled, and the ways in which they negotiate their role, and the role of their work, is redefined throughout the duration of the text. However, it would be wrong to assume that this redefinition is anything other than temporary and superficial. As I shall show, as the plot draws to its conclusion and the author-protagonist moves out of the carnivalized space, the hierarchy, as it was originally conceived by the author-protagonist, is reasserted, rendering the redefinition finite to the carnival's temporary erasure of rank and privilege. It is superficial in that this 'suspension of hierarchical precedence' is solely at the level of the plot; when other factors, including narrative structure, style, and characterization, are considered, it becomes evident that rather than subvert genre conventions, these texts support and endorse them. In this way, the texts which follow simultaneously erase hierarchical structures and reinforce them; in themselves, they are highly problematic in their subversion of, and their conformity to, genre conventions. By turning to the theories of Fredric Jameson, set out in his article 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' (1979), I show that these texts are performing the simultaneous expression and containment of anxieties surrounding the production of texts for a mass market, through this complex relationship to genre convention. In this sense, these carnivalesque intrusions into the narrative highlight King's desire to destabilise the

hierarchical strata of the literary field, while unavoidably reinforcing it through the commodification of this radical, subversive element.

For the sake of clarity, I should stress that when I refer to genre, and the conventions incumbent upon the manifestation of genre, I do not do so in the spirit of post-structural formalism, in so far as I am concerned with the ways in which popular fiction genres are circulated, received and interpreted in material form. I agree with Jameson's argument that

the older generic discourses... continue a powerful afterlife in the realm of mass culture. Paperback drugstore or airport displays reinforce all of the now sub-generic distinctions between gothic, bestseller, mysteries, science fiction, biography, or pornography (Jameson, 1979, p. 136).

Both structuralist studies of genre, such as Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) and Northrop Frye's 'The Mythos of Summer: Romance' (1957), and post-structuralist studies such as Jacques Derrida's 'The Law of Genre' (1980), provide comprehensive explorations of the term 'genre'; however, they do not take into account the position occupied by a text in the cycles of publication, distribution, circulation and reception which is necessary for my own purposes in this thesis. Underpinning my analysis of genre conventions, and the way these conventions function in the texts chosen for this study, are theories derived from book history such as those found in Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1987) and D.F. MacKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986). By drawing upon book history, I show that genre functions as an integral component in the production, circulation and reception of texts, particularly those marketed to the masses. After all, genre is not just a set of reading practices acknowledged and enacted by interpretive

communities.²⁰ It is not just a structural framework providing a basis for the author to construct their narrative. It is not just a taxonomic system enabling publishers to target specific markets, and supplying booksellers with guidance as to product placement. It is all of these and more, and to reduce our understanding of the concept to the disembodied words upon the intangible page, does not allow for a full appreciation of the role genre plays in the sociology of texts. In my case studies, I ask questions as to the role of the author-protagonist in the problematisation of the high/low divide in order to explode the boundaries of the text traditionally open to analysis, and to assess the roles of texts, genre and cultural hierarchy in late-capitalist society. In my first chapter, however, I engage with the multitude of paratextual, epitextual and peritextual, material concerning King's *habitus* and his perception of the field of literary production, so as to assess the trajectory of his career while simultaneously analysing the choices he has made concerning the form and content of his production.

While the focus of the majority of this thesis is on King's writing about writing as found in his fiction, the first chapter focuses on his part how-to guide, part autobiography, *On Writing*. By choosing to focus on this text, prior to addressing some examples of his fiction, and by exploring the correlation between the opinions expressed there and a history of King's literary production, I establish a clear sense of King's *habitus*. This chapter is divided into four sections, Concerning Capital, Textual Entrapments, Commercial vs. Folk Cultural Production and King and the Cultural Custodians, each in turn corresponding to the following case studies. In the first section, Concerning Capital, I address King's complex relationship to

²⁰ This is a term derived from the work of Stanley E. Fish and shall be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

economic capital through an exploration of King's early days when the publication of short fiction became an economic strategy, through to his decision whether or not to endorse products such as Miller Lite and American Express, to his defence at the NBA award ceremony of his ability to generate large profits. It looks forward to the case study on *The Shining*, in which King's efforts to reconcile his ability to accrue economic capital become expressed through the tragic character of Jack Torrance. In the second section, my focus shifts to issues of stereotyping and genre classification. *Textual Entrapments* draws upon childhood experiences of cultural classification as articulated in the unpublished article 'Culch' (1975) and the foreword to *Salem's Lot*, before moving on to consider this cultural classification in light of King's popular success. This section corresponds to the case study on *Misery* and *The Dark Half* which both explore textual entrapments of one type or another. My third section, which tackles the production of culture according to the heteronomous principle, focuses on commercial and folk cultural production and the way in which King attempts to emphasise his work's affinity with folk culture through the metaphors he employs in *On Writing* and his practice of publishing limited editions. It is a section which anticipates the upcoming case study on *Bag of Bones*, in which King juxtaposes the two types of popular cultural production through the figure of the author-protagonist, his deceased wife and a nineteenth-century blues singer. The final section, *King and the Cultural Custodians*, explores the relationship between King and academia as expressed by King in *On Writing*, *Danse Macabre*, and the foreword to the revised edition of the first of the Dark Tower series, *The Gunslinger* (2003). However, it also engages with the relationship as expressed by those from within the Academy: Burton Hatlen and Gary Hoppenstand. The aim of this chapter is to establish the authorial context for

the thesis and to provide the architecture for the case studies which follow: the first of which is an analysis of *The Shining*.

Published in 1977, *The Shining* is the earliest of King's novels that I concentrate on in the case studies. Written on the back of King's economic success from the publications of both *Carrie* and *'Salem's Lot*, *The Shining* hearkens back to a more impoverished time when, working as a high school teacher, he supplemented his income with the publication of his short stories. Featuring author-protagonist Jack Torrance, the narrative dramatises the tension that exists between the need for economic profit and the desire for literary credibility through Jack's financial difficulties and his aspirations 'of becoming a major American writer in the next decade' (TS, p. 294). I argue that, while Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining* (1980) gained significantly more critical attention, and therefore, cultural consecration, than King's novel received, the novel actively engages with many of the issues for which Kubrick's film received acclaim. The relationship between the novel and the film is a subject King is frequently questioned about, and his responses to those questions in interviews ranging from the 1980s to 2006 necessarily inform my analysis. Despite King's first author-protagonist featuring in *'Salem's Lot*, *The Shining* marks King's first narrative to develop the participation in the literary field as a central theme of the text, and it is this which also characterises the two novels which form the focus of the following case study.

In the second case study, my analysis of King's *Misery* and *The Dark Half* centres on the way popular fiction is perceived and produced by their author-protagonists, Paul Sheldon and Thad Beaumont respectively. In both these novels, the author-

protagonists articulate their anxiety pertaining to their entrapment, an entrapment which extends beyond their narrated predicament, as they struggle for freedom from their antagonists, and includes a textual entrapment effected through their own choice to write and publish popular genre fiction. I address both of these texts in one case study in order to emphasise the many crossovers between them: they both feature an author-protagonist who writes fiction that is perceived either by themselves or by others as either serious or popular, both author-protagonists suffer entrapment at the hands of an antagonist motivated by the author-protagonist's production of popular fiction, they both feature elements of the carnivalesque, and both novels are directly linked to King's experimentation with the pseudonym, Richard Bachman.²¹ Published only two years apart, they offer a fascinating insight into the world of popular authorship and the benefits and restrictions that it brings as experienced firsthand by the author who wrote them. By combining my study of both novels in this case study, I provide strong, compelling analysis of King's portrayal of the popular author's role as he perceived it at the end of the eighties: a decade which saw King become an economic force within the world of publishing.²²

²¹ Richard Bachman was a pseudonym employed by King between the years 1977 to 1984, when he was revealed as the true author of the novels. Despite King's admission to writing under the Bachman name, he continues to publish as Bachman as recently as 2007 with *Blaze* (2007). The source for the name and his reason for his employment of it are discussed in Chapter 2.

²² As Michael Collings confirms:

At the end of Stephen King's first ten years as a regular on the national bestsellers lists in 1986, he had already set a number of sales records for his novels, including several weeks with an astonishing five titles occurring simultaneously on the hardcover, mass-market paperback, and the trade paperback lists; a slightly larger number of weeks with four titles; and occurrences of two or three titles so frequent as to barely elicit comment. His collectibles were commanding extraordinary prices; his new books were literally lining bookstore walls on the first days of release; and in some senses he was undeniably among the hottest literary phenomena of the mid-80s (Collings, 1997, p. 44).

In my next case study I address *Bag of Bones*, which was published following his move from NAL to Scribner at the end of the nineties. My approach to *Bag of Bones* focuses on the ways in which mass and folk culture are compared within the text by focusing on opposing methods of production, and on the circulation of the resulting products. Drawing upon Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope²³ and Walter Benjamin's theory of mechanical reproduction, I explore issues of authenticity in cultural production. I also analyse the presence of the intertextual referencing of Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' to posit some ideas as to its relevance to author-protagonist Mike Noonan's experience of literary production as a popular novelist. In my conclusion, I focus on King's most recent output, specifically *Lisey's Story*, *Duma Key* (2008), the anthology *The Best American Short Stories 2007* (2007), and his newest collection of short fiction, *Just After Sunset* (2008). In each of these texts King continues to demonstrate his understanding of hierarchical strata, position-taking and the literary field, and yet, the anxiety that is dramatised in his earlier fiction becomes articulated through narratives that focus on cultural producers that attract significant symbolic capital. Both Scott Landon of *Lisey's Story* and Edgar Freemantle of *Duma Key* are extremely successful as they are awarded cultural kudos and financial gain in equal measures, and it is through their narratives in particular that King explores issues of legitimacy, legacy and the role of cultural custodians. However, as I shall show through my analysis on the paratextual material that accompanies both the short story anthology and *Just After Sunset*, he continues to engage with these same concerns outwith narratives

²³ The chronotope is a concept discussed in two of the essays collated in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981): 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (1937-1938) and 'Epic and Novel' (1941). In 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', he states that, 'we will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 184). It is the connection between this concept and the products within folk and mass culture that shall be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

featuring a participant in cultural production, thus confirming that the issues I raise throughout this thesis persist in his most recent publications.

My intention throughout the chapters which follow is to shift the focus of research into Stephen King's fiction from that which has complied with his narrow typecasting as a horror author to the whole range of fiction King has produced and the relevance of that work to the wider field of textual and cultural production. King is an intensely prolific author who continues to produce fiction on an almost yearly basis, despite his many announcements of immanent retirement dating from *It* (1986) onwards. Due to the sheer bulk of King's output, both under his own name and the pseudonymous Richard Bachman, I have had to necessarily limit my own selection for analysis, which I have done by focussing solely on novels which directly engage with the process of literary production. As I have shown in this introduction, King is not operating within a vacuum, but within the context of a culture which has experienced increasing sacralization throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that his authorial practices should be analysed with respect to those practices employed by those authors he most frequently references, such as Herman Melville. Writers producing fiction in the antebellum period may have been operating within a field of literary production which is vastly different from the one King participates within today; but I argue that the need which developed during that period to accrue both symbolic and economic capital, due to the agonism experienced as America began to establish its literary identity, and to the development of the professionalisation of authorship, is ingrained within the American literary tradition, and it is this tension which continues to reverberate within the contemporary literary production of American authors such as Stephen

King. This thesis is a charting of *habitus* through the career trajectory of Stephen King, the portrayal of his many author-protagonists and his participation within the field of literary production.

Chapter 1 – On Writing

Introduction

In the first of three forewords to his part autobiography/part how-to guide, *On Writing*, King recalls a conversation he once had with his fellow author Amy Tan. He asked Tan ‘if there was any one question she was *never* asked during the Q-and-A that follows almost every writer’s talk’ (OW, p. x), to which she responded, ‘No one ever asks about the language’ (OW, p. xi). King claims that it is her response to his question that gave him the permission that he needed to write his ‘little book about writing’ (OW, p. xi). Prior to this conversation, King confesses, ‘I didn’t trust my own motivations – *why* did I want to write about writing? What made me think I had anything worth saying?’ (OW, p. xi). He continues to fret: ‘If I was going to be presumptuous enough to tell people how to write, I felt there had to be a better reason than my popular success’ (OW, p. xi). This *projected* lack of confidence is rather undermined once his many articulations upon the topic of writing, authorship and literary production in both his paratexts and his fiction are taken into account. Faux modesty aside, it is interesting to note how, as a prelude to his ‘memoir of the craft’ (OW, p. v), King seeks ‘permission’ to write about writing from an author unproblematically regarded as a ‘literary’ novelist, one whose books have been nominated for a clutch of prestigious prizes including the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Orange Prize and the Los Angeles Times Award and who has received the Commonwealth Gold Award, the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, the Torgi Award, a New York Times Notable Books and a Bafta. As his forewords unfold, it becomes clear that King regards himself and Tan as literary fellow travellers:

Amy was right: nobody ever asks about the language. They ask the DeLillos and the Updikes and the Styrons, but they don't ask popular novelists. Yet many of us proles also care about the language, in our humble way, and care passionately about the art and craft of telling stories on paper (OW, p. xi).

King may claim that his text is 'about the language' and that his book is an 'attempt to put down, briefly and simply, how I came to the craft, what I know about it now, and how it's done' (OW, pp. xi-xii), but as this comment implies, his concern is as much with the cultural politics that govern the field of literary production and that presume to separate out the artists from the 'proles'.

King's anxiety around this issue and his desire to establish the terms in which his own work can be legitimized repeatedly infiltrates *On Writing*. His apparent lack of conscious appreciation of the dispositions which underpin his perception of the literary fields' hierarchical strata is consistent with the partly unconscious level at which *habitus* operates. Through my analysis of *On Writing* I argue that this text is best understood as a dramatisation of *habitus*. By approaching the text in this way, it becomes apparent that King's perception of the literary field, its structured structures and its structuring structures, and the way in which position-takings can be effected, finds articulation through this autobiographical narrative and his advice on writing creatively. The dispositions which generate 'practices and perceptions' (Johnson, 1993, p.5) are expressed through different but interrelated principles affecting positioning and position-taking within the field. As with all fields, the field of literary production is not 'structured in a flat linear fashion, with aesthetics at one end, economics at another, and practitioners distributed in between' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 169), but rather as a

more complex, multi-dimensional model... that distributes positions not only according to whether work is autonomous with respect to the social and economic fields, but by considering a whole range of other principles –

forms, styles, media, the degree of ‘consecration’ claimed and the relation to artistic tradition (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 169).

In the course of this chapter, which establishes the architecture of my central argument throughout this thesis, I engage with four key themes: the distribution of capital, the writing of genre fiction, the distinctions between commercial and folk cultural production, and finally the role of those charged with the responsibility of legitimising literature and King’s own relationship to them. In each of these sections, and their corresponding case studies, I address not only the binary definitions fundamental to the differentiation of the autonomous and heteronomous production of art, but also the differences inherent at either pole: popular and commercial within heteronomous production, and consecrated and avant garde within autonomous production, all of which feature in King’s work. *On Writing*, I suggest, both addresses and embodies the career-long anxieties King has fostered about his fiction, and *in* his fiction.

The interaction of these principles and their textual expression within King’s writing raise many questions concerning the stability of these binary positions and King’s own interest in perpetuating them. In what way does King assert his authorship while simultaneously recognising his stigmatised role as popular author? How does he attempt to reconcile his pursuit of both symbolic and economic capital? Through his many paratextual enunciations concerning the practice of writing fiction, does he undermine or support the position he maintains in *On Writing*? As his interpretation of Amy Tan’s response indicates, the answers are considerably more complex than they may first appear, and frequently require investigation into texts outwith the main focus of this chapter in order to gain a broader contextual appreciation of the relevant factors. Just as Tan’s response was

not ‘a very simple and direct’ (OW, p. xii) permission to King to publish *On Writing*, so *On Writing* is not ‘a very simple and direct’ articulation of ‘how one author was formed’ (OW, p. 4). It is, in fact, a text of many contradictions, complexities and complicities.

Concerning Capital

I was convinced – deeply convinced – that somewhere deep inside me was a money machine waiting to be turned on. And that when I found the dials and the combinations, the money would just pour out (Wiater and Anker, 1990, p. 214).

Despite his extensively demonstrated ability to generate enormous economic capital from his literary production, King maintains an uneasy relationship to money and his texts’ capacity to accrue it. Nowhere is this more evident than in his production of fiction as articulated in *On Writing*. One primary example of this can be found in King’s relation of his experience selling his plagiarised edition of Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ (1842) to his schoolmates. Upon discovering one of the hand-printed documents, his teacher, Miss Hisler, exclaimed, ‘What I don’t understand, Stevie... is why you’d write junk like this in the first place. You’re talented. Why do you want to waste your abilities?’ (OW, p. 45). Even although King had successfully produced a work of fiction which covered his costs of production and gave him a sizable profit, King identifies this experience in *On Writing* as the point at which he became ‘ashamed about what I write’ (OW, p. 46). King’s next effort confirmed his ability to produce commercially profitable literature, as he wrote an original short story, ‘The Invasion of the Star Creatures’ of which he ‘sold all but four or five’ (OW, p. 46) of a print run of four dozen. His earlier experience, however, remained an important one. As he states, ‘I guess that means I won in the end, at least in a financial sense. But in my heart I stayed

ashamed. I kept hearing Miss Hisler asking why I wanted to waste my talent, why I wanted to waste my time, why I wanted to write junk' (OW, p. 46).

Whether shame is necessarily the most appropriate term for the unease King purports to have felt in producing popular, economically viable fiction, is less important here than the fact that he has chosen to include this memory amongst the 'assorted snapshots' which together form 'a kind of *curriculum vitae*' (OW, p. 4). This articulation of 'shame' is rooted within the attribution of literary worth and the accrual of symbolic capital: a kind of capital only available to 'those who can *recognize* the specific demands of this universe and who, by concealing from themselves and others the interests at stake in their practice, obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 75). The autonomous principle, which underpins the production of art that is capable of accruing symbolic capital, depends upon 'temporal failure,' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40) as 'temporal failure' is viewed as 'a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). The immediacy of King's economic success, as intimated by his memories of these early commercial ventures, automatically precluded him from 'deriving profits from disinterestedness'. His ability to generate income through his literary production signifies a fundamental incompatibility between King's literary production and the distribution of symbolic capital.

His narrative, which charts the development of a bestselling novelist, is one in which the financial realities of a poverty-stricken childhood and early adulthood loom large, and this is particularly evident in his depiction of his short story publications as a necessary economic strategy. Between the years of 1970 and

1975, King published 'Graveyard Shift' (1970), 'I Am the Doorway' (1971), 'Battleground' (1972), 'The Mangler' (1972), 'The Boogeyman' (1973), 'Trucks' (1973), 'Grey Matter' (1973), 'Sometimes They Come Back' (1974), 'Night Surf' (1974), 'The Lawnmower Man' (1975) and 'Strawberry Spring' (1975) in *Cavalier* magazine. The money generated from the publication of these and other stories in men's magazines was, as King states, 'just enough to create a rough sliding margin between us and the welfare office' (OW, p. 72). He recalls in particular the cheque he received for 'Sometimes They Come Back', a 'long story that [he] hadn't believed would sell anywhere' (OW, p. 74), for five hundred dollars, providing them with the finances to take their sick daughter to the doctor and to purchase her necessary medications. This narrative of economic impoverishment not only informs King's work, but also serves as a justification for the type of fiction he produced. King's literary production, then as now, is a consciously commercial concern and yet, as this justification reveals, it is not an aspect of his work that he feels particularly comfortable with. He is extremely keen that these short stories are acknowledged as not primarily produced for economic profit, and that it is recognised that there is a degree of intrinsic literary worth within them. In his illustration of a composite early-career writer, Frank, whose journey towards publication is included in the how-to section of *On Writing*, he describes Frank's first publication of a short story for which he receives twenty-five dollars. As King states, 'Twenty-five bucks won't pay the rent, won't even buy a week's worth of groceries for Frank and his wife, but it's a validation of his ambition, and that – any newly published writer would agree, I think – is priceless' (OW, pp. 291-292). Despite their role in keeping King and his young family afloat during their lean

years, King perceives that the money the short stories generated is not solely a component within his economic strategy, but also a ‘validation of his ambition’.¹

This art/money dialectic is explored further in his foreword to *Skeleton Crew* (1985) in which he discusses the financial details regarding his short story, ‘Word Processor of the Gods’ (1983). He divulges a conversation he had with a friend who was arguing that, while King’s novels ‘were making very good money... the short stories were actually losers’ (SC, p. 1). His friend reasoned that after agent fees of ten percent, business management fees of five percent, and taxes of fifty percent, with an additional ten percent of that tax bill paid to the state of Maine, King had generated the same income as a New York plumber for the week’s worth of work that it took to produce his short story ‘Word Processor of the Gods’. After divulging his friend’s calculations pertaining to his production of the short story, King rejoins by contrasting his friend’s initial calculation as to the financial remuneration King received for ‘Word Processor of the Gods’ with his own calculations, following its incorporation into his second collection of short fiction. He states that ‘my total take on “Word Processor of the Gods” – net – is now just over twenty-three hundred dollars, not even counting the \$769.50 you hee-hawed so over at my house at the lake (SC, p. 3).

However, following this demonstration, King proceeds to state that ‘you don’t do it for the money, or you’re a monkey. You don’t think of the bottom line, or you’re a

¹ The view of economic success as validation is also expressed by King in a review he wrote on Elmore Leonard’s *Glitz* (1985), beginning his review with ‘How good is this novel? Probably the most convincing thing I can say on the subject is that it cost me money. After finishing *Glitz*, I went out to the bookstore at my local mall and bought everything by Elmore Leonard I could find’ (King, 1985). The review, which is extremely positive, begins with this correlation of literary worth with economic value.

monkey. You don't think of it in terms of hourly wage, yearly wage, even lifetime wage, or you're a monkey' (SC, p. 4), which corresponds to his response in *On Writing*, to the question, 'Do you do it for the money, honey?' (OW, p. 301): to which he responds, 'no. Don't now and never did. Yes, I've made a great deal of dough from my fiction, but I never set a single word down on paper with the thought of being paid for it' (OW, p. 301). This same refusal is reiterated during his acceptance speech for his National Book Award for distinguished contribution to American letters:

Now, there are lots of people who will tell you that anyone who writes genre fiction or any kind of fiction that tells a story is in it for the money and nothing else. It's a lie... I never in my life wrote a single word for money. From those early days to this gala black tie night, I never once sat down at my desk thinking today I'm going to make a hundred grand (King, 2003).

This rebuttal follows the criticism he received for accepting the award from critics and academics, including Harold Bloom who stated that, 'By awarding [the NBA distinguished contribution] to King they recognize nothing but the commercial value of his books, which sell in the millions but do little more for humanity than keep the publishing world afloat' (Bloom, 2003). King's continued reiterations that he does not write 'for money' stem from an anxiety arising from the stated beliefs of cultural custodians, or 'gatekeepers' as Bourdieu classifies them, that popular literature is compromised by its economic success. By stating again and again in his forewords, speeches, non-fiction and interviews that he is not writing for money, King is attempting to claim a level of 'disinterestedness,' thus validating his worth as an author deserving of symbolic capital.

Despite King's supposed disinterestedness, however, his interest in the economic realities of not only his literary production but also his role as literary producer is

rendered explicit during his discussions of marketing and critical attention. For example, during an interview with Stanley Wiater and Roger Anker (1984) in which he discusses his decision to participate in an American Express commercial and his decision to turn down a part in a Miller Lite commercial, King explains:

The other day these people called me up from some other agency: ‘Saw your American Express ad. Loved it! You wanna do a Miller Lite ad?’ And I went, ‘Jesus, yeah, I *do* want to do a Miller Lite ad – those are really cool!’ Then I thought to myself: ‘You know, you’re a *writer*. You do about three more of these things and you can go on Hollywood Squares, for all the reputation that you’ve got.’ Not that I’ve got much of a reputation anyway. But there has to be a point when, before you sell, you say, ‘I’m not a huckster, a commercial object’ (Wiater and Anker, 1990, p. 242).

King clearly appreciates that his literary reputation is inextricably bound to his commercial objectification. By choosing to participate in commercials that advertise products such as alcoholic beverages and credit cards, his potential to accrue symbolic capital risks irreparable damage. The large advances that he has accepted in the past have already contributed towards his texts’ incompatibility with the accrual of symbolic capital: a fact King recognises when he states that: ‘You can always tell a bad review coming, because it will be a review of my check-book and my contractual agreements’ (Spitz, 1990, p. 257). He claims that a ‘review like that will start out saying, ‘This is the third book in Stephen King’s multi-million-dollar contract for New American Library,’ and then you know, well... the trouble’s going to start (Spitz, 1990, p. 257). King recognises a direct correlation between his economic success and the critical reception of his work: a correlation that emphasises his literary production as arising from the heteronomous rather than autonomous principle.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in 1976 when *‘Salem’s Lot* made the number one position on *The New York Times* bestseller list. The following month the same

publication featured an article by King in which he attempts to establish his text's literary worth regardless of the amount of money its publication generated. This article called 'Not Guilty: The Guest Word' (1976) relates a 'bizarre coincidence' (King, 1976) that saw King read an article called 'Money Talk' (1976), in which David Madden's income for his book *Bijou* (1975) is discussed, and receive a phone call to inform him that '*Salem's Lot* was expected to take the top slot in paperback bestseller list, within the space of a few hours. This coincidence leads King to reveal that 'Madden worked on *Bijou* for six years and made \$15,000. I worked on '*Salem's Lot* for about eight months...and stand to make nearly half a million dollars, if all falls together' (King, 1976). Upon making this revelation, King proceeds to make another:

How does the contrast make me feel? In a word, guilty. But in another two words, not guilty. The two feelings are perfectly joined at hip and shoulder like Siamese twins, and I'm going to try to cut them apart before your very eyes (King, 1976).

The way in which he attempts to perform this excision is to present the possibility of there being an 'art to accessibility, too, although it may be of a more humble sort than that which belongs to the artist who will not hew his peg to fit accessibility's hole' (King, 1976). By emphasising the accessibility of his literature King confirms his role as a producer of heteronomous art. Madden, by contrast, is portrayed as a disinterested writer: one who writes autonomously in his production of 'art for art's sake', art which succeeds through 'temporal failure'. By admitting to writing a text which is 'easy to slip into, pleasant to stroke around in for the next 400-odd pages' (King, 1976), King makes it clear that he produces with his market in mind, which results in his realised potential to make a considerable amount of money.

Another point at which King's dissatisfaction with the correlation of literary worth with disinterestedness can be discerned is in his derision of university creative writing classes. This is raised briefly in *On Writing* where he admits his preference for his wife's poem, 'A Gradual Canticle for Augustine,' over the other poems produced during a class he attended while completing his undergraduate degree. As he explains, 'there was a view among the student writers I knew at that time that good writing came spontaneously, in an uprush of feeling that had to be caught at once' (OW, p. 62) in which 'there *were* no mechanics, only that seminal spurt of feeling' (OW, p. 63). In Tabitha's poem, however, there was 'a work-ethic' which 'had as much in common with sweeping the floor as with mythy moments of revelation' (OW, p. 65).² It is this 'work-ethic' and its connection to money-making literature that is explored fictively in his epic horror, *It*. One of the protagonists, Bill Denbrough, is a hugely successful popular novelist who recalls his own dissatisfaction with the way in which creative writing is taught in universities. He voices his frustration during one such class in which they have spent the last seventy minutes discussing 'a sallow young woman's vignette about a cow's examination of a discarded engine block in a deserted field' which is supposed to be 'a socio-political statement in the manner of the early Orwell' (*It*, pp. 132-133). He asks the class, 'can't you guys just let a story be a *story*?' to which his tutor responds, 'Do you believe William Faulkner was just telling *stories*? Do you believe Shakespeare was just interested in making a *buck*?' (*It*, p. 133). Bill admits that 'I think that's

² This emphasis on work-ethic and the refusal of 'mythy moments of revelation' seems reminiscent of E.A. Poe's 'Philosophy of Composition' (1846) in which Poe confesses that 'I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would – that is to say could – detail, step-by-step, the process by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion' (Poe, 1846, p. 163) before considering, 'Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say – but, perhaps, the authorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause' (Poe, 1846, p. 163). He then states that most 'writers – poets in especial – prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy – an ecstatic intuition – and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes' (Poe, 1846, p. 163).

pretty close to the truth' (*It*, p. 133), leading the tutor and the rest of the class to publicly deride him for holding such beliefs.

Following this experience, Bill receives an F grade on his next story along with the damning comments 'PULP' and 'CRAP' (*It*, p. 134). The description of the actual process of 'the business of writing this story' (*It*, p. 133) furthers the connection between 'work-ethic' and literary production. It is as though 'he is not so much *telling* the story as he is allowing the story to *flow through* him' (*It*, p. 133), although not as the 'seminal spurt of feeling' King later accuses creative writing students of producing. Instead, Bill feels that

after ten years of trying he has suddenly found the starter button on the vast dead bulldozer taking up so much space inside his head. It has started up. It is revving, revving. It is nothing pretty, this big machine. It was not made for taking pretty girls to proms. It is not a status symbol. It means business. It can knock things down. If he isn't careful, it will knock *him* down (*It*, p. 134).

While I discuss the mechanistic production of literature in a later case study, what is interesting to note here is that this machine-like literary production, which has nothing in common with the 'uprush of feeling' (OW, p. 62) King's fellow students believed in, is simultaneously incapable of garnering critical validation while proving deserving of financial recompense. For the story, Bill receives two hundred dollars from *White Tie*, a men's magazine similar to those which King published in during his fledgling career, and promptly decides to drop his creative writing class, with which his incompatibility had been painfully obvious. Stapling his drop card to the editor's congratulatory note and pinning them to the department notice board earned him an overall F for the course and a comment from the tutor asking, 'Do you think money proves anything about anything, Denbrough?' (*It*, p. 135). Bill's response is 'Well, actually, yes' (*It*, p. 135), although it is this accrual of economic

capital rather than symbolic capital which later prevents him from being appreciated as a writer of serious autonomous literature by critics and the Academy: a fate shared by his creator, Stephen King.

Textual Entrapments

That little elite, which is clustered in the literary magazines and book-review sections of influential newspapers and magazines on both coasts, assumes that *all* popular literature must also, by definition, be bad literature. Those criticisms are not really against bad writing; they're against an entire type of writing. My type of writing, as it turns out (Norden, 1990, pp. 79-80).

In an early unpublished article held in the archives at King's alma mater, the University of Maine, King describes the word 'culch' which his mother often used.

In the article King offers a definition for his mother's slang word:

Culch (pronounced cul-tch) was my mother's word for *junk*. That is an exact translation, but like any translation of slang into straight language it is flavorless. Culch and junk are synonymous, but culch has certain overtones – undertones too, for that matter (King, 1975, pp. 2-3).

An important aspect of this definition is that while culch means the same as junk, it signifies greater meaning. King goes on to enlarge this definition by stating that his 'mother used the word culch to define – either partially or fully – a wide variety of uniquely American things' (King, 1975, p. 3). In the article he proceeds to give a long list of examples in order to further clarify the word:

The stuff you get for Halloween and always puke up on November 1...The Johnny Carson show. Orange crush. Dr Pepper. Pink Studebakers. Toy cars and trucks made of plastic...The Letters to the Editor column in Esquire. Nehru jackets. The movies of Raquel Welch (King, 1975, p. 3).

The list is extensive, everything from junk food to clothing, politicians to litter, cars to public service advertisements are included, but all with one point of commonality

in that they were all classified as ‘culch’ by King’s mother.³ King attempts to make sense of this mixture of cultural detritus by describing it as ‘one of those yardstick words, a way to divide the sheep from the goats’ (King, 1975, p. 3). He states that, in ‘order to grow up satisfactorily whole in such a culture (culch-ure?), some yardstick word was necessary. Shoes were necessary. Futuristic X-ray machines, however, were not’ (King, 1975, p. 3). It is this belief in the need of a ‘yardstick word’ in order to gauge the worth of an object, concept or person that is especially interesting in relation to King’s own value system. He even confesses that of ‘all the things my mother gave me, I do believe that this one word has proved to be one of the most enduring and most useful’ (King, 1975, p. 3); however, it is also King’s primary experience of cultural classification.

³ ‘Your Kind of Place’ (1975) was an article that King wrote in the same year as ‘Culch’ which concerns the fast food outlet McDonald’s and its rise and continued success within the late capitalist era. As Davis suggests in *Stephen King’s America*, ‘King’s rendition of the Macdonald’s saga highlights a number of vices often pervading American fiction: greed, alienation, and manipulation’ (Davis, 1994, p. 80). King’s exploration of this ‘saga’ illustrates an interesting dichotomy; there is at once a respect for, and a rejection of, the capitalist enterprise embodied by Ray Kroc, owner of McDonald’s. He confesses that, ‘I love McDonald’s; I am hopeless. My children love it. Even my wife, who is cynical about many things, will not withhold McDonald’s from her children. In a world where all our traditions have been broken, the golden arches continue to stand’ (King, 1975, p. 3). Despite his love for the burger chain and his admiration for the ‘twin arches’, he proceeds to stress that ‘the most significant thing about McDonald’s is the number of trash containers that are spotted around the restaurant’ (King, 1975, p. 3). He asserts that:

The beer can at the side of the road, America’s symbol of litter for many years, now has a partner: the blowing yellow hamburger wrapper, branded with the golden arches, which you see lying in the weeds or fluttering on the soft shoulder of the highway. Instead of leaving a flag and a plaque on the moon, it might have been more appropriate if our astronauts had sprinkled around some McDonald’s wrappers and a few red Big Mac boxes. The thought of that stuff lying on top of that windless, pocked and pulverized surface fills me with both wonder and *horror*. And below the bronzed tablet reading WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND, the twin arches, raised in bas relief (King, 1975, pp. 3-4; my italics).

His description of the discarded packaging fits perfectly with his description of ‘culch’; it is superfluous, cheap, and has a distinctly American heritage. In ‘Culch’, he declared that if the ‘worst manifestations’ of culch ‘are to be avoided, immunization is necessary’ (King, 1975, p. 4), and yet when this is applied to his experience of McDonald’s it would appear that immunization has become indoctrination. As much as he regards Ray Kroc as ‘the realization of every American’s dream’ (Davis, 1993, p. 79), he also appreciates that there are negative aspects of capitalism, namely its appropriation of culture and its manipulation of a population.

King's claim, that his mother's classificatory system for judging a product's cultural value has affected his perception of the field of literary production, is reiterated in the foreword to *'Salem's Lot* in which he discusses her differentiation between 'trash' and 'bad trash':

To Nellie Ruth Pillsbury King, *The Blackboard Jungle* was trash; *The Bat*, by Mary Roberts Rinehart, was trash; *The Amboy Dukes*, by Irving Shulman, was *serious* trash. None of these books were forbidden to us, however. A very few others were. These our mother described as 'bad trash'... The only three in that category I can remember for sure were *Peyton Place*, *King's Row* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (SL, p. viii).

While acknowledging that 'trash has its place' (SL, p. viii), Nellie King impressed on her children her own taxonomic system for judging value by pronouncing a text's worth as she handed it to them following a trip to the library. When King imagines her response to *'Salem's Lot*, he guesses that 'she would have finished the last hundred pages in one of her marathon chain-smoking readathons, then laughed, put it aside (not without some affection), and pronounced it trash. But maybe not *bad* trash' (SL, p. xii). King's understanding of his mother's code for categorisation has had the result that he classifies his own texts accordingly. Despite the appreciation that he has for his mother's system for attributing cultural value, he has nonetheless come to regard these systems of value judgement as a constraint upon his literary production.

The anxiety that he has experienced and articulated regarding the way in which he, as a literary producer, and his literary production are judged is particularly prevalent in his many reiterations concerning the 'typing' which occurred during his early career. As King recalls, there was a great deal of deliberation surrounding the publication of his second novel. The day before Thompson had contacted King to

tell him of the sale of the paperback rights for *Carrie*, King had finished the first draft of what was to become '*Salem's Lot*. It was towards the end of this 'euphoric conversation' (King, 1982, p. 30) that Thompson suggested they should begin to think about a follow-up. King wrote him a letter the following month, 'and told him we had a bit of a problem; I had two possible follow-up books and couldn't pick between them' (King, 1982, p. 30). Upon reading both manuscripts, *Second Coming*⁴ and *Roadwork* (1981), Thompson and King had a conversation, while walking back to Doubleday's New York office, concerning which book they should go with:

[Thompson] said, '*Roadwork* would probably get more serious attention, but *Second Coming* is *Peyton Place* with vampires. It's a great read and it could be a bestseller. There's only one problem.'

'What's that?' I asked, as DON'T WALK changed to WALK and people started to move around us.

Bill stepped off the curb. In New York you don't waste the WALK, even when decisions of moment are being made, and this – I might have sensed it even then – was one that would affect the rest of my life. 'You'll be typed as a horror writer,' he said ('*Salem's Lot: Illustrated Edition*, p. xii).

While King suggests here, thirty years later, that he may have recognised that this was the point at which he became a genre author, his response at the time 'was that reputation follows function as much as form does; I would write the things I had it in me to write and leave it to the critics to figure out labels' (King, 1982, p. 31).

'*Salem's Lot*, however, was overlooked by critics despite, or more likely, because of, its popular success.⁵ The issue was raised again when King summarised the plot

⁴ King changed the title of *Second Coming* to *Jerusalem's Lot* after his wife 'said that *Second Coming* sounded like a sex manual' ('*Salem's Lot Illustrated Edition*, p. xii), and then to '*Salem's Lot* when his publishers complained that '*Jerusalem's Lot* sounded like a religious book' ('*Salem's Lot Illustrated Edition*, p. xii).

⁵ The overlooking of King's fiction because of its popularity is confirmed in a retrospective of King's work in *The New York Times* (2000) in which Cynthia Ozick, after doing a reading with King, confessed that she 'had never given King much thought' but that it 'dawned on me as I listened to him that, never mind all the best sellers and all the stereotypes – this man is a genuine, true-born *writer*, and that was a revelation' (Dubner, 2000).

of *The Shining* (1977) for Thompson as they ‘sat up...half the night in a bar called Jaspers’ (DS, p. 554). King recalls that:

By the end, [Thompson’s] elbows were planted on either side of his bourbon and his head was in his hands, like a man with a monster migraine.
 ‘You don’t like it,’ I said.
 ‘I like it a lot,’ he said hollowly.
 ‘Then what’s wrong?’
 ‘*First* the telekinetic girl, *then* the vampires, *now* the haunted hotel and the telepathic kid. You’re gonna get typed’ (DS, p. 554).

The ‘typing’ of Stephen King as a horror writer continued to stalk him for many years, and in some ways still does.⁶ The publication choices, taken by King and Thompson during the beginning of King’s career, were to set the course for the way in which King would be perceived, not only by critics and academics, but also by his fans and the general population, as an author of horror fiction. King has recounted this process and the conversations with Thompson many times: first in ‘On Becoming a Brand Name’ (1980), then in the ‘Afterword’ to *Different Seasons* (1982) and more recently in the ‘Foreword’ to the illustrated edition of *Salem’s Lot* and *The Paris Review* interview. In each of these repetitions, King confirms his anxiety concerning his ‘typing’ which arose from this series of career defining decisions.

It would be wrong, however, to assert that King’s perception of ‘typing’ merely applies to the producers of popular literature. As he reveals in *On Writing*, he is

⁶ This is evidenced in two recent interviews. In ‘Constant Craving’ (2000), King admits:
 if I see the red gels and the underlighting come out when someone comes to photograph me, I do walk out these days...It’s degrading to be treated as someone who is so one dimensional. But once they decide you’re a whore, they want to put you in a skirt, don’t they? (Adams, 2000a).

In *The Paris Review* interview he states:

Other people will hang tags on me like the horrormeister, the shlockmeister, the fearmeister, the master of suspense, the master of horror. But I’ve never said what it is that I do, and I don’t write letters complaining about these tags, because then it sounds like I’m trying to put on airs and make myself sound like something I’m not (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 88).

very aware of the ‘typing’ of literary authors, and while seeking to undermine his own classification he also seeks to undermine that of critically revered authors. One of the ways in which he attempts to achieve this is by aligning himself with some of the key tropes of the ‘serious’ author stereotype. King recalls that his mother in her encouragement of his attainment of a teaching degree prior to his pursuit of a writing career, told him that, ‘You may want to get married, Stephen, and a garret by the Seine is only romantic if you’re a bachelor’ (OW, p. 68). Despite following her advice though, King states that ‘I was keeping my family in a series of garrets which overlooked not the Seine but some of Bangor’s less appetizing streets’ (OW, p. 69). The image of the impoverished author living in a Parisian garret is one often employed to define an artist who will not, as King phrased it, ‘hew his peg to fit accessibility’s hole’. Here King is trading upon the ‘Christ-like mystique of the *artiste maudit*’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 169): a figure, portrayed as being ‘sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the next’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 169), perpetuated by those interested in the accrual of symbolic capital.

The serious literary author who suffers for his art is again discussed in *On Writing* when King raises the issue of his alcoholism. He states:

The idea that creative endeavour and mind-altering substances are entwined is one of the great pop-intellectual myths of our time. The four twentieth-century writers whose work is most responsible for it are probably Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson, and the poet Dylan Thomas (OW, p. 109).

These writers, King insists, are ‘the writers who largely formed our vision of an existential English-speaking wasteland where people have been cut off from one another and live in an atmosphere of emotional strangulation’ (OW, p. 109): concepts which, King believes, are ‘very familiar to most alcoholics’ (OW, p. 109).

King refuses to endorse the belief that alcoholism and high art have a natural affinity by denouncing the vision of social isolation and ‘emotional strangulation’; he contends that the vision arises as a result from their role as ‘common garden-variety drunks and druggies’ (OW, p. 109) as much as it does from their role as highly regarded, well thought of writers. In fact, he goes so far as to assert that any ‘claims that the drugs and alcohol are necessary to dull a finer sensibility are just the usual self-serving bullshit’ (OW, p. 109) and that ‘Hemingway and Fitzgerald didn’t drink because they were creative, alienated, or morally weak. They drank because it’s what alkies are wired up to do’ (OW, p. 110). He dismantles the connection between alcoholism and the endeavour to produce serious literature in order to undermine ‘the usual self-serving bullshit,’ and in so doing, actively denounces the ‘idea that creative endeavour and mind-altering substances are entwined’. King similarly destabilises this correlation through the articulation of his own suffering as he fought his drug and alcohol addiction. By acknowledging his role as a popular author who has had to contend with an addiction largely considered the province of serious, consecrated writers, he problematizes the affiliation. After all, he contends, ‘We all look pretty much the same when we’re puking in the gutter’ (OW, p. 110).

However, just as I proposed in the introduction to this chapter, *On Writing* is not a straightforward text, free of ambiguities and contradictions; it is a highly complex construction which illumines King’s *habitus* through its many inconsistencies. One such inconsistency exists in his depiction of the ‘great pop-intellectual myths’, such as is found in his discussion of literary production and its links to substance addiction, and in his recollection of his mother’s comment concerning writers and their garrets overlooking the Seine. In one sense King is clearly tackling the

‘typing’ of literary authors by undermining the correlations dependent upon that stereotyping, and by affiliating himself, as an immensely popular novelist, with both alcoholism and Parisian garrets. In another sense, through this affiliation, King is capitalising on the entrenchment of this stereotyping by illustrating the qualities that he possesses which are compatible with those ‘great pop-intellectual myths of our time’. This simultaneous endorsement and subversion of the stereotyping of literary writers results, I would suggest, from a lack of conscious awareness pertaining to his *habitus*: the dispositions which affect his perception of the field of literary production. It reveals the unconscious, internalised system of value judgements which compel him to deny the legitimacy of literary stereotyping, while at the same time supporting its perpetuation. It is through this unacknowledged conflict that it becomes possible to discern a dual strategy for acquiring greater amounts of symbolic capital. By denying legitimacy to the deeply embedded cultural stereotype of the serious author there exists an intention, which may or may not be consciously held, to invalidate the structure which dictates the distribution of symbolic capital. By supporting its perpetuation, however, King betrays a latent desire to ascend the traditional hierarchy and attain symbolic capital as an author who has come to be considered as serious and as ‘literary’ an author as those already consecrated and integrated into the contemporary literary canon.

The conflicting desire to endorse or to subvert the distribution structure of symbolic capital is not unique to *On Writing*; a similar tension can be discerned in his ‘Afterword’ to his 1982 collection of novellas, *Different Seasons*. As I indicated earlier, in this accompanying essay, King re-inscribes his experience of becoming typed as a horror writer through his early career decisions relating to his publication

strategy. In considering the advantages and disadvantages to this typing, King states:

I could, for example, be an ‘important’ writer like Joseph Heller and publish a novel every seven year or so, or a ‘brilliant’ writer like John Gardner and write obscure books for bright academics who eat macrobiotic foods and drive old Saabs with faded but still legible GENE McCARTHY FOR PRESIDENT stickers on the rear bumpers (DS, p. 554).

By placing the words ‘important’ and ‘brilliant’ in quotation marks, King attributes these descriptions of Joseph Heller and John Gardner to an undefined other: a critic capable of bestowing symbolic capital and whose opinions become accepted as valid and durable. King is also seen here perpetuating those ‘pop-intellectual myths’ through his correlation of importance with limited literary production, brilliance with obscurity, and also through his stereotypical description of an academic. However, this afterword is also the point at which King highlights the difficulties of writing within and outwith the genre with which his name is synonymous,⁷ through his lament concerning the publication of the long short story form. He claims that ‘artistically speaking, there’s nothing wrong at all with the novella. Of course, there’s nothing wrong with circus freaks, either, except that you rarely see them outside of the circus. The point is that there are great novellas, but they traditionally only sell to the “genre markets”’ (DS, p. 556). Genre markets - a term King considers to be ‘the polite term; the impolite but more accurate one is “ghetto market”’ (DS, p. 556) - have traditionally been one of the primary markets for the novella. However, as King elucidates, there is no such market for the

⁷ In assessing King’s success, Stefan Kanfer, in the October 6, 1986 issue of *Time* magazine that featured an illustrated cover of a terrified reader engrossed in a Stephen King novel, claims that *It*, at ‘3lbs. 7 1/2oz... would seem the right heft for a doorstop and the wrong one for a bestseller. But King has become a brand name himself, and his publishers ordered a supernatural first printing of 800,000 copies – and then demanded five additional printings, for a current total of 1,025,000 copies’ (Kanfer, 1986). Kanfer proposes that when ‘an author receives that kind of recognition, two factors are at work: his skills and the vitality of his genre... the frightful theme is what continues to make him the most successful horror writer in history’ (Kanfer, 1986).

‘mainstream’ (DS, p. 556) novella, or ‘ordinary stories’ (DS, p. 559) as King describes the novella collection to his editor.

In writing novellas that do not belong to the horror genre, the genre in which he became so successful, King has strayed into a type of literary production which does not typically yield large amounts of economic capital due to its distinct lack of ‘marketability’ (DS, p. 556). As King confesses, ‘I found myself in a puzzling position. I had gotten to a place with my novels where people were saying King could publish his laundry list if he wanted to... but I couldn’t publish these tales because they were too long to be short and too short to be really long’ (DS, p. 558). King makes it clear that despite the economic success that he has achieved through his literary production of horror novels, he also belongs to that type of writer who struggles to find publication for their texts because of their inherent lack of marketability. King also states a belief in his own literary deficiencies by contrasting this distancing from the genre markets and popular literary production. He admits:

There are still magazines that publish long fiction – *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker* are two which have been particularly sympathetic to the publication problems of a writer who has delivered... a 30,000-word novella. But neither of these magazines has been particularly receptive to my stuff, which is fairly plain, not very literary, and sometimes (although it hurts like hell to admit it) downright clumsy (DS, p. 557).

King, in articulating the difficulties he has encountered during the publication process of the novellas collected in *Different Seasons*, has revealed an incompatibility between the form of the long short story and his own reputation as a popular author; the length of the form coupled with its ‘ordinary’ subject matter lacks economic viability and King’s reputation as a producer of ‘the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and a large fries from McDonald’s’ (DS, p. 557) precludes

their inclusion in critically respected publications such as *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*. King's success within the horror genre has placed limitations upon his literary production as he is excluded from publications of serious literature because of it, and when he attempts to deviate from the genre, he claims he is unable to find publication. King's remedy is to negotiate with his editor to publish his collection of 'mainstream' novellas followed up by a novel in which he is true to form: *Christine* (1983).

Commercial vs. Folk Cultural Production

I started out as a storyteller; along the way I became an economic force, as well
(King, 1985b, p. 1).

As I stated in the introduction, the conflicts within the field of literary production are not limited to those between the autonomous and heteronomous principles of producing literature; there are also conflicts inherent within the production of literature at both ends of the spectrum. In this section, I turn to focus on one of these internal struggles: that which exists between commercial and folk cultural production. For my purposes here, I am working with the definition of folk culture as 'a communal art rooted in daily experience, a product of *gemeinschaft* in which the distinction between audience and performer is imprecise' (Biggsby, 1976, p. 18) as opposed to popular culture as 'an entertainment, a product of *gesellschaft*, in which that distinction becomes vital' (Biggsby, 1976, p. 18). It is a struggle in which King has participated for many years, and which has encouraged his employment of a variety of media throughout his career. Before proceeding to explore King's experimentation with the tangible forms of the text and its correlation to the folk/commercial dialectic, I would first like to turn to the intangible: the words upon

the page. This is, inevitably, discussed comprehensively in *On Writing*, and it is through King's metaphorical rendering of the writing process that he most closely aligns his own literary production with folk cultural production rather than mass culture. The first indication that this is a key objective for King in the writing of his book 'about the language' is its subtitle: 'A Memoir of the Craft'. King frequently returns to this use of the word 'craft' to describe the process of writing, the practice of which he proposes to teach in *On Writing*, and the metaphors he employs in order to convey a perception of that process as akin to the manual production of folk art than to the global mass market industry.

One such metaphor is that of carpentry, which he employs extensively throughout the section entitled, 'Toolbox', in which he delivers some of the basics of style and grammar. He begins by recalling his grandfather, Fazza, and uncle's profession of carpentry and the large handmade toolbox which contained all the necessary tools. After accompanying his uncle to a job one day, King enquired 'why he'd lugged Fazza's toolbox all the way around the house, if all he'd needed was... one screwdriver' (OW, p. 124). His uncle responds, 'I didn't know what else I might find to do once I got out here, did I? It's best to have your tools with you. If you don't, you're apt to find something you didn't expect and get discouraged' (OW, p. 125). King uses this anecdote 'to suggest that to write to your best abilities, it behooves you to construct your own toolbox and then build up enough muscle so you can carry it with you' (OW, p. 125). He maintains this metaphor throughout the section describing each of the writing basics as tools for constructing narrative. He states, 'You'll find you have most of the tools you need already, but I advise you to look at each one again as you load it into your box. Try to see each one new,

remind yourself of its function, and if some are rusty...clean them off' (OW, p. 125). This process of re-familiarising oneself with the 'nuts and bolts' of the writing process, he reiterates, is 'mostly a matter of cleaning the rust off the drillbits and sharpening the blade of your saw' (OW, p. 132).

According to this pairing of literary production and manual construction, writing, as King represents it here, is not 'art for art's sake' and it is not art mechanically reproduced for the masses; instead, it is portrayed as a 'craft': a skilful endeavour more suited to cottage industry than global, mass production. King states that carpenters

build houses, stores, and banks. They build some of wood a plank at a time and some of brick a brick at a time. You will build a paragraph at a time, constructing these of your vocabulary and your knowledge of grammar and basic style. As long as you stay level-on-the-level and shave even every door, you can build whatever you like – whole mansions, if you have the energy (OW, pp. 153-154).

At no point during this metaphorical representation is the writing process portrayed as a commercial endeavour. There is no mention of real estate agents, payment for services rendered, legal contracts for the construction work; there is an absence of any mention of exchange value. The labour employed to complete the finished product (the written text, the constructed house) is articulated in terms of use value: that which, as Baudrillard expounds, 'is never truly inscribed in the field of the market economy' (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 130). Baudrillard qualifies this statement by claiming that, within use-value 'is contained...the promise of a resurgence beyond the market economy, money and exchange value, in the glorious autonomy of the simple relation of people to their work and their products' (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 130). This is not the autonomy present in the production of art for art's sake, but rather autonomy unconnected with the processes of exchange whether for economic

or symbolic forms of capital. It is an autonomous relationship between the worker, their work and their own immediate needs. In this sense, King is once again distancing himself from the commercial venture of writing for economic profit, as well as undermining the principles for the distribution of symbolic capital.

A second metaphor which King employs in *On Writing* is that of the practice of palaeontology; he equates the excavation of fossils to the act of creating fiction. He claims:

Stories aren't souvenir tee-shirts or GameBoys. Stories are relics, part of an undiscovered pre-existing world. The writer's job is to use the tools in his or her toolbox to get as much of each one out of the ground intact as possible. Sometimes the fossil you uncover is small; a seashell. Sometimes it's enormous, a *Tyrannosaurus Rex* with all those gigantic ribs and grinning teeth. Either way, short story or thousand-page whopper of a novel, the techniques of excavation remain basically the same (OW, pp. 188-189).

Once again, King can be seen here differentiating the labour expelled in the process of writing fiction from that in producing commodities such as 'souvenir tee-shirts' and 'GameBoys,' both of which exist as examples of commodity fetishism: 'not a function of the commodity defined *simultaneously* as exchange value and use value, but of exchange value alone' (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 130). Also yet again, he is encouraging the perception of the employment of grammar and style as tools to be utilised, thus reinforcing the connection between the mental labour of writing to the manual labour of construction and excavation. However, the metaphor also illuminates another facet of King's portrayed perception of his own literary production as production which is 'a spontaneous, autochthonous expression' (Macdonald, 1994, p. 30) as opposed to one which 'is imposed from above' (Macdonald, 1994, p. 30). It is through this proposed affiliation of his writing with

autochthony that King attempts to differentiate his own production from that of commercial, mass culture and from elite, high culture.

It is this differentiation which is also present in his experimentation with a variety of different media from e-publishing to limited editions. His experimentation with the latter has been the most contentious among his many fans, leading to his defence issued in *Castle Rock*: a fan newsletter for news of King and his literary production. The defence entitled 'The Politics of Limited Editions' (1985) was so lengthy that it was printed in two separate parts over consecutive months, and it strongly indicated King's dissatisfaction with the perception of his role as literary producer as one who produces commercial fiction for the masses. In 'The Politics of Limiteds – Part II,' King begins:

I started out as a writer and nothing more. I became a popular writer and have discovered that, in the scale-model landscape of the book business, at least, I have grown into a Bestsellersaurus Rex – a big, stumbling book-beast that is loved when it shits money and hated when it tramples houses (King, 1985b, p. 1).

Evidently, King resents the commercial influence his role as a popular literary producer has afforded him. The pressures placed upon him by his publishers, who believed he risked 'over-exposure in the marketplace' (King, 1985a, p. 3), and by booksellers, who asserted his 'economic responsibility' to publish in a widely accessible format, are cited as both the reason for his publication of the limited edition and for his publication of a defense pertaining to his right to continue publishing in this form.

However, also inscribed in this defence is his contention that he is engaged in a cottage industry when he actively participates in the production of limited editions.⁸

He describes the production of *Eyes of the Dragon* (1984) thus:

It was designed by Michael Alpert of Bangor, a fine poet and an inspired, deeply dedicated maker of books. A transplanted West Virginian named Kenneth Linkhauser has done a number of lovely pen-and-ink illustrations... My sister-in-law designed the ad copy, which will run in three fantasy/science fiction orientated magazines... and did the layouts. The printing will be done by Stineour Press, in Vermont. In other words, cottage industry from beginning to end (King, 1985a, p. 4).

King claims that by involving himself in the production of a book such as this, in which a number of named individuals collaborate to produce the final article, he is part of a collective producing a book which is not aimed at economic profit. He states that to ‘issue such a book, of course, is one of the few ways I have left of saying I am not entirely for sale – that I’m still in this business for the joy of it, and that I have not been entirely subsumed by the commercial juggernaut I have cheerfully fuelled up and set in motion’ (King, 1985b, p. 5). This ‘commercial juggernaut’ is strikingly similar to Bill Denbrough’s ‘vast dead bulldozer,’ and it demands that the mass, industrial production of his commercial fiction be differentiated from his limited editions: his cottage work.

The sentiment that he has retained a measure of authenticity regarding his literary production is reiterated during his explanation of his involvement in the e-publication of his short story, ‘Riding the Bullet’ (2000). He claims that writing short fiction is ‘the way I affirm, at least to myself, the fact that I haven’t sold out, no matter what the more unkind critics may think’ (EE, p. xvi), and that he believes

⁸ For further reading on the publication of limited editions as a reaction against mass-market publishing during the 1920s’ vogue for fine books see Megan L. Benton’s *Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in America* (2000).

short stories to be ‘piecework, the equivalent of those one-of-a-kind items you can buy in an artisan’s shop’ (EE, p. xvi). He is careful to stress though that

there’s no reason for stories to be *marketed* by the same old just-like-Father-did-it methods, simply because the stories themselves are created that way, nor is there any reason to assume (as so many stodgies in the critical press seem to have done) that the way in which a piece of fiction is sold must in some way contaminate or cheapen the product itself (EE, p. xvi).

With King’s emphasis on short fiction’s roots in traditional craftsmanship, the method of marketing and distributing literature through an electronic medium at first appears unorthodox and even anachronistic. However, even this seemingly ill-matched coupling of the traditional and contemporary is reconciled through King’s insistence in distancing himself from the mass market.⁹ He confesses to taking ‘an amateur’s slightly crazed pleasure in the business side of what I do. I like to goof widdit, do a little media cross-pollination and envelope-pushing’ (EE, p. xi). By defining his interest in ‘the business side’ as that which belongs to an amateur, his ‘cross-pollination and envelope-pushing’ become a way for King to continue ‘trying to see the act, art, and craft of writing in different ways, thereby refreshing the process and keeping the resulting artefacts – the stories, in other words – as bright as possible’ (EE, p. xi). He rejects the notion that it is ‘about making more money’ or ‘about creating new markets’ (EE, p. xi), preferring to entertain the possibility that ‘a fresh perspective on one aspect of creative writing – the commercial aspect – can sometimes refresh the whole’ (EE, p. xvi).¹⁰

⁹ This is evident in his lament articulated in his article ‘Son of Best Seller Stalks the Moors’ (1993) for *The New York Times* in which he condemns the ‘book business, which hardly used to be a business at all’ for searching ‘for The Next Big Thing with a zeal once found only in the movie business’ (King, 1993). He notes that the ‘gentleman’s profession of book publishing has become the corporate game called the book biz’ (King, 1993) and that the success of book sequels, a practice which aims to capitalise on the source texts’ initial economic success, causes him to ‘feel a little bit sick to my stomach’ (King, 1993).

¹⁰ King’s attempt to ‘refresh the whole’ is also present in his publication of the serial novel *The Green Mile* (1996) in six parts during 1996, the medium of which, he claims, ‘certainly energized the writing of the story’ (GM, p. xiii) while harkening back to ‘the nineteenth-century manner’ (GM, p.

King chose to repeat his e-publishing experiment on a larger scale and without his publisher's backing when he embarked upon his new serial novel, *The Plant* (2000). This conscious attempt to cut out the middleman attracted intense media speculation which King attempted to contrast with his original intention. He claims that there is 'a profound crevasse of misunderstanding between the smart guys of the business world and the talented goofballs who make entertainment in this increasingly entertainment-hungry society' (King, 2000). His assessment of the media's interest and their portrayal of the book's success, or lack thereof, was included in an article written for *Time*, 'How I Got That Story' (2000). He states:

Publishers, investors and media watchers see a venture like *The Plant* and say, 'Ah, King is moving into e-commerce!' in the tones of 1940s newscasters relaying the news that Hitler is moving east. King in the meantime, is thinking something along the lines of, 'Hey guys! My uncle's got a barn! Let's put on a show!' It's a goofy thing, in other words. Not a business thing at all. Which, may I add, isn't the same thing as saying there's no money in it. Or cultural clout (King, 2000).

Here, King is deliberately portraying himself as a business naïf who remains blissfully ignorant of the machinations of the global entertainment industry, as opposed to the savvy businessman capable of orchestrating strategies for world domination that, he proposes, the 'publishers, investors and media watchers' perceive him to be.

xiii) of book publication. However, *The Green Mile* is also a significant publication because of its commercial success encouraging cultural commentators to state that:

The Green Mile has become a publishing sensation, with each of the first five installments having shipped more than 3,000,000 copies, and four of the five currently occupying positions on *The New York Times* paperback bestseller list, which all but guarantees that the sixth and concluding installment, in stores this week, will also be a hit. It's a nifty trick: at \$2.99 a pop for each roughly 90-page paperback book, and \$1 more for the half-again-as-long conclusion, readers of the complete *Green Mile* will have shelled out a total of \$18.94 for what would have cost around \$6.99 if it had been a normal, one-volume, mass-market paperback (Handy, 1996).

The commercial success of this venture was rewarded with a Blue Ribbon, making it the 'only book campaign noted by *Advertising Age* in its annual feature on the 100 most outstanding marketing campaigns of 1996 (in a field that features very visible campaigns for Starbucks, Energizer batteries, Coca Cola, *The X-Files*)' (Maryles, 1997).

It is a perception he has claimed to be battling throughout his career as a bestselling novelist, despite his many attempts to emphasise his affinity with folk culture through his cottage industry production of small-scale literary products. Regardless of his participation in restricted publication or internet publication, invariably the reviewers deem his choice of form a business decision rather than one based upon maintaining ‘a fresh perspective on one aspect of creative writing’. When he allowed his short story, ‘My Pretty Pony’ (1989) to be designed by the artist Barbara Kruger and published by the Whitney Museum of American Art, the result was, in King’s opinion, ‘over-priced’ and ‘over-designed’ (ND, p. 827): over-designed, as the form took precedence over the content, and over-priced, as the pre-publication price was set at \$1,800 and rose to \$2,500 post-publication. The story became almost an irrelevancy as attention was focussed on the price and the design instead of on the narrative. This situation was repeated with the publication of ‘Riding the Bullet’. King complains in the introduction to *Everything’s Eventual* (2002) of being ‘*mobbed* in the airport lounges’ (EE, p. xviii) by ‘handsomely suited, briefcase-toting fellows’ (EE, p. xvii), and that publications, such as *The New York Times*, ‘pontificated at some length over the perceived success of ‘Riding the Bullet’’ (EE, p. xviii). What King found difficult to come to terms with was not that he had ‘inadvertently become a mogul,’ (EE, p. xviii) but that ‘nobody cared about the story’ (EE, xviii). He was forced to acknowledge that ‘all those readers might have been a lot more interested in the novelty of the electronic package than they were in what was inside the package’ (EE, p. xix). With *The Plant*, King experienced the same interest in the ‘electronic package’ with scant regard for the story within the package. As he bemoaned, ‘In the modest hoopla that has

surrounded the publication of *The Plant*, very few media analysts bothered to talk about the story itself (possibly because they didn't bother to read it)' (King, 2000). Despite his best efforts to align himself with the principles of folk cultural production, his economic success as a popular writer has blinded the other participants operating within the field of literary production to anything other than the inherent commerciality of his work.

King recently responded to a reader's question on the *Today Show* (2008) regarding which of his author-protagonists was most like him by citing Gordon Lachance from 'The Body' as the closest to reality. In many ways, this is an interesting choice, not least because of the disparity Lachance perceives as existing between the commerciality of his fiction and its roots in oral folk culture. Lachance complains:

Nowadays writing is my work and the pleasure has diminished a little, and more and more often that guilty, masturbatory pleasure has become associated in my head with the coldly clinical images of artificial insemination: I come according to the rules and regs laid down in my publishing contract (DS, pp. 400-401).

His production has become defined by its commerciality and Lachance has been 'entirely subsumed by the commercial juggernaut' (King, 1985b, p. 5) King feared in his 'Politics of Limiteds' article. The business of producing literature has contaminated the writing process for Lachance, resulting in the loss of pleasure he previously felt from the act of creating fiction. He, like King, has evolved into a 'best-selling novelist who is more apt to have his paperback contracts reviewed than his books' (DS, p. 358); one whose literary products receive more attention because of their packaging than the story inside the package. It leads him to question, 'if there really is any point in what I'm doing, or what I'm supposed to make of a

world where a man can get rich playing “let’s pretend” (DS, p. 480). The clinical, mechanisation of the literary production process now predominates, resulting in commercial fiction which gains attention because of its potential to accrue vast amounts of economic capital. King, like Lachance, has failed to establish a level of disinterestedness necessary for the accrument of symbolic capital, which an emphasis on folk cultural production had been contrived to achieve.

King and the Cultural Custodians

To me, it all goes back to this idea held by a lot of people who analyze literature for a living, who say, If we let the rabble in, then they’ll see that anybody can do this, that it’s accessible to anyone. And then what are *we* doing here?
(Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p.87).

When King collected his National Book Award for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2003 much of his speech focussed on the divide between literature perceived as popular and literature perceived as literary. It was a key moment for King and his decision to focus upon this particular grievance represented the culmination of a career-long endeavour to undermine the culturally accepted divide between literature produced according to the heteronomous and autonomous principle.¹¹ As he stated, ‘I believe the time comes when you must be inclusive rather than exclusive’ (King, 2003), and it is this push for inclusion which this section traces from King’s days as a student within the university system, to his time as a university teacher and onwards to his collection of the NBA award. Throughout King’s career as a writer and through his relations with academia, King has attempted to render cultural custodianship obsolete; a claim corroborated by Burton Hatlan, one of the professors who taught King during his undergraduate

¹¹ As a reviewer of *It* observes, ‘King tries to conflate cultural material that teachers, critics, and other squares urge young people to keep distinct’ (Edwards, 1986).

degree at the University of Maine. He confirms that, from ‘the beginning, he set himself a goal of trying to bridge the gap between traditional, serious literature and mass culture. He didn’t want to accept the limitations of either one’ (Davis, 1994, p. 149), and that King’s ‘work really in some ways grows out of a conscious critique of that cultural split itself’ (Davis, 1994, p. 159). Hatlen persists by stating that King ‘calls into question all of the ways in which we have traditionally thought about literature. He calls into question the very reality of the split’ (Davis, 1994, p. 160). However, through the act of questioning the ‘reality of the split’ he simultaneously acknowledges its existence within the structures of the literary field; it informs his *habitus*, thus influencing the development of his dispositions and his perception of the way in which position-takings are effected. He may question the validity of the structures that reinforce the polarity between both high and low, but that questioning simply strengthens their influence in the hierarchisation of the field.

These cross-purposes to undermine and to reinforce these structured and structuring structures are present throughout King’s life and career, and are most clearly apparent in the contradictions present during his discussions of the Academy. This is a typical agonistic response by a literary producer towards those entrusted with the power to consecrate literature, thus confirming recognition of ‘the legitimacy of [the Academy’s] verdicts sufficiently to reproach it for not having recognized them’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124). The agonism is particularly prevalent in King’s employment of the metaphor of the country club for the exclusivity that he perceives to define the culturally consecrated pole of literary production. He has frequently referred to his inability to be perceived as a serious writer in terms of being unable to gain access to an exclusive club. The appropriateness of this

metaphor is supported by Bourdieu who confirms that entering ‘the field of literature is not so much like going into religion as getting into a select club’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 77). In King’s acceptance speech for the NBA, he discusses his past angry rants to his wife concerning the opposition of popular and serious literature. He admits that even ‘a note in the acknowledgments page of a novel thanking the this or that foundation for its generous assistance was enough to set me off. I knew what it meant, I told my wife. It was the Old Boy Network at work’ (King, 2003). In *On Writing*, in a defense of encouraging the production of popular literature, he claims that:

I expect to be accused by some of promoting a brainless and happy Horatio Alger philosophy, defending my own less-than-spotless reputation while I’m at it, and of encouraging people who are ‘just not our sort, old chap’ to apply for membership at the country club (OW, p. 162).

For King, serious literature is always affiliated with unfair exclusivity, and popular fiction with an open church policy.

Those King accuses of perpetuating this exclusivity are the academics that

are liberals in their politics but crustaceans in their chosen fields. Men and women who would take to the streets to protest the exclusion of African-Americans or Native Americans... from the local country club are often the same men and women who tell their classes that writing ability is fixed and immutable; once a hack, always a hack (OW, p. 161).

The stigmatisation that King and his literary production have endured is, he maintains, the result of ‘intellectual snobbery’ (OW, p. 161): an academic approach of suspicion towards popular success which is ‘used as an excuse not to think’ (OW, p. 162). However, it is not only this perception of a rigid hierarchy that causes King to criticise the literary critics; it is also the act of literary criticism itself which, he claims, ‘serves only to reinforce a caste system’ (OW, p. 161) which privileges autonomous over heteronomous literature. King has criticised the practice of

literary criticism elsewhere, most memorably in *Danse Macabre*, in which he made his infamous comparison of the literary critic and the lepidopterist,¹² stating:

those lepidopterists of literature who, when they see a lovely butterfly, feel that they should immediately run into the field with a net, catch it, kill it with a drop of chloroform, and mount it on a white board and put it in a glass case, where it will still be beautiful... and just as dead as horseshit (DM, pp. 300-301).

According to King's articulation of a text's fate at the hands of an academic, the work of a literary critic imposes a rigid fixity which is not only phenomenological in nature, but is essentially taxonomic, thus embedding the text within the hierarchical strata which characterise the literary field.

However, towards the end of the text, there is a longer and more sustained attack on literary criticism, and those that practice it, whom he accuses of not feeling 'comfortable with the comfortably overgrown... literary wilderness until they have built a freeway composed of Cliff's Notes through it' (DM, p. 432) and of not feeling 'totally at ease until each tale, created to hold some reader spellbound... has been neatly dehydrated and poured into a gel capsule to be swallowed' (DM, p. 432). His distinctly unfavourable depiction of the job of the literary critic is compounded when he wishes upon them a variety of afflictions directly appropriated from J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy epic, *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (1954-1955). He inveighs:

That is their job – the job of dissectors, engineers, and pharmacists – and I leave it to them, along with the fervent wish that Shelob may catch them and eat them as they enter the Dark Lord's land, or that the faces in the Marsh of

¹² King may be alluding to the most famous of literary lepidopterists, Vladimir Nabokov. John Updike in his introduction to Nabokov's *Lectures on Literature* (1980) states:

Nabokov took early and lasting delight in the exact sciences, and his blissful hours spent within the luminous hush of microscopic examination carry over into his delicate tracing of the horse theme in *Madame Bovary* or the twinned dreams of Bloom and Dedalus; lepidoptery placed him in a world beyond common sense (Updike, 1980, p. xxv).

the Dead will first hypnotize them and then drive them mad by quoting Cleanth Brooks to them eternally in mud-choked voices, or that the Dark Lord himself will take them up to his Tower forever or cast them into the Cracks of Doom, where crocodiles of living obsidian wait to crunch up their bodies and silence their quacking, droning voices forever (DM, pp. 432-433).

This series of curses directed towards literary critics invites speculation as to the relevance of such a text to the literary production of King and to his perception of the high/low dialectic.

Assistance in ascertaining the importance of *The Lord of the Rings* is found in King's introduction to the revised edition of *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger*, which he begins, 'Hobbits were big when I was nineteen' (TG, p. ix). He states that 'although I read the books in 1966 and 1967, I held off writing. I responded... to the sweep of Tolkein's imagination – to the ambition of his story – but I wanted to write my own kind of story, and had I started then, I would have written his' (TG, p. ix). King's response to his reading of Tolkein's epic is the desire to emulate; however, his emulation, as he contends, had to be 'his own kind of story' and not a replication of *The Lord of the Rings*. Ultimately, the texts arising from this admiration were those which compose his *Dark Tower* series: the narrative of Roland Deschain, spanning seven texts and twenty-six years. Whether or not this series is a successfully original descendant of *The Lord of the Rings* is less relevant to my purposes here than King's perception of the kind of success enjoyed by that particular text. In the same introduction, he claims that:

I think novelists come in two types... Those who are bound for the more literary or 'serious' side of the job examine every possible subject in light of this question: *What would writing this sort of story mean to me?* Those whose destiny... is to include the writing of popular novels are apt to ask a very different one: *What would this sort of writing mean to others?* The 'serious' novelist is looking for answers and keys to the self; the 'popular' novelist is looking for an audience (TG, p. xii).

The ‘story of Frodo,’ King maintains, belongs ‘to the second group’ (TG, pxii); the group of texts which were written by an author ‘looking for an audience’ over and above ‘answers and keys to the self’; a group of texts which turns its reflective gaze outwards rather than directing it in towards the self.

However, King’s rather simplistic rendering of the high/low dialectic ignores the importance of the role the structure of the field of literary production plays. It necessarily informs the writing of all literary products, perpetuating the dispositions of literary producers and in turn, being perpetuated by the dispositions of literary producers. Burton Hatlen, in an interview with Jonathon Davis, discusses King’s perception of the success achieved by *The Lord of the Rings* and how that perception inspired his desire to emulate that text and that success. Hatlen states that, for King,

Tolkein was an important influence. He hasn’t talked very much about Tolkein. But he’s told me *The Stand* was quite consciously based on *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkein managed to be taken seriously by literary scholars and be vastly popular for a period in the 1960s and 1970s, and Tolkein was writing fantasy. So here it became possible once again to look at fantasy as serious real literature (Davis, 1994, p. 149).

So, as Hatlen clarifies, King was motivated by the success of *The Lord of the Rings* which managed to transcend the stigma of commerciality in order to become a text which both appealed to the mass market and still accrued significant symbolic capital through its consecration by the cultural custodians. King, Hatlen contends, was attempting to ‘bridge the gap between traditional, serious literature and mass culture’ (Davis, 1994, p. 149) and that he ‘did it somewhat differently in that he deliberately went after certain genres which had never been really effectively reconciled with the notion of high literature’ (Davis, 1994, p. 149). Tolkien’s

example showed King that it was possible to be a ‘writer of literature and a writer with a mass audience’ (Davis, 1994, p. 156) while producing genre fiction. His adoption of Tolkein as a role model reflects his inherent desire to ‘bridge the gap’ and to encourage a reconsideration of the way value judgements are made pertaining to popular and serious fiction. As Hatlen asserts, ‘We have a massive rethinking of the whole issue of canonicity and canonization; Steve’s work is one of the forces that has initiated this rethinking of that issue’ (Davis, 1994, p. 160).

To return to the text in which the Tolkein hexes are included, *Danse Macabre*, despite containing this litany against literary scholarship, is a text which has its roots in academia. As King divulges in the introduction, the idea to write *Danse Macabre* came from Bill Thompson, King’s former editor at Doubleday. King, who was at that time composing a syllabus for the Themes of Supernatural Literature course that he was due to teach the following semester at the University of Maine, decided that ‘if my series of talks (I don’t quite have balls enough to call them lectures) on the horror-supernatural-gothic field seemed well received – by myself as well as by my students – then perhaps writing a book on the subject would complete the circle’ (DM, p. 12). He proceeds to thank his students of that course, stating that it is an ‘acknowledgement of those one hundred Eh-90 students who listened patiently... as I worked out my ideas. As a result of that class, many of these ideas cannot even be said to be my own, for they were modified during class discussions, challenged, and, in many cases, changed’ (DM, p. 12). The development of the ideas which underpin this work of non-fiction exploring the origins and expression of the horror genre was undertaken by King and his students in an academic setting, thus undermining the anti-academic statements contained

within that same text. His active participation within an academic institution at the time of writing *Danse Macabre*, forces a re-evaluation of his articulations of antipathy towards the university system and its practices, which play such a fundamental role in the consecration of literature. Rather than the emphatic rejection of the Academy that it appears to be at first, when considered within the context of its publication, *Danse Macabre* is actually a complex negotiation of the high/low dialectic: one which requires King to both acknowledge his debt to the Academy, while simultaneously undermining the practices it promotes and the consecratory power it wields.¹³

His teaching of the Themes of Supernatural Literature course was not, however, the first time that he had taught at the University of Maine. As Hatlen recalls, during ‘his senior year, [King] decided that he wanted to teach a course... on popular fiction. He felt that the curriculum of the English department tended to be snobbish, elitist, and oriented toward old stuff’ (Davis, 1994, p. 145). As no-one in the English department was ‘in a position to teach’ (Davis, 1994, p. 145) a course on popular fiction, he developed a proposal for his own course which was accepted by the ‘committee that reviewed proposals for the special seminars’ (Davis, 1994, p. 145). While lecturer Graham Adams was the agreed ‘front person’ for the course, King ‘actually taught the course’ (Davis, 1994, p. 145), leading Hatlen to surmise that ‘that’s still the only time in the history of this university that an undergraduate has actually taught a course’ (Davis, 1994, p. 145). Once again, King has demonstrated his desire to integrate popular, commercial fiction, produced according to the heteronomous principle, within the academic system, thus

¹³ This will be further explored in Chapter 5 in my analysis of *Lisey’s Story*.

acknowledging and engaging with the systems of consecration rather than displaying an interest in subverting them. He states:

I had some running battles with those teachers in college who sneered at the popular fiction I carried around all the time. They'd go around all day with essentially unreadable books like *Waiting for Godot*. I was their court jester. 'Oh, King, he's got some *peculiar* notions about writing,' they'd say (Allen, 1990, p. 96).

However, Hatlen's recollection of King's teaching of a course on popular fiction, and his status as the only undergraduate in the history of the University of Maine to have taught a course, suggest a much more receptive and supportive environment than King has portrayed in the past.

Academic support is now also perceptible towards not only King's 'peculiar notions about writing' but also the fruits of his literary production. King has stated that 'I think now – and I didn't use to think this way – but I think now that we [King and Peter Straub] might actually have a serious place in American literature in a hundred years or so' (Wiater and Anker, 1990, p. 244). More recently, in response to a question concerning whether he still felt excluded by the literary establishment, King stated that, 'It has changed a lot... People who have grown up reading you become part of the literary establishment. They take you as part of the landscape that was there when they came along. In some ways you get a squarer shake' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 100). Certainly, the support is not unequivocal as the opposition to the bestowing of the NBA on King in 2003 shows. Gary Hoppenstand, one of King's leading supporters, has claimed, 'In the past ten years, I have seen more and more academics recognize in King elements of literary quality. Yet, these academics are but a handful when compared to the overall literary establishment that still perceives in King the "penny dreadful" pot-boiler, the hack

writer' (Davis, 1994, p. 168). However, it has to be recognized that this growth in academic interest in King is perhaps more a reflection of the changes in the discipline¹⁴ than in a change of academic perception towards King and his work. King's response to the growing academic interest in his work is to acknowledge it but also to downplay its significance. In *On Writing* he states:

Critics who try to rise above this intellectual hardening of the arteries usually meet with limited success. Their colleagues may accept Chandler into the company of the great, but are apt to seat him at the foot of the table. And there are always those whispers: *Came out of the pulp tradition, you know... carries himself well for one of those, doesn't he?... did you know he wrote for Black Mask in the thirties... yes, regrettable...* (OW, pp. 161-162).

From this response it is clear that King still believes his literary production to be stigmatised because of its commerciality and its roots in popular genre tradition. 'Literary quality' may be recognised by some academics as being present in King's fiction, but he remains a considerable distance from becoming a consecrated author: he is absent from most university curricula on contemporary literature, funding for research into his work is still scarce and the longevity of his literature remains unsure.

Conclusion

Don't bother trying to read between the lines, and don't look for a through-line. There are *no* lines – only snapshots, most out of focus (OW, p. 4).

In the opening pages of *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu states that:

writers' efforts to control the reception of their own works are always partially doomed to failure... if only because the very effect of their work may transform the conditions of its reception and because they would not

¹⁴ For further reading see Thomas Frank's *One Market Under God* (2000) in particular the chapter 'New Consensus for Old: Culture Studies from Left to Right,' the work of Gerald Graff such as *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (1979) and *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (1987) and Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987).

have had to write many things they did write and write them as they did... if they had been granted from the outset what they are granted retrospectively (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 31).

According to Bourdieu, there is a certain blindness for writers concerning their literary production: an obscuring that renders a clear, objective appreciation of their own output impossible. It is an argument qualified by King himself in the third and last foreword to *On Writing*, when he states that, ‘Fiction writers, present company included, don’t understand very much about what they do – not why it works when it’s good, not why it doesn’t when it’s bad’ (OW, p. xiii). Just as King’s description regarding his curriculum vitae portrays ‘a fogged-out landscape from which occasional memories appear like isolated trees’ (OW, p. 3), it also describes his own perception of his career trajectory, his literary production and his position-takings within the field of literary production. The first half of *On Writing* is, after all, ‘not an autobiography’ (OW, p. 4), but a curriculum vitae: a document outlining the shape of one writer’s career. King’s assertion as to the absence of any ‘through-line’ confirms his own inability to perceive a coherent, linear progression throughout his career as an author. Not only does *On Writing* attempt to reposition his literary production by qualifying many of the things he did write and why he wrote them as he did, but it is also a text which suffers from an identical fate: the very effect of his work transformed the conditions of its reception.

Consequently, this chapter does not perform the service of providing a ‘through-line’; rather it is invested in the plotting of a number of positions taken throughout *On Writing* and throughout King’s long and prolific career. The ‘assorted snapshots’ (OW, p. 4) of which King’s narrative in *On Writing* is composed also represent the structure of this chapter with its individual sections focusing upon four

distinct, but interconnecting, factors affecting dispositions: the struggles between and within autonomous and heteronomous production as delineated by the art/money dialectic, the problems inherent in the writing of genre fiction, the distinction between commercial and folk cultural production and the cultural consecration of literary production. By plotting these positions the structure of the field is revealed to be dynamic and evolving: one which is not only capable of structuring the dispositions held by its participants, but one which is simultaneously structured by them. It is precisely because of its dynamism and its continual evolution that the participants within the field produce from a position of ignorance as to the reception of their own work. *Habitus* is often described as a feel for the game, but it does not, however, provide insight as to the identities of the ultimate winners and losers of that game. The very nature of the field prevents this contemporaneous knowledge, and it is only with the benefit of hindsight that conclusions may be drawn. King, as evidenced by his difficulty to discern an overall strategy within his own literary production, is still struggling to fully ascertain his own literary legacy. As he admits to Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, 'It's a crapshoot. You never know who's going to be popular in fifty years. Who is going to be in, in a literary sense, and who's not' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 75).

Chapter 2 – The Shining

Introduction

With *The Shining* I have more problems. I have my days when I think that I gave Kubrick a live grenade which he heroically threw his body on (King, 1990, p. 36).

During an interview with Eric Norden for *Playboy* in 1983, King confessed that, while he admired Brian De Palma's version of *Carrie* (1976), Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining* left him feeling 'profoundly ambivalent' (Norden, 1990, p.47). Twenty three years later, during his interview with Lehmann-Haupt for *The Paris Review*, the subject of Kubrick's version was raised again, and he admitted that it is 'certainly beautiful to look at: gorgeous sets, all those Steadicam shots. I used to call it a Cadillac with no engine in it. You can't do anything with it except admire it as sculpture' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 79). King's deep-seated ambivalence towards Kubrick's cinematic reinterpretation of one of the key texts in King's canon is partly founded in the alteration the filmmaker made to the narrative, Kubrick's choice of actors and, as King perceives it, his misunderstanding of the horror genre. However, I argue that it is also informed by an anxiety pertaining to the critical acclaim enjoyed by the film but not by the book, an anxiety reinforced by the many reviews of Kubrick's version which emphasised film and director's cultural and artistic superiority to the source text and its author. Janet Maslin in *The New York Times* review (1980), for example, praised Kubrick and his collaborator, Diane Johnson, for 'their shrewd and economical screenplay' (Maslin, 1980) claiming that King's original narrative was 'changed and improved considerably' by their 'alterations' (Maslin, 1980). Pauline Kael, reviewing for *The New Yorker Magazine* (1980), was even more scathing in her assessment of King's novel,

stating that Kubrick uses ‘Stephen King’s hokum to make a metaphysical statement about immortality’ (Kael, 1980).¹

However, it was not only the film critics who condemned King’s novel as no more than ‘hokum’ while elevating Kubrick’s work on *The Shining*; Kubrick himself distanced his film from its origins, dismissing the novel as ‘by no means a serious literary work’ (Ciment, 1984, p. 181). Indeed the process of writing the screenplay involved an attempt to render the film more ‘serious,’ as is borne out by Kubrick’s choice of the novelist and academic Diane Johnson as collaborator on the text.

Kubrick describes Johnson thus:

Diane is an American novelist who has published a number of extremely good novels which have received serious and important attention. I was interested in several of her books and in talking to her about them I was surprised to learn that she was giving a course at the University of California at Berkeley on the Gothic novel. When *The Shining* came up she seemed to be the ideal collaborator (Ciment, 1984, p. 185).

Johnson brought with her a measure of cultural ‘consecration,’ with her participation in academia and her novels receiving serious ‘attention’, which was important for Kubrick in his efforts to adapt King’s novel: a consecration King recognises, recalling that she ‘writes reviews for *The New York Times Book Review* sometimes; she had one not too long ago on a book of letters by or about William Butler Yeats. Quite a smart lady’ (Stewart, 1990, p. 175). Despite this, however, King claims that neither Kubrick nor Johnson ‘had any background in the field’ (Modderno, 1990, p. 197) of horror, and that this ‘basic ignorance of the field [causes] a lead-up to a big bang that isn’t a big bang. It’s sort of a dud firecracker’ (Modderno, 1990, p. 197). Kubrick and Johnson have produced a screenplay which

¹ Derogatory remarks such as these led King to state, perhaps in an effort to divest them of their authority, that ‘film critics tend to be the nouveau riche establishment of American letters... and, like nouveaux riches people everywhere, they know that secretly they are being laughed at, or they are inferior’ (Kilgore, 1990, p. 154).

acts as a ‘critique of the horror genre’ (Bergstrom, 2000): a collaborative enterprise dependent upon a dispassionate approach towards the material. This practice is indicative of the reflexivity Kubrick brings to all his films which engage in generic convention; his ‘freedom to reinvent the various generic conventions... at one with his distance from all of them, and with their own historic obsolescence in the new world of television, wide screen, and the blockbuster film’ (Jameson, 1981, p. 119).

Kubrick attempts to establish cultural legitimacy for his project capitalising upon Johnson’s intellectual achievements, his reflexive approach to genre, and upon maintaining a derisive tone when discussing King’s original. One such example of Kubrick’s derision arrives during a discussion on the adaptation process, in which he claimed:

It is in the pruning down phase that the undoing of great novels usually occurs because so much of what is good about them has to do with the fineness of the writing, the insight of the author and often the density of the story. But *The Shining* was a different matter. Its virtues lay almost entirely in the plot, and it didn’t prove to be very much of a problem to adapt it into the screenplay form (Ciment, 1984, p. 185).

Kubrick suggests here that the original did not contain ‘fineness of writing’, authorial insight or ‘density of... story’, and was therefore a straightforward text upon which to leave his own directorial mark. However, as Kian Bergstrom points out, Kubrick’s choice of novel was more than just a question of adaptational convenience:

Starting with *The Shining*, his films would become increasingly concerned with the differences between ‘popular’ taste and ‘high culture,’ between sensationalism and intellectualism, internalizing this dialectic within the themes and actions of the works, even as Kubrick wrestled with it externally, in terms of marketing, casting, and choice of material (Bergstrom, 2000).

This dialectic that Kubrick was exploring in his work and struggling with as a cultural producer, at ‘the beginning of his increasing interest in definitions and

analyses of popular culture and the end of his definitive standing as a critical darling' (Bergstrom, 2000),² accounts for his decision to adapt a popular novel while simultaneously distancing himself from its bestselling author.

It should not be assumed, however, that the articulation and exploration of this dialectic remains unexplored in the novel only then to become a feature in its cinematic adaptation; the relationship between high and low, popular and serious, economic and symbolic is, I want to suggest, central to the original narrative, and it may have been this which appealed to Kubrick over and above the anticipated ease with which he could adapt it for his own purposes. The anxiety King reveals in his comment about Kubrick's critically revered version, did not stem from the film critics' damning indictment of his novel, but was actually present prior to his production of the text and, indeed, is an integral part of his narrative about the Torrance family's nightmarish incarceration in The Overlook Hotel. Jack Torrance, who is one of King's conspicuously least successful author-protagonists in the struggle to attain symbolic or economic capital,³ demonstrates the prominence of this aspect of the narrative, and it is through him that King dramatises issues

² Bergstrom clarifies:

The Shining stands at a turning point in Stanley Kubrick's career in two important ways. Coming after the monetary failure of *Barry Lyndon*, and being adapted from a Stephen King bestseller, it is clearly an attempt to regain a popular footing... It also marks the beginning of his critical downswing. Following the four Academy Awards, the nominations for Best Picture, Director and Screenplay, that *Barry Lyndon* was honoured with, *The Shining* became the first Kubrick film in 23 years not to be nominated for a single Oscar (Bergstrom, 2000).

³ Jack is perhaps only second to *The Stand's* Harold Lauder, who is described as an aspiring writer who

edited the Ogunquit High School literary magazine and wrote strange short stories that were told in the present tense or with the points of view in the second person, or both. *You come down the delirious corridor and shoulder your way through the splintered door and look at the race-track stars* – that was Harold's style (TSt, p. 310).

His pretentious, self-conscious style indicates the way he wishes others to perceive him, as a writer whose job it is 'to carve with language, to hew close to the bone' (TSt, p. 409), not as one who entertains or provides escape from everyday reality. Just as Jack believes that 'the reason... all great literature, fiction and non-fiction, was written' is so that 'truth comes out' (TS, p. 244), Harold believes that a writer's craft is to 'hew' and 'carve' in order to ascertain universal truths.

pertaining to the hierarchical strata inherent to the structure of the field of literary production, the distribution of capital, both economic and symbolic, and the relationship of literary production to labour, alienated or otherwise. It is a text which directly engages in the art/money dialectic, and as such, it invites us to consider, *pace* Jameson, the role of the cultural producer in the late capitalist era: an invitation duly accepted by Stanley Kubrick.

Controlled, Corrupted and Consumed

In an ‘Evening at the Billerica Library,’ (1983) King confesses, ‘I’ve been drawn back to the idea, again and again, that if you write it, if this is the worst thing that you can think of, and you write it down, then it’ll be all right’ (King, 1990, p. 33). This act of writing down one’s fears is a trope present in many of King’s texts, and is certainly a component within those texts which deal with the figure of the author-protagonist and the trials and tribulations which are manifested as a result of participation within the field of literary production. In *The Shining*, King claims that as he was writing it, he projected himself back into a time when he was

back in that trailer in Hermon, Maine, with no company but the buzzing sound of the snowmobiles and my own fears – fears that my chance to be a writer had come and gone, fears that I had gotten into a teaching job that was completely wrong for me, fears most of all that my marriage was edging onto marshy ground and that there might be quicksand anyplace ahead (King, 1982, p. 36).

However, Jack Torrance’s experience should not solely be viewed as an expression of King’s past fears from a time before he became renowned as a bestselling horror novelist; the narrative of *The Shining* also expresses fears which were plaguing King as he was writing it. He states during a discussion of the popularity of the horror genre (1980), ‘When you’ve got a lot of free-floating anxieties, the horror story or movie helps to sort of conceptualize them, shrink them down to size, make

them concrete so they're manipulable' (Henderson, 1990, p. 260), and, for King, the writing down of these 'free-floating anxieties' allows him to gain control over them, thus removing their potency. As one of his other author-protagonists, Gordon Lachance from 'The Body,' discovers, 'there was a kind of dreadful exhilaration in seeing things that had bothered me for years come out in a new form, *a form over which I had imposed control*' (DS, p. 358).

The Shining is a narrative in which many fears are expressed and consequently manipulated; however, in relation to the focus of this study, the fears most pertinent to King's anxieties concerning the distribution of capital are those fears which pertain to the perils of literary production, of which I shall focus on three: the fear of being controlled, corrupted and consumed.⁴ Each of these fears is inherently linked to King's then newly discovered capacity to accrue vast sums of economic capital and to attract a sizeable readership. They arise from a fear of participating within the field of literary production in a position which reflects that ability to be economically successful,⁵ and which undermines the potential to accumulate

⁴ King also admits to employing the form of the limited edition as a way of managing these fears stating:

It's been a good life in a good world – but it gets noisy. More distressing than the noise is the certainty that too many people are hustling, too many people are hungry, and they would be perfectly willing to dine on anything... including *you*. This sort of cannibalism often attacks the creative impulse before it attacks anything else, and when it does, the result seems to be a kind of spiritual well-poisoning. It becomes a little too easy to push away a good novel idea in favor of a novel idea that looks like a natural to sell 600,000 copies and go to some film company for the proverbial high six-figure advance. One would think that a writer would become less vulnerable to such temptations after he or she had become fairly wealthy, but it's not true – when your wallet is full, success itself has a way of becoming the brass ring you grab for. For me, the limiteds have been a way of coping with that' (King, 1985b, p. 5).

⁵ King's profitable talents are reflected in the promotional material that was written to encourage booksellers to stock *The Shining*. It describes the front cover as 'completely unique and eye-catching' (anon, 1977):

Done on Mylar, *The Shining* features the head of a small boy, with no features visible, only the outline of the head and black hair. The background slowly fades from black to gray to the shiny, reflective stock, creating a cover that is elegant and intriguing... No paperback house has ever done a cover in Mylar. This is a first for the industry (anon, 1977).

symbolic capital. The fear of being controlled by an outside force is one that is particularly prevalent throughout Jack's tortured descent. His narrative is one of possession, powerlessness and the failure to exert one's own will, and the various ways in which this is communicated in the text illustrate the acuteness of this fear. The alienation with which Jack regards manual labour is evident in the incompatibility he perceives as existing between his literary production, or his 'real work' (TS, p. 160), as he terms it, and the prospects he imagines await him away from the Overlook. This alienation with which he regards manual work in the town of Sidewinder and the lack of alienation he experiences in relation to his position as caretaker at the Overlook, exemplifies both a fear of being controlled and the way in which one can be controlled without being consciously aware. He imagines:

The picture of John Torrance, thirty years old, who had once published in *Esquire* and who had harboured dreams – not at all unreasonable dreams, he felt – of becoming a major American writer during the next decade, with a shovel from the Sidewinder Western Auto on his shoulder, ringing doorbells... (TS, p. 294).

The picture changes from Jack shovelling snow for a living, to Jack receiving charity, to Jack 'swamping out Greyhound buses' (TS, p. 295), 'washing cars in a rubber suit' (TS, p. 295), 'washing dishes in a diner' (TS, p. 295) and 'pumping gas' (TS, p. 295). In each of these visions of the future, the disparity between Jack's fantasy 'of becoming a major American writer' and his impoverished reality is clarified, contrasting the way that he views his responsibilities to the Overlook.

The mylar, while creating a cover that was 'unique and eye-catching' was also impractical as it was expensive (9 cents 'right off the top of a book that originally sold for \$6.95') and 'the lettering and picture gradually buff off the book... The mylar was really discontinued not just because it buffed in people's hands, but because it buffed in the boxes when they were shipped' (Stewart, 1990, pp. 180-181). The use of this expensive, yet impractical, material serves as in illustration of the willingness King's publishers expressed to promote him as an author with the potential to attract a lot of buyers. As the promotional letter also reveals, *The Shining* was 'also being backed by a huge radio advertising campaign: \$100,000 dollars worth of sensationally frightening commercials will saturate 15 major markets, thus reaching more than 58 million people!' (anon, 1977) and boasted an 'initial print order for the Signet edition [of] 1,500,000' (anon, 1977).

Jack's perception of the Overlook at the outset is a space in which he could achieve liberation from the economic forces which would affect his literary production. His role of caretaker is, therefore, closely aligned with the maintenance of this space; in other words, it has a self-serving purpose in that the work he is engaged in is a fundamental component in the preservation of his literary aspirations. While replacing the rotten shingles, Jack feels that 'the work itself was soothing (TS, p. 114) and that 'he felt himself healing from the troubled wounds of the last three years' (TS, p. 114) as he works up on the damaged roof. The manual work is having a liberating effect upon Jack's literary output too, as he discovers that 'the roadblock' (TS, p. 114) which was preventing the completion of his play 'disappeared under his fingers as magically as cotton candy dissolves on the lips' (TS, p. 114). The lack of alienation that Jack feels concerning his work at the hotel becomes augmented following his discovery of the Overlook scrapbook in the basement. On finding the scrapbook, Jack embarks upon an investigation into the hotel's history and in doing so becomes possessed by the spirit of the Overlook. This possession occurs during his reading of the scrapbook and it is closely related to 'the gotta,' which will be discussed in depth in the following case study: the structural form of the text eliciting the reader to engage in a meaning-making process in collaboration with the text itself.⁶ In the case of the scrapbook, this

⁶ The gotta is an aspect of King's own writing which is clearly present in *The Shining* as articulated by fans in their letters archived at the University of Maine, in which they illustrate the way in which they feel manipulated by his fiction. Tamara A. Johns writes that many 'times I wanted to toss [*The Shining*] aside, burn it, wipe the imagery from my mind... I could not. I read the complete text in nine, almost non-stop, hours loving every spellbinding page' (Johns, 1978). The language Johns uses suggests a textual invasion that borders on the visceral. She describes the desire to destroy the physical object of the text as though this would somehow provide a cessation of the assault upon her senses. She has become the reader, as described by Wolfgang Iser, who 'passes through the various perspectives offered by the text, and relates the different views and patterns to one another' thereby setting 'the work in motion, and so sets himself in motion, too' (Iser, 2002, p. 291). Linda Neff describes *The Shining* as 'the best book I have ever read. Once I started it, it was impossible to put down. My mind was driven to such heights of suspense and terror that I didn't quite realize until I cried for fifteen minutes with relief after I'd finished it' (Neff, 1978). Once again King's words

structural form takes the shape of a series of newspaper articles excised from their original contexts and re-contextualised alongside each other with the primary aim of constructing the Overlook's historical narrative. The gaps, represented by the white space dividing the isolated scraps of text, emphasise the lack of connecting narrative between these individual stories which consequently demand interpretation. Jack, in his efforts to interpret these gaps is compelled to search for 'the piece of Overlookiana he needed to make the mystic connection that he was sure must be here somewhere' (TS, p. 243).

Although the manner by which Jack comes to be under the control of the Overlook is key to understanding the way in which Jack's alienation to his labour as Overlook caretaker becomes effaced, the narrative the scrapbook conveys is of equal importance, particularly when addressing fears associated with the distribution of capital. The story constructed within the pages of the scrapbook is one of economic success and failure, of transgression and excess, of decadence and greed. Various journalists who have conducted investigations into the happenings of the Overlook and the dealings of those involved in its ownership, record their findings illuminating a litany of corruption and criminal activity. The underlying principle behind all of these illegal operations is the distribution of economic capital. Jack's first discovery amongst the pages of the scrapbook is an invite to the opening of the hotel in 1945. He imagines that he can 'almost see them in the dining room, the

upon the page have 'bridged the gap of inexperienceability of one another's experiences' Iser, 2002, p. 292) thus facilitating the reader to engage with the text. It is through this engagement that King is able to manipulate his reader's emotions and control the reading experience. As Trish Lanphier confirms with her simple statement 'you got me – I'm hooked' (Lanphier, 1978), this engagement with the initial text acts as a 'hook' which attracts readers to King's other works, an attribute he himself admires as demonstrated in his review of Elmore Leonard's *Glitz* as discussed in a previous footnote.

richest men in America and their women. Tuxedos and glimmering starched shirts; evening gowns; the band playing; gleaming high-heeled pumps. The clink of glasses, the jocund pop of champagne corks' (TS, p. 170). This vision of conspicuous consumption⁷ detailed through the style of dress and the drinking of champagne, expresses the enjoyment and display of economic wealth. Upon further investigation, however, Jack finds that underpinning this portrayal is a second narrative, one connected to wealth creation. It is through this second narrative that Jack discovers the inherent corruption in the economic system of which the ownership of the Overlook is integrated. The activities that figures such as Horace Derwent, Vito the Chopper and Charles Grondin appear to be involved in include extortion, gambling, prostitution and other forms of organised crime. The image evoked by the invitation becomes altered as Jack now envisions these men 'reputed to be involved with drugs, vice, robbery, murder... right above him, in those empty rooms. Screwing expensive whores on the third floor, maybe. Drinking magnums of champagne. Making deals that would turn over millions of dollars' (TS, p. 179). The refined decadence Jack first imagined is exposed as a 'false face' (TS, p. 468).

The corruption revealed in the history of the Overlook is intrinsically connected to the accumulation of vast amounts of economic capital, an issue King discussed, in relation to his economic success as a literary producer, in his article 'On Becoming a Brand Name' published in *Fear Itself* (1982). There he confesses a fear of corruptibility, claiming that, in 'writing popular, commercial fiction, there is nothing but danger' (King, 1982, p. 16). He asserts that the 'commercial writer is easy to bribe, easy to subvert, and he knows it' (King, 1982, p. 16) and that he has

⁷ I am using this term as it is described in Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1912) as the 'consumption of luxuries... directed at the comfort of the consumer himself, and is, therefore, a mark of the master' (Veblen, 1994, p. 45).

personally ‘felt this much more strongly in the last two or three years than ever before’ (King, 1982, p. 16). He fears that writing commercial fiction is ‘hazardous to your integrity’ (King, 1982, p. 41) and that it is ‘all too easy to begin producing the literary equivalent of frozen TV dinners’ (King, 1982, p. 41). As with the *poète maudit* discussed in the last section of this case study, there exists a discrepancy between the image and reality. King may claim that the ‘idea that success in itself can hurt a writer is as ridiculous and as elitist as the commonly held belief that a popular book is a bad book’ (King, 1982, p. 42), but he remains unsuccessful in divesting those beliefs of their power to influence the distribution of capital. This fear of corruptibility as represented in *The Shining* is exaggerated in its detailing of criminal activity; however, it does illuminate a fear that there is a link between commercialism and the operations of economic exchange with a corrupting influence with the power to manipulate. The phrase ‘*this inhuman place makes human monsters*’ (TS, p. 156; italics original) is repeated several times throughout the text, referring to the way in which the economic system, as embodied by the structure of the Overlook hotel, has the capability to bring out the worst in those participating in that system, and that through their greed they become easily manipulated. These monstrous humans become incorporated into the system, ‘like microbes trapped in the intestine of a monster’ (TS, p. 232).

Part of King’s fear of becoming a corrupt, commercial writer is related to his perception of literature’s relationship to truth-telling. He frequently references Frank Norris’s response to critic’s question pertaining to his texts’ literary worth, ‘What do I care for your opinion? I never truckled. I told the truth’ (King, 1982, p.

16).⁸ For King, it would appear that literary integrity remains separate from its ability to accrue economic capital. King states that ‘the commercial writer who can tell the truth has achieved a great deal more than any “serious” writer can hope for; he can tell the truth and still keep up with his mortgage payments’ (King, 1982, p. 16). Jack, too, appears to be concerned about the integrity of his literary production, particularly after he is forced to recognise his position within the supplicant/patron relationship. He claims that his book detailing the historical narrative of the Overlook would not be ‘the soft and thoughtful thing he had first considered, but a gem-hard work of research, photo section and all, and he would pull apart the entire Overlook history, nasty, incestuous ownership deals and all. He would spread it all out for the reader like a dissected crayfish’ (TS, p. 209). Approaching this new literary project as though he were an investigative journalist, Jack plans on exposing the corruption which lies at the heart of this hotel in an attempt to realign the image with reality. He states that he ‘would write the hotel’s biography, write it straight from the shoulder... but it would not be written vindictively’ (TS, p. 244). Jack does not view this project as a way of wreaking revenge on those responsible for committing past wrongs against him, rather ‘for the reason he felt that all great literature, fiction and nonfiction, was written: truth comes out, in the end it always comes out’ (TS, p. 244). However, it is even during these moments when Jack believes that he is beginning his project with the intentions of allowing the truth to come out, that he is simultaneously being manipulated for the purposes of the malignant spirit held within the walls of the Overlook hotel.

⁸ It is also present in *On Writing*, p. 222, and again in his NBA acceptance speech.

This fear of corruptibility, however, also feeds into another fear that King returns to frequently: the fear of being consumed by a voracious public appetite for celebrity and an unscrupulous commercialism inherent in the literary production of popular novels. Cannibalism is an activity which King employs as a metaphor for his growing popularity and the cult of celebrity. In an interview with Michael Kilgore for the *Tampa Tribune*, King states that:

The occupational hazard of the successful writer in America is that once you begin to be successful, then you have to avoid being gobbled up. America has developed this sort of cannibalistic cult of celebrity, where first you set the guy up, and then you eat him... I wish to avoid being eaten. I don't want to be anybody's lunch (Kilgore, 1990, pp. 153-154).

As a literary producer who has become conflated with his literary production, this persists as a real fear for King. Becoming subsumed by the commercialism of which the publication his books endorses is one of the hazards he perceives as besetting the popular writer. He complains that his publishers assume that 'if your books sell well you ought to be some kind of celebrity, that that's yours by right, that you must want it' (Henderson, 1990, p. 259). King's celebrity is inextricably connected to the commerciality of his fiction; by 'writing books that are accessible and popular' (Henderson, 1990, p. 259) he has, unwittingly or otherwise, become a public figure intimately identified with the genre of fiction he is famous for producing. The metaphor of cannibalism for this type of fame which hinges upon his own commerciality as a literary producer also stems from his fears of becoming a brand name. For example, in 'On Becoming A Brand Name' he compares himself to foodstuffs such as Hellman's mayonnaise (King, 1982, p. 39) and Green Giant sweetcorn (King, 1982, p. 15), thus correlating the marketing of himself to that of edible products: the brand synonymous with the product.

These fears expressed through the cannibalism metaphor were already a feature for King as he wrote *The Shining*, as signalled by the repeated mention of cannibalism throughout the text. Wendy in particular mentions the Donner Party⁹ many times both prior to their arrival at the Overlook and after. She recalls as they make the car journey through the mountains on their way to their home for the season, that ‘the Donner Party had become snowbound and had resorted to cannibalism to stay alive’ (TS, p. 66), causing her to enquire if Jack is ‘sure the larder is fully stocked?’ (TS, p. 67). Even when looking around the well-stocked food supplies in the hotel kitchen, ‘the Donner Party kept recurring to her’ (TS, p. 79), and when touring the hotel with Ullman she imagines that they might get stuck in the elevator ‘between floors like flies in a bottle and found in the spring... with little bits and pieces gone... like the Donner Party’ (TS, p. 99). Wendy’s obsessive returns to the fate of the Donner Party betray her fear of the cannibalistic act: not only that she would be eaten but that she would be driven to partake in the eating. Jack recognises that this fear exists for Wendy and that it inhibits her movements around the hotel. When travelling in the elevator by himself, Jack recalls that Wendy ‘had a true claustrophobe’s horror of the elevator’ (TS, p. 275) and that she ‘envisioned the three of them trapped in it between floors while the winter storms raged outside, she could see them growing thinner and weaker, starving to death. Or perhaps dining on each other, the way those Rugby players had’ (TS, p. 275). Jack discounts her fear by making jokes about cannibalism and by stating that, ‘Nothing in the Overlook frightened him. He felt that he and it were *simpático*’ (TS, p. 275).

⁹ The Donner Party were a group of people migrating westwards across the Sierra Nevada in 1846. Beset by poor weather conditions, half of the party died of starvation, causing the others to turn to cannibalism in order to survive. For further reading see Patrick Breem’s *Diary* (1846-1847) and Eliza P. Houghton’s *The Expedition of the Donner Party and Its Tragic Fate* (1911).

Jack's disregard for the fear of cannibalism relates to the fact that in many ways he has already been consumed. As a family, the Torrances are described as being 'like microbes trapped in the intestine of a monster' as they go 'about their early evening routine' (TS, p. 232) in the Overlook, thus implying that the hotel has swallowed them up. Jack, however, appears to be consumed by the Overlook: a fact which is most apparent during his murderous pursuit of his wife and son. Wendy recognises that 'Jack wasn't out there anymore. She was hearing the lunatic, raving voice of the Overlook itself' (TS, p. 456), while Danny perceives that the hotel's force 'was hiding behind Daddy's face, it was imitating Daddy's voice, it was wearing Daddy's clothes' (TS, p. 466). Jack does not fear cannibalism as he has already been cannibalised by the malevolent force of the hotel. Not in the physical sense that Wendy fears, but in the sense that he has become consumed by the capitalist structure that the hotel represents. The possession of Jack is achieved through the hotel's consumption of him, his labour and his product. As a worker within the hotel hierarchy he has become integrated within the fabric of the structure and in so doing, he loses the sense of autonomy that his participation within literary production depends upon. The fears of economic success that King has exhibited throughout his many interviews that he would become controlled, corrupted and cannibalised become expressed through this narrative of a literary producer condemned to failure. It may seem ironic that the figure who acts as a focus for these fears of economic success is one of King's least economically successful author-protagonists, but the reasons for this are two-fold: in the first instance, as I have stressed previously, *habitus* subsists at both a conscious and an unconscious level and as such it is simultaneously expressed directly, as in the interviews, and indirectly, as in his fictional representations of authorship. Secondly, by employing

Jack as the locus of these fears he further illustrates his intention to undermine the separation between the production of serious literature and the endeavour to accrue economic capital: an intention articulated in this text which occupies a position in King's career as he was on the cusp of mass market success,¹⁰ in which he further explores through the type of literary production in which Jack is involved, and the way in which this type of literary production permeates the entire narrative.

Staging Literary Anxiety

The Shining played an important role in the confirmation of King's reputation as bestselling horror author. It was the first of his hardback books for Doubleday to make it onto the bestselling lists, if only for a week, and it was coupled with a back-flap description of King as 'the master of the modern horror story'. Bill Thompson warned King, both prior to the publication of *Salem's Lot* and *The Shining* that he risked becoming 'typed' as a horror writer, and King responded that it was a risk he was willing to take if it meant he would be categorised alongside writers like 'M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 89). However, as he claims in the introduction to the 2001 New England Library edition, it was with *The Shining* that he attempted to 'try for something a little more difficult and complex' (TS, p. xiii). While writing the character of Jack Torrance's father, King faced the decision whether 'to make little Jacky's father a flat-out bad guy' (TS, p. xiii) or to render him a more realistic character. He stresses, 'If I had been less well-fixed financially, I might well have opted for choice number one. But my

¹⁰ Evidence that this was the case can be found in a letter from Ray Hellen, a National Sales Manager who wrote to King in early 1978 requesting that King 'write a personal letter to my two Field Managers' (Hellen, 1978) as he felt 'that a personal letter from you will make them get off their "butt" and sell a few more copies' (Hellen, 1978). Whether King complied with this request or not is unknown, however, it serves as an illustration that the encouragement of booksellers in the form of the promotional art and marketing described in a previous footnote, and personal letters was still required as part of a strategy to promote King as a popular author.

first two books, *Carrie* and *'Salem's Lot*, had been successful, and we Kings were doing okay in that regard' (TS, p. xiii). King is at pains to point out twenty-four years after its first publication that *The Shining* is the text in which he moved away from the easy option of writing characters that neatly conformed to the generic conventions of popular horror (which he claims, 'I could do in my sleep' (TS, p. xiii)) to a more realistic portrait. This is a text which was written as King was enjoying a modicum of financial success: enough to risk stretching his literary talent, as he claims twenty four years later, but not enough to refuse the selling of the film rights to *The Shining* to Warner Brothers.

As the third book published by King, *The Shining* is a text which has to perform on multiple levels; it must earn economic capital, as King was not yet at the stage when financial remuneration became just 'how you keep score' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 94), and it had to generate a degree of critical acclaim at a time when his reputation remained relatively unfixed. As Burton Hatlen claims in his interview with Jonathan Davis, King was labouring under the belief that it was possible to accomplish the dual purpose of attaining serious recognition and mass popularity, à la Tolkein. *The Shining* is the novel in which King interrogates the validity of this belief through the presence of a particular form of literary production: that is, the production of dramatic literature. There are many references to the theatre and King draws extensively upon the lexicon of the theatre throughout the narrative of the trapped Torrances. For example, Watson, the hotel's janitor is said to have 'soliloquized' (TS, p. 21). Similarly, characters are described as 'a bad actor' (TS, p. 23) or as putting 'on this big act' (TS, p. 24), establishing the first of many references which pepper the entire narrative. I argue that these references and

inferences signify the relevance of theatrical literary production to the text and that by closely connecting his novel to the world of the theatre, King hopes to enjoy the privileged status critically revered playwrights enjoy within the field of literary production. The proliferation of these references is also relevant due to the type of literary production Jack is in the process of writing. Jack's role as playwright highlights his failure as a literary producer, not only through his lack of success in completing the manuscript, but also through the subject matter of the play, which appears to mirror Jack's downfall at Stovington Prep. The combination of both Jack's literary production, and the theatrical infiltrations throughout the text, signal the importance of the theatre in a text concerned with the distribution of economic and symbolic capital.

The presence of theatrical literary production runs throughout the narrative involving all characters; Wendy is said to feel 'like an outsider, a bit player who had accidentally wandered back onstage while the main action was taking place' (TS, p. 97); Danny watches the snow 'curtaining them off from the world' (TS, p. 371) as though The Overlook were the stage and the play was currently between acts. However, the character who is most expressive of the theme of theatrical production is Jack. He is the one who perceives much of the action as though it were occurring within a dramatic performance. Accordingly he believes that Danny's reaction to his experience in Room 217 is 'a piece of play-acting put on to escape his punishment' (TS, p. 285) and that Wendy, 'instead of being satisfied with the passive *role* of having wrecked one career and crippled another, had opted for the poisonously active task of trying to destroy his last and best chance' (TS, p. 422; my italics). He casts his family members in roles in the drama unfolding within the

snowbound hotel, thus creating a juxtaposition between image and reality; however, unlike Danny who with his extraordinary ability to perceive the truth behind the image, as illustrated towards the end of their incarceration in *The Overlook*, Jack is condemned to confusion. Jack's confusion extends to his own actions too, as he perceives himself also as an actor within the dramatic performance of his own domestic tragedy. For example, when the three members of the family meet in the bar after Danny has been attacked by the woman in Room 217, it is said that the 'three of them made a tableau that Jack felt very strongly: it was just before the curtain of Act II in some old time temperance play, one so poorly mounted that the prop man had forgotten to stock the shelves of the Den of Iniquity' (TS, p. 265). The connections between the events within the hotel to a performed narrative upon the stage, and the members of the Torrance family to the actors enacting that performance, are reiterated throughout the text, focalised through the author-protagonist; they find expression through Jack's perception as an aspiring playwright.

It is through his role as playwright that the theme of dramatic literary production is articulated. Jack's endeavour to produce a play is mentioned in the first chapter and its importance to the narrative as a whole is evident by the number of times it is mentioned, discussed and appraised. The play is called *The Little House*, which Jack describes to his New York agent as revolving around a 'conflict between Denker, a gifted student who had failed into becoming the brutal and brutalizing headmaster of a turn-of-the-century New England prep school, and Gary Benson, the student he sees as a younger version of himself' (TS, p. 115). Harbours hopes

of being hailed ‘Jack Torrance, the Eugene O’Neill¹¹ of his generation, the American Shakespeare!’ (TS, p. 127) by those more influential than his wife, Jack believes that his ‘tragedy in five acts’ (TS, p. 282) may have the potential ‘to see it through a successful Broadway run’ (TS, p. 282). However, his hopes become dashed as he is unable to finish it; as he explains, he ‘had begun with one play and it had somehow turned into another’ (TS, p. 285) and consequently he is unable to complete the narrative. It is its completion that Jack perceives will bring about the end of his struggles. He surmises that the play may ‘even make him some money’ (TS, p. 296), or ‘lacking that, Al might well convince the Stovington Board to rehire him’ (TS, p. 296). In either case, by finishing the play, Jack would have arrived at a more favourable position to financially support his family. Ultimately, however, Jack is unable to complete it, thereby not allowing it the opportunity to raise either economic or symbolic capital: to have a ‘successful Broadway run’ or to sink ‘without a trace’ (TS, p. 132).

Jack’s hopes for the success of his play aside, the actual narrative of the play holds some interesting parallels to Jack’s efforts to assert his literary authority. It is a play in which an agonistic struggle exists between an established academic and his student, a ‘bright boy more cursed with money than blessed with it’ (TS, p. 284).

¹¹ The reference to Eugene O’Neill appears particularly significant, not only because of O’Neill’s status as a major canonical figure in American theatre, but also because of his critique of capitalism as featured in his play *The Hairy Ape* (1922) which details the fate of Yank, a ‘stoker on an ocean liner’ (Berkowitz, 1992, p. 34) and a dispossessed labourer. The role, working in the basement of a vehicle designed to bring pleasure to the leisure class, is one shared by Jack in his role to attend to the boiler in the basement of the Overlook Hotel. In fact, Jack even imagines his own regression ‘from college-educated man to wailing ape in five easy seconds’ (TS, p. 119) further strengthening his similarity to Yank. O’Neill is also relevant to *The Shining* through his employment of masks in the productions of his plays such as *The Hairy Ape*, *The Great God Brown* (1926) and *Lazarus Laughed* (1925): an image which recurs throughout the narrative of Jack’s deterioration. For further reading on O’Neill’s use of masks see ‘Eugene O’Neill: An Exercise in Unmasking’ (1961) by E.M. Waith and ‘The Uses of the Mask in *The Great God Brown* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*’ (1966) by A.R. Sogliuzzo.

The majority of the play remains unexplored within the confines of the novel, but Jack's battle to conclude the narrative is provided, and it is through this articulation that insight is allowed into the dynamics of the play itself. In the ending Jack had initially planned:

Denker, in a fit of rage, seizes the poker from beside the fireplace and beats saintly Gary to death. Then, standing spread-legged over the body, the bloody poker in one hand, he screams at the audience: 'It's here somewhere and I *will* find it!' Then, as the lights dim and the curtain is slowly drawn, the audience sees Gary's body face down on the forestage as Denker strides to the upstage bookcase and feverishly begins pulling books from the shelves, looking at them, throwing them aside (TS, p. 282).

However, Jack's problem with completing this draft occurs as he develops 'opposing feelings about his characters' (TS, p. 282), causing him 'to see Denker as a Mr Chips figure, and the tragedy was not the intellectual racking of Gary Benson but rather the destruction of a kindly old teacher and headmaster unable to see through the cynical wiles of this monster masquerading as a boy' (TS, p. 285). The play, originally intended to be 'a microcosm to say something about the abuse of power' (TS, pp. 284-285), is undergoing radical change as Jack's sympathy towards his characters becomes altered and redirected; the apparent impairment of his judgement affecting not only his interpretation of the motives of those around him, but also the motives of his own fictional characters.

The two characters of Jack's play offer an insight into the inner battle Jack is engaged in pertaining to his views about literary production and the distribution of capital. Denker, the teacher originally perceived as 'not much different from the strutting South American little Caesars in their banana kingdoms, standing dissidents up against the wall of the handiest squash or handball court, a super-zealot in a comparatively small puddle, a man whose every whim becomes a

crusade' (TS, p. 284), occupies the position of authority, experience and education; he holds the power to consecrate within the educational establishment within which the play is set. Gary Benson, on the other hand, is a student whom Denker views as 'a younger version of himself,' with the benefits of economic wealth. In Jack's first draft, Denker, who was also 'a gifted student' appears to actively resent Gary Benson for his wealth, intellect and bright future and the playwright's sympathies clearly lie with Gary Benson. As those sympathies shift, and Jack encounters obstacles to the narrative's successful conclusion, Denker becomes the character

who had never had any of the things Gary had. Denker, who had had to work all his life just to become the head of a single little school. Who was now faced with ruin over this handsome, innocent-seeming rich boy who had cheated on his Final Composition and had then cunningly covered his tracks' (TS, p. 284).

Jack has constructed a narrative which includes two characters that enact the power relations as they exist within the field of literary production: 'the opposition between the incumbents and the pretenders instals at the very core of the field a tension between those who try to overtake their rivals and those who wish to avoid being overtaken, as if it were a race' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 126). To begin with, Gary Benson, economically wealthy enough to retain disinterestedness, is juxtaposed with Denker, the authoritarian, cultural custodian who persists in hindering Gary Benson's progress. After Jack's shift of sympathies, Gary Benson becomes 'a postulant before the altar of knowledge rather than a sincere acolyte' (TS, p. 284) and Denker is reconfigured as an economically disadvantaged individual who is attempting to retain his position within the field. In either draft, the theme of the play is the battle between 'artistic generations' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 122), the act of position-taking and the fear of usurpation and displacement; it is the theme of hierarchical struggle.

In order to fully appreciate the importance of the theatre to this text, it is necessary to turn to Bourdieu's explication of the nature of the field of literary production. Despite its emphasis on nineteenth-century Parisian culture, it remains relevant to the nature of theatrical production in America in the twentieth-century and to the position it enjoys in the hierarchical strata of literary production.¹² Bourdieu asserts that poetic literary production is situated at the opposite end of the field from dramatic production in that it remains consecrated 'as the art *par excellence* by the romantic tradition, it retains all its prestige... it continues to attract a large number of writers...[and] it is almost totally devoid of a market' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 114). Dramatic literary production, however, belongs at 'the opposite end... with its direct exposure to the immediate sanction of the bourgeois public, its values and its orthodoxies' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 114) in that it successfully 'procures, besides money, the institutionalized consecration of the academies and official honours' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 114). Due to the business of theatre, a dramatic production must be a popular success or else it will never progress to the stage in the first place. It must satisfy 'the bourgeois public' in order for it to not only cover the costs of the initial investment which permitted its staging to begin with, but also to reward those investors with a profit after the costs of the theatre, sets, wages of actors' and backstage staff, advertising and royalties have all been accounted for.¹³ However,

¹² For further reading on American drama and the literary field see Morris Freedman's *American Drama in Social Context* (1971) in particular the chapter 'Will Success Spoil the American Dramatist' and John Gassner's *Theatre at the Crossroads: Plays and Playwrights of the Mid-Century American Stage* (1960).

¹³ Robert Brustein in his essay 'Why American Plays Are Not Literature' (1965) claims there is a widespread conviction among men of mind that the dramatist, writing for an audience with debased values, does not have very high standards himself – and anxious to please a wide number, he creates a contaminated work which gives literature a bad name (Brustein, 1965, p. 247).

He writes that this conviction can be overturned by 'the playwright's strong resistance to commercial pressures when he is certain his work is being cheapened' (Brustein, 1965, p. 250).

as I established in the previous chapter, the field of literary production is not merely a two-dimensional spectrum with economic profits at one end and symbolic at the other, as there is an intrinsic logic to the field which takes into account generic difference, and positions the producers of those genres accordingly; ‘authors who manage to secure “high-society” successes and bourgeois consecration are opposed to those who are condemned to so-called “popular” success – the authors of rural novels, music-hall artists, *chansonniers*, etc.’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 46). On the other hand, dramatists of genres such as the tragedy potentially occupy a privileged position within the field in that they enjoy a high degree of economic capital and a high degree of academic consecration. This combination of the best of both worlds has been an aim of King’s from the outset and the presence of theatrical production illumines this desire in a narrative which follows the troubles of King’s only author-protagonist who is, in essence, a playwright-protagonist.

In an interview with Joyce Lynch Dewes Moore for *Mystery Magazine* (1981), King clarifies his intention to draw upon the symbolic capital enjoyed by dramatic literary production by stating of *The Shining* that:

Originally I set the book in the form of a Shakespearean tragedy, and that was really all I knew. It was going to be in five acts, which finally translated themselves into parts: Job Interview and Preparatory Matters, Closing Day, Wasp’s Nest, Snowbound, and Matters of Life and Death (Moore, 1990, p. 107).

The idea had come to King for the narrative of a family trapped in a haunted hotel over a harsh, unforgiving winter during a trip to the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado, on the day that it was closing for the season. Armed only with the kernel of the plot, he chose to employ the structure of the Shakespearean tragedy in order to improve his position within the field of literary production; by attempting to

position-take in this way, he draws attention to his desire to increase the amount of symbolic capital available to him, as one who had already been sanctioned by the bourgeois public. This link to Shakespearean drama is augmented through his description depicting Jack as ‘an absurd twentieth-century Hamlet, an indecisive figure so mesmerised by onrushing tragedy that he was helpless to divert its course or alter it in any way’ (TS, p. 327). In fact, King had intended to further strengthen the links between *The Shining* and Shakespearean tragedy by ending the narrative with the death of all the characters. He recalls that the ‘original plan was for them all to die up there and for Danny to become the controlling force of the hotel after he died’ (Ketchum, Cadigan and Shiner, 1990, p. 169); however, he altered this planned ending in the writing of his first draft in which Danny survived, but ‘Jack beat his wife to death with the mallet and it was blood and brains and everything’ (Ketchum, Cadigan and Shiner, 1990, p. 169). This was changed in the rewrite because, as King explains, ‘It was really just terrible and I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t leave it that way’ (Ketchum, Cadigan and Shiner, 1990, p. 169). Instead the narrative ends with the death of the author-protagonist and the rescue of the other family members, thus offering an ameliorated resolution to the narrative.

By shying away from his plans to ape Shakespearean tragedy, King effectively cements his position as bestselling horror author; the novel ultimately fails to differentiate itself from its categorisation as a popular horror novel. The ending of the narrative illustrates the way in which King is capable of managing ‘anxieties about the social order’ having ‘first revived them and given them some rudimentary expression’ while still offering a ‘legitimation of the existing order’ (Jameson, 1979, p. 144); order is reasserted, transgression punished and boundaries confirmed.

As King verifies, ‘horror fiction is really as Republican as a banker in a three-piece suit’ (King, 1990, p. 22) in that it ‘has that effect of reconfirming values, of reconfirming self-image and our good feelings about ourselves’ (King, 1990, p. 22). It is King’s perpetuation of this ‘reconfirming’ narrative which encourages the deviation away from the traditional tragic conclusion to which the narrative alludes. Rather than the proposed bloodbath, reminiscent of the scene Fortinbras encountered upon entering the Danish royal court, the narrative closes with Wendy, Danny and Halloran recovering, emotionally and physically, the following summer in a hotel in Western Maine, where Halloran delivers the moral of the story, instructing Danny to pull ‘your act together and just go on’ (TS, p. 497). The references to the theatre continue despite the foiling of a tragedy in Shakespearean tradition, by King’s adherence to popular cultural generic convention. Of the horror genre, King states that ‘I love writing the things I write, and I wouldn’t and *couldn’t* do anything else’ (Norden, 1990, p. 82), and it is because of King’s apparent inability to write a narrative which disobeys the conventions of popular fiction, that ‘the bulk of the pages becom[e] sheer devalued means to an end’ (Jameson, 1979, p. 132). In attempting to achieve both critical acclaim as a serious writer and profitable popularity as a commercially viable writer simultaneously, King has drawn upon the lexicon and structure of dramatic literary production; however, by failing to follow through, the narrative becomes irrevocably entrenched in the popular fiction trope which offers narratological resolution. King proves that he is incapable of occupying both positions concurrently and that he must choose a position within the polarised field of literary production.

***Poète Maudit* or Hired Scribe?**

Hierarchical strata are an issue of much concern in *The Shining*. According to Bourdieu, the literary field is characterised by its dual hierarchy which is dependent upon the distribution of capital. Literary success in the accumulation of either form of capital, economic or symbolic, is often linked to failure in the accumulation of the other: a phenomenon explored in *The Shining*, particularly through the figure of the impoverished author-protagonist. At the outset of the novel, Jack's career has already become derailed resulting in his acceptance of the position of caretaker at the Overlook Hotel. His previous job was teaching English at Stovington Preparatory Academy, where he was considered 'something of a catch for Stovington, a slowly blooming American writer perhaps, and certainly a man well qualified to teach that great mystery, creative writing' (TS, p. 41). His increasing dependence upon alcohol, contributing to the loss of his position and his inability to meet his fiscal and familial responsibilities, is also intrinsically linked to the decrease in his literary production. Even after he determines to tackle his addiction he remains unable to write creatively; those 'last unhappy six months at Stovington, months when the craving for a drink had been so bad that he could barely concentrate on his in-class lectures, let alone his extracurricular literary ambitions' (TS, p. 114) stymieing his chances of success. While pondering the twists and turns of his career's progress, Jack muses that 'part of his drinking problem had stemmed from an unconscious desire to be free of Stovington and the security he felt was stifling whatever creative urge he had' (TS, p. 115); however, he comes to fear that perhaps it has less to do with the 'stifling' of creative urges and more to do with his urge to self-destruct. When he fears that he may have lost his position at the Overlook due to an antagonistic telephone call with the manager, Stuart Ullman, he

queries, ‘Was he afraid somewhere inside that the Overlook might be just what he needed to finish his play and generally collect up his shit and get it together? Was he blowing the whistle on himself?’ (TS, p. 200).

Whether it is the case that he loses, or comes close to losing, his jobs due to creative or self-destructive urges, Jack’s inability to establish an equilibrium between the work which provides for his family and ‘the writing I consider to be my real work’ (TS, p. 160) is undeniable. Unable to reconcile his need for economic capital and his desire for symbolic capital, he is incapable of improving his position within the field of literary production through his writing; instead, he looks to outside sources for his economic capital, seeking employment first as a teacher and then as the caretaker of the Overlook. Jack’s fiction would be more predisposed to gain economic capital within the literary field if he were to consciously strive towards writing that which is accessible, popular and commercial. The literary field, as I have previously asserted, is organized according to ‘two independent and hierarchized principles of differentiation (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 121), that is, ‘between pure production, destined for a market restricted to producers, and large-scale production, orientated towards the satisfaction of the demands of a wide audience’ (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 121). Now, it cannot be argued that Jack is unable to produce literature belonging to this latter form of production as he has already displayed the capacity for writing accessible, popular fiction that appeals to ‘the demands of a wide audience’. The sale of one of Jack’s stories to *Esquire* magazine proves that he does possess the ability to write commercial fiction. Wendy recalls opening the offer of publication which informed her that ‘*Esquire* would like to use Jack’s story ‘Concerning the Black Holes’ early the following year. They would pay nine

hundred dollars, not on publication but on acceptance' (TS, p. 52). While Jack's victorious proclamation of '*Veni, vidi, vici*' (TS, p. 52; italics original) indicates that he perceives this publication, and the money it brings, to be a sign of success, Wendy cannot help but remember her mother's condemnatory remarks regarding Jack: '*Big ideas*, her mother had said. *Sure. The welfare lines are full of educated fools with big ideas*' (TS, p. 53; italics original). The question Wendy is forced to ask herself is 'Did the *Esquire* story make her mother wrong or right?' (TS, p. 53).

Certainly, Jack's employment at Stovington is attributed to 'the strength of his stories – four of them published at that time, one of them in *Esquire*' (TS, p. 52), and yet Jack's 'big ideas' about the role of a literary producer, and their capacity to accrue capital, do contribute to the Torrances' proximity to financial dependence upon the welfare state following his loss of that teaching position. Instead of investing his efforts in increasing his literary production to the point at which he can support himself and his family from profits derived from publication, Jack appears to invest in the image of the '*poète maudit*': a figure for 'which success is suspect and asceticism in this world is the precondition for salvation in the next' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 101). In embracing the idea that 'a real artist must suffer' (TS, p. 250) he buys into the '*poète maudit*' concept, reinforced by those 'great pop-intellectual myths' (OW, p. 109) that are actually 'nothing other than the retranslation of the logic of a new mode of production into ideal and ideology' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 169). Jack is portrayed as an author who 'invents himself *in suffering*, in revolt, against the bourgeois, against money, by inventing a separate world where the laws of economic necessity are suspended, at least for a while, and where value is not measured by commercial success' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 169). By partitioning

himself off from the world in the Overlook, rendered isolated and inaccessible for a period of months by the harsh winter conditions, Jack hopes to experience that ‘separate world where the laws of economic necessity are suspended’ believing that he would be able to reassert his position as a literary producer with the potential to become ‘a major American writer in the next decade’ (TS, p. 294). He is, after all, unable to experience that freedom from economic necessity, ‘disinterestedness,’ in any other way, possessing no economic resource to render him financially independent. Unlike his friend Al Shockley, Jack has not inherited the wealth which offers ‘a decisive advantage in a world which, as in the world of art and literature, does not provide immediate profits’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 170); rather, Jack must manufacture a situation where he can distance himself and his production from the world of commercialism and economic gain.

When comparing the figure of Jack as he appears in the book and Kubrick’s film, Fredric Jameson states that:

Stephen King’s original was far more openly and conventionally an artist’s novel whose hero is already a writer of some minimal achievement and a classical American *poète maudit* whose talent is plagued and stimulated by alcoholism. Kubrick’s hero, however, is already a reflexive commentary on this now conventional stereotype (Hemingway, O’Neill, Faulkner, the beats, etc.): his Jack Nicholson is not a writer, not someone who has something to write or likes doing things with words, but rather someone who would like to *be* a writer, who lives a fantasy about what the American writer is, along the lines of James Jones or Jack Kerouac (Jameson, 1981, pp. 121-122).

Jameson differentiates the two versions of the same character by assessing the amount of literary production achieved by each, and then utilises this differentiation in order to make a comment on the role of the *poète maudit*. He claims here that King’s Jack actually inhabits the role, while Kubrick’s merely covets. However, as Jameson also argues, the fantasy entertained by Kubrick’s Jack is already

‘anachronistic and nostalgic’ (Jameson, 1981, p. 122) and that ‘all those unexplored interstices of the system, which allowed the lumpens of the 50s to become, in their turn, figures of ‘the Great American Writer,’ have long since been absorbed into the sealed and achieved space of consumer society (Jameson, 1981, p. 122). The stereotype of the ‘Great American Writer’ has been rendered ‘so many consumable images’ (Jameson, 1981, p. 122) which Kubrick’s Jack recognises and responds to. I argue, however, that despite the original Jack’s ‘minimal achievement,’ he still endorses this particular set of consumable images and holds hopes of living up to them. Jameson, in his differentiation of either version’s literary production, exaggerates the contrast between their perception of the stereotype and their own preoccupations with becoming an expression of that stereotype.

The presence of the *poète maudit* in the novel, however, does not endorse the reversal of economic success that the stereotype is invested with effecting. The image of the *poète maudit* is informed by ‘an upside down economy where the artist could win in the symbolic arena only by losing in the economic one’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 201); however, this failure within the economic ‘arena’ is only a ‘short term’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 201) failure as the financial success is effectively deferred rather than refused. In the case of Jack Torrance, his investment in the image of the *poète maudit* is made to appear ineffectual in that it does not bring him either symbolic or deferred economic capital. Instead, Jack fears that he has ‘failed as a teacher, a writer, a husband and a father’ (TS, p. 365); he fears that failure has tainted every part of his life, including his literary production. According to the logic of Bourdieu, failure in his literary efforts could ultimately lead to cultural consecration and the economic benefits that status would bring; however, Jack, the

sole author-protagonist within King's fiction to pursue this path towards literary legitimacy, never makes it to that point. Through Jack, King dramatises his belief that the *poète maudit* has no place within contemporary American economics, thus exposing the *poète maudit* to be a 'false face' (TS, p. 468): merely a mask to disguise the hidden economic intentions of those aiming for cultural consecration. Jack is condemned as a writer who pursued a fundamentally flawed strategy, one which, according to King, offers no hope of success in any arena. In essence, Jack's narrative is one in which the image of the *poète maudit* is stripped of its power to attract symbolic capital, and its status as no more than a redundant, reified image is confirmed. It is configured as a simulacrum: an image which operates at the level of the hyperreal with its foundations in counterfeit. This in itself does not strip the image of its power, but through exposing it as functioning within a flawed economic strategy, King hopes to assert his own strategy through which the accrual of either economic or symbolic capital is not dependent upon its exclusivity.

As Jack succumbs to the malignant influence of the hotel, his role as a *poète maudit* is further undermined as he comes to inhabit the position of hired scribe. Jack's shift from *poète maudit* to hired scribe appears to be activated by his discovery of the scrapbook in the basement, containing newspaper cuttings divulging the hotel's lurid past. In his discussion with Watson during his first visit to the basement, the subject of reputation was raised pertaining to the hotel's past and the current esteem with which it is held. Watson suggests that, like all hotels, 'the Overlook's got a reputation' (TS, p. 26) in that the hotel has had its fair share of scandal over the years. This reputation persists despite the management's attempts to suppress the news of the tragic deaths and violent murders which have occurred at the hotel.

There is a discrepancy between actuality and the image portrayed to the customer, in much the same way that there exists a discrepancy between Jack's image as a *poète maudit* and the reality of his situation. It is a situation first hinted at during Jack's interview with Mr Ullman, in which the two men are described as 'interviewer and interviewee, supplicant and reluctant patron' (TS, p. 5). Jack may have manufactured a space which, in Wendy's words, allowed him to be his 'own boss' (TS, p. 269); free of the financial concerns that dogged his life prior to his arrival at the Overlook, Jack should have been able to concentrate upon a form of literary production that remains independent from the pressures of economic viability. In other words, he had entered into a space in which he expected to enjoy the liberty that comes from disinterest. However, Jack's disinterest was feigned, as his literary production is not as independent from outside forces as he had hoped it would be. Al Shockley makes this clear to Jack when he reminds him of the supplicant/patron relationship that exists between Jack and the hotel hierarchy.

Following his discovery of the Overlook scrapbook, Jack decides that his next project after his play will be a book on the Overlook itself. Upon further investigation, Jack calls Ullman to inform him of his intentions. Jack predicts that, rather than the kind of book he was proposing, Ullman would actually prefer 'some sort of commissioned guidebook that you could hand out free to the guests when they checked in. Something with a lot of glossy photos of the mountains at sunrise and sunset and a lemon-meringue text to go with it' (TS, p. 199). The type of book that would be commissioned would be one entirely dictated to by commercial concerns, restricting the producer to the degree that all artistic merit would be lost. However, as his conversation with Al reminds him, he is, in effect, in just such a

position in that his patrons are those that are paying him to stay at the hotel; his patrons have provided him with the space within which he has chosen to unsuccessfully feign disinterest. Al, despite claiming that he doesn't want to control Jack's 'artistic life' (TS, p 208), attempts to prevent Jack from proceeding with his book detailing the dark history of the Overlook hotel. Al agrees not to fire Jack, which would effectively remove him from the space within which he planned to resume his pursuit of literary consecration, if he agrees not to contact Ullman again, under any circumstances, and on the condition that there will be no 'book about a famous Colorado mountain hotel with a history' (TS, p. 207). The ultimatum is compared to 'getting a call from some twentieth-century Medici prince... no portraits of my family with their warts showing, please, or back to the rabble you'll go. I subsidize no pictures but pretty pictures' (TS, p. 207). Jack is forced to recognise that his relationship with Al is dependent upon the fact that 'the dog collar' he has on Jack 'will always be ignored by mutual consent' and that Al will 'take good and benevolent care' (TS, p. 207) of him and his family.

In coming to terms with 'Al's high-goddam-handed request that he chuck his book project' (TS, p. 243), Jack's illusion that he is 'a classical American *poète maudit*' is shattered. As with the moment at which he finally discerns the face of Christ in the seemingly 'senseless and patternless' 'jumble of whites and blacks' (TS, p. 306), Jack experiences that 'one gestalt leap, the conscious and unconscious melding in that one shocking moment of understanding. You would always see it. You were damned to always see it' (TS, p. 309). Prior to this 'gestalt leap,' Jack was under the impression that the literary production he undertook while under the roof of the Overlook hotel was uninfluenced by the market and commercialism.

Forced to recognise the falsity of this position, Jack soon regards the production of the *Overlook* book as a transaction between supplicant and patron. He questions, 'Perhaps the *Overlook*, large and rambling Samuel Johnson that it was, had picked him to be its Boswell. You say the new caretaker writes? Very good, sign him on. Time we told our side' (TS, p. 309). Rather than writing autonomously, Jack has become a literary producer whose production is manipulated by his employer: the mysterious, supernatural force cited as 'the manager' (TS, p. 389). This lack of control over his own production is also reflected in his physical movements both during and after his visit to Room 217, as he is described as walking with 'jerky, marionette strides' (TS, p. 278). Jack accounts for his experience of the supernatural in Room 217 by reassuring himself that he saw what he did because he 'had been strung up' (TS, p. 294), and he attempts to explain away the bruises upon his son's neck by claiming that Danny subconsciously caused his own injuries: that the 'subconscious figure is pulling the strings' (TS, pp. 292-293). In each of these examples, Jack is compared to a puppet whose strings are being pulled by some exterior force independent of Jack's own volition. His actions, like his production are outwith the realms of his own control: the 'hotel was running things now' (TS, p. 370).

As an authentic *poète maudit*, Jack would have suffered in the role of tortured author that King's mother feared he was condemned to play, and yet he would have retained a possibility of literary legitimisation: a possibility rendered unavailable to the commercial, economically viable writers of popular genre fiction. He perceives himself to be a 'cultural [entrepreneur] struggling to accumulate specifically cultural capital, albeit at the cost of temporarily renouncing economic profit' (Bourdieu,

1993, p. 83). However, King, whose aims are to enjoy ‘the deferred, lasting success of “classics” and the immediate, temporary success of best-sellers’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 82) in synchrony, undermines the validity of this cultural hierarchy by unmasking the *poète maudit* to reveal the hired scribe. He exposes the reality that all literary production is influenced by economic profit, and that even when authors believe themselves to be operating within a space protected from outside market forces, they are in fact living an illusion. Jack is a literary producer who is forced to recognise his participation within the commercial world of consumerism and economic profit, despite his desperate attempts to maintain the illusion of disinterestedness. The gestalt leap which he made as a schoolboy in order to perceive the image of Christ, occurs a second time as he now perceives himself to be a marionette-figure: a writer whose literary production is dictated to by those to whom he is held in thrall. As I demonstrate in later chapters, King often portrays the literary producer of popular literature as one who is held captive by his market, trapped by a readership and by their publisher's expectations. Jack, however, is an example of a serious literary producer, and yet he is no freer from the economic market than King's bestselling author-protagonists.

Conclusion

The Shining was King's ‘first hardcover bestseller; it went to Number 8 on the *Times* list... to Number 7 on the *Publishers Weekly* list, to Number 6 on the *Time Magazine* list’ (King, 1982, p. 41). King also found himself ‘a popcorn celebrity one week in *People* magazine – a two-page spread sandwiched in between Bjorn Borg and Larry Flynt’ (King, 1982, p. 41). After already experiencing a dramatic increase in sales of *Carrie* following Brian de Palma's adaptation, King knew that

he could expect similar success following Kubrick's. This economic success, however, further consolidated his position as a writer of popular fiction and adversely affected his potential to attract symbolic capital. This, along with the condemnatory remarks made by film critics, influential academics and the director, Stanley Kubrick, himself, regarding the literary worth of his novel, exacerbated King's anxiety concerning the commerciality of his fiction and his need to be appreciated as a serious writer. As King states, 'I have written seriously since I was twelve, and to me that means that I always wrote in order to make money' (King, 1982, p. 16), and yet, it also means to receive cultural consecration, the lack of which King feels keenly. The fallout from the publication of the novel and the release of Kubrick's film has long haunted King. He once wondered if he would end up feeling the same way about Kubrick's *The Shining* as he presumed Robert Bloch must have felt about Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). He wonders how

Bob Bloch... has been able to cope with people asking, "How did you like *Psycho*?" – for twenty-some years. He must be a little bit tired of that question. I'm getting tired of *The Shining* question... I hope people aren't asking me that question in twenty years (Grant, 1990, p. 117).

However, it has now been over twenty years since he made that wish and it is a question he still finds himself asked in interviews with the press.

As I have argued in this case study, however, this anxiety did not result from this experience; it is inherent to King's *habitus*, and as such it was present throughout the writing of *The Shining* becoming expressed in a number of different ways. Firstly, his *habitus* gains expression through a dramatisation of three key fears that King harboured relating to his economic success: control, corruption and consumption. By incorporating these three embodiments of his central fear of economic success into the narrative, King hoped that he could manipulate them,

thus divesting them of their potential to wield power over him and his literary production. Secondly, it is shown through the presence of references to the theatre and his (failed) attempts to replicate a Shakespearean tragedy, thus hoping to capitalise upon the potential economic and symbolic success he perceived to be available to such a venture. His determination to be considered both popular and serious, as confirmed by his university professor, Burton Hatlen, is made manifest through the structure and lexicon of the theatre as well as the actions of his one and only playwright-protagonist. Last, the exploration of the image of the *poète maudit* and the denial of its potential to accrue either symbolic or economic capital allows King to cast this figure in the role of hired scribe; his understanding of the field, the way position taking is effected and the way in which that affects the distribution of capital all finding articulation through the literary production of this masked figure. As his reaction to Kubrick's film and his subsequent literary production show, King's fears surrounding his success and his failure continue to haunt him and his fiction. An inevitable conclusion perhaps, as, after all, it is impossible to exorcise oneself of one's own *habitus*, as I shall show in the next case study on *Misery* and *The Dark Half*.

Chapter 3 – Misery and The Dark Half

Introduction

In his 1985 article ‘The Politics of Limited Editions’ King confesses to holding ‘a strong and probably irrational belief that a novel in manuscript is like a man with one leg and a novel which has been printed and bound is like a man with two’ (King, 1985a, p. 4). He claims that ‘*not* to publish is to see the book as a creation which has been wilfully crippled’ (King, 1985a, p. 4). King’s confession of this ‘act of need’ (King, 1985a, p. 4), this ‘compulsion’ (King, 1985a, p. 4) sheds some light on his revelation the year before of his experiments with pseudonymy. Between the years of 1977 and 1984 King not only published under his own name, but also under the pseudonym, Richard Bachman, and the name has been resurrected twice since with the publication of *The Regulators* (1996) and *Blaze* (2007). The first four novels, collated in a single volume, *The Bachman Books* (1986), were accompanied by an introduction, ‘Why I Was Bachman,’ in which King once again defends his need to find other outlets for publication. One of the reasons he cites is over-exposure. He claims:

I didn’t think I was overpublishing the market... but my publishers did. Bachman provided a compromise for both of us. My ‘Stephen King publishers’ were like a frigid wifey who only wants to put out once or twice a year, encouraging her endlessly horny hubby to find a call girl. Bachman was where I went when I had to have relief (BB, pp. viii-ix).¹

This compromise, explained through the metaphor of prostitution, indicates that, just as the limited editions offered King a way of publishing his books free from the restrictions placed upon his production by his mass-market publishers, his adoption

¹ For further reading on the metaphor of sex and reading in King’s fiction, see ‘The Rape of Constant Reader: Stephen King’s Construction of the Female Reader and Violation of the Female Body in *Misery*’ by Kathleen Margaret Lant, in *Imagining the Worst: Stephen King and the Representation of Women*, edited by Lant and Theresa Thompson.

of a pseudonym similarly allowed King a release from repressive publication strategies.

His second, and main, reason for publishing as Richard Bachman was, he claims, to attempt to replicate the success he had garnered under his own name. This time, however, the fiction had been released from the ‘ghetto’ (King, 1982, p. 22) of the horror genre market. As King says of *Roadwork*, it ‘was an effort to write a ‘straight’ novel’ (BB, p. xii), an ‘honestly dealt novel – a novelist’s novel, if you know what I mean’ (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 88).² It was an attempt to break out of the straitjacket stereotype of horror novelist, and all the baggage that that label brought with it. As King observes, Bachman was beginning to become successful as an author in his own right:

His final book, *Thinner*, had sold about 28,000 copies in hardcover before a Washington bookstore clerk and writer named Steve Brown got suspicious, and went to the Library of Congress, and uncovered my name on one of the Bachman copyright forms.³ Twenty-eight thousand copies isn’t a lot – it’s certainly not in best-seller territory – but it’s 4,000 copies more than my book *Night Shift* sold in 1978. (BB, p. xi)

The question of ‘is it work that takes you to the top or is it all just a lottery?’ (BB, p. xi) clearly remains unresolved by this experiment, and it is King’s belief that had the experiment been allowed to continue, he would have been able to provide a more conclusive answer. His plan was to release *Misery* under Bachman’s name rather than his own, and he believes that this ‘might have taken ‘Dickie’ onto the

² As he confirms in an interview with Stephen Jones in 1979 (five years previous to the revelation that he was publishing pseudonymously) his decision not to publish the ‘two mainstream novels’ (Jones, 1990, p. 166) that he had written was ‘more a business decision’ (Jones, 1990, p.166). Of course, both novels had in fact been published, just not under the name of Stephen King.

³ For an account of Brown’s discovery see his chapter ‘The Life and Death of Richard Bachman: Stephen King’s Doppelgänger’ in *Kingdom of Fear: The World of Stephen King* edited by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller (1986).

best-seller lists' (BB, p. xi).⁴ While this episode in King's career failed to bring him the answer to his question, it still performed a valuable service in that it forced a re-evaluation of his work in light of the more 'straight' Bachman novels,⁵ as well as performing a clever marketing trick. King not only managed to exceed the limits of publication as decreed by the publishing industry, but he published them twice over: once under Bachman's name and again under his own.

Misery and *The Dark Half* offer insights into King's experiments with pseudonymy. While *Misery* may, as King posits, have been a breakthrough novel for Bachman, it stands out in King's oeuvre as a work which explicitly tackles the role of the literary producer and the way in which that role functions within the wider field of cultural production. It takes into account the hierarchical strata, those structuring structures and structured structures that affect the development of an author's *habitus* and condition literary creation and reception. Through its narrative of the author-protagonist trapped, it explores the divisions between the production of popular and serious fiction, and reveals the inherent difficulties in the practice of position-taking within the hierarchically defined field. Paul Sheldon, his perception of the field and his own literary output are vividly rendered through the narrative of his incarceration by his 'number-one fan' (M, p. 6), Annie Wilkes. Unlike King, Paul does not employ a pseudonym in order to publish those texts which do not participate in the genre for which he has become famous; instead he publishes both

⁴ It may also have been King's intention to publish *Misery* as a Bachman book so as to avoid the backlash from readers who perceived *Misery* as an attack upon his fans. As Tabitha King divulges, 'I have read several pained, angry, and offended letters from fans who mistakenly believe that Steve was recording his true feelings about his readers in *Misery*' (King, 1987, p.1), which led her to write a defence of her husband's motives behind his 'exploration of the worst aspects of the celebrity-fan connection' (King, 1987, p.1).

⁵ As King points out, the books published under the Bachman pseudonym 'weren't really Stephen King books as it was then understood' (Adams, 2000b).

his serious novels and his bodice-ripping romances under the name of Paul Sheldon. King's revelation that he intended *Misery* to be a Bachman book allows us to consider the function of pseudonymy in King's career alongside the issues of authorial practice explored in the novel itself. In his introduction to *The Bachman Books*, King cites Paul McCartney on The Beatles' assumption of fake identities 'so no one would recognize them, and they would just have a rave-up, like in the old days' (BB, p. vi), but recognizes that their cover would inevitably be blown by their distinctive voices and trademark 'guitar licks' (BB, p. viii). From King's point of view this manifests itself as an anxiety that, as a popular cultural producer, it is impossible to escape recognition and, in turn, the expectations and stigmata that accompany such recognition.⁶

These themes of textual entrapment and liberation were addressed again in his fictive exploration of his employment of a pseudonym in *The Dark Half*: a text in which he credits 'Richard Bachman for his help and inspiration' (DH, p. x), stressing that this 'novel could not have been written without him' (DH, p. x). With the disclosure of the source for either pseudonym, the correlation of both the author and the author-protagonist's employment of a pseudonym extends beyond the dedication. George Stark, the name of the pseudonym who haunts Thad Beaumont, is derived from Donald Westlake's pen name, Richard Stark, which, incidentally, is the same source for the first name of King's pseudonym, Richard Bachman. King

⁶ An example of a review which validates this perception appeared in *The New York Times* (1987) which states that '*Misery* will undoubtedly perform as other Stephen King novels have – cresting to the top of the best-seller lists, splashing heavily with the Book-of-the-Month Club, weighing down the corners of thousands of beach blankets this summer' (Katzenbach, 1987) before asserting that success 'has a way of diminishing value and obscuring actual worth' (Katzenbach, 1987). By emphasising the authorial signifier, Stephen King, Katzenbach highlights not only the author-function, as I have already discussed, but also the fact that the recognition of the King brand condemns the novel because of the inevitability of the popular success the brand recognition necessitates.

recalls that NAL contacted him regarding the publication of *Getting It On*, and enquired ‘what name I wanted on it. There was a Richard Stark book on my desk, and the Bachman-Turner Overdrive on the stereo. So I told them to call him Richard Bachman’ (Brown, 1987, p. 115). The shared source for both King and Thad’s pen names irrevocably links the two, signalling a connection between the theme of entrapment and liberation as it pertains to the literary production of both King and Thad. King’s admission to publishing his ‘straight novels’ under the Bachman pseudonym, and Thad’s use of the Stark pseudonym to write popular novels act as inversions of one another, highlighting King’s preoccupation with the divide between the literary production of popular and serious fiction. In this sense, *The Dark Half*, more so than *Misery*, directly engages with the adoption of a pseudonym in order to affect liberation from the expectations of publishers, critics and public. By featuring the pseudonym-made-flesh, as it were, King explores the way in which pseudonymy offers only a temporary liberation from these expectations and speculates that, at worst, the pseudonym actively exacerbates the original entrapment experienced by the literary producer. King includes an anecdote in ‘Why I Became Bachman,’ in which he relates a rumour that Elvis admitted to an interviewer:

I was like a cow in a pen with a whole bunch of other cows, only I got out somehow. Well, they came and got me and put me in another pen, only this one was bigger and I had it all to myself. I looked around and seen the fences was so high I’d never get out. So I said, ‘All right, I’ll graze’ (BB, p. vi).

King may have temporarily escaped the widespread recognition, but he has found himself in the same situation as Elvis, in that he is in that ‘bigger’ pen with the high fences; however, unlike Elvis, King is not content to graze and continues to lament his entrapment through his fiction.

A Miserable Entrapment

...outside things began to impinge more rapidly until the objective world, with all its freight of memory, experience, and prejudice, had pretty much re-established itself. He was Paul Sheldon, who wrote novels of two kinds, good ones and best-sellers (M, p. 7).

As Paul Sheldon awakens from his state of unconsciousness, following his recovery from a car accident, he begins to retrieve his sense of identity. The narrative states that ‘memory, experience and prejudice’ re-establish themselves during this process of identity formation, but another way of describing this is that it represents a reaffirmation or recomposition of *habitus*. Paul’s understanding of the field of literary production is prominent in his understanding of himself and his place within the world; by consciously identifying himself as ‘Paul Sheldon, who wrote novels of two kinds, good ones and best-sellers’, he simultaneously states his connection to his profession and evaluates the symbolic capital of his previous work. He defines himself through his writing, and yet Paul is not a mere representation of King himself, but rather, I would suggest, Paul’s narrative is a dramatisation of King’s *habitus*. He is not representing authorship, but the author-function. As Michel Foucault establishes, the author-function works as a categorising agent: it defines a text as belonging to a larger body of work, through establishing their similarity with the other texts within that group, and by differentiating it from texts which belong to other groups. This procedure of taxonomic differentiation can be equated with Paul’s identification. His own categorisation is re-established and subsequently he is positioned within a cultural hierarchy which defines not only his previous and future career, but also the production, publication, circulation, and reception of his work. His acknowledgment that he writes two kinds of books, ‘good ones and best-sellers,’ is key to appreciating the weight of his ‘memory, experience, and

prejudice'; it is crucial to appreciating his perception of the field of literary production.

Prior to his arrival at Annie's home, Paul's experience of culture has been one in which the categorisation of texts was fixed to the author function, and the author categorised according to the symbolic capital accrued. Paul perceives this system as rigid, as proven by his previous efforts to subvert the system which have all met with opposition in the form of literary critics, readers, agents, editors and publishers. In the case of the readers, Paul recalls the outcry from the fans of his *Misery* novels when he takes a break from writing these historical romances to concentrate on 'what he thought of as his "serious" work' (M, p. 31). As Paul laments, he 'could write a modern *Under the Volcano*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Sound and the Fury*; it wouldn't matter. They would still want Misery, Misery, Misery' (M, p.31). When he defies his readers' expectations, his more 'serious' efforts are met with a slew of letters from his readership; letters which vary 'from bewilderment... to reproach, to outright anger' (M, p. 31). Their complaint remains the same though, no matter their tone: they protest, it '*wasn't what I expected, it wasn't what I wanted*' (M, p. 31; italics original). However, it is not just readers who fix Paul's position in the literary field; Paul accuses the literary critics of doing the same. As he acknowledges, his serious work, *Fast Cars*, which Annie forces him to destroy, was '*a book that would sell half as many copies as the least successful Misery book [he] ever wrote, and which Peter Prescott would shit upon in his finest genteel disparaging manner when he reviewed it for that great literary oracle, Newsweek*' (M, p. 50; italics original). In anticipating *Fast Cars*' economic and symbolic failure, Paul demonstrates his perception of a rigid and unchanging, 'immortalized

and completed' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 199), literary hierarchy. This is the system of classification that he is familiar with; it is the system upon which the development of *habitus* is founded. It structures his understanding of the way in which the field of literary production operates, his own position within that field, and the expectations placed upon him to comply with his positioning. However, the dismantling of the structures through which the distribution of capital is managed is rendered an undesirable outcome. Paul loses his ability to effect position-takings when he is prevented from participating within the field of literary production. This rejection of the system is antithetical to Paul's understanding of how to function within the field, which is demonstrated in his inability to sacrifice *Misery's Return* to the fate of the 'severely limited (first printing: one copy) Annie Wilke's Edition' (M, p. 281). His rescuing of the manuscript which he has been forced to produce during his captivity clearly shows his determination to remain a participant in the field of literary production. 'It wasn't *Annie* that was holding him back; it was the manuscript' (M, p. 354). He is as trapped by the structures that determine his literary production as he is by the text itself.

This self-imposed textual entrapment complements the physical entrapment he endures at the hands of Annie Wilkes and is alluded to throughout the novel. The first indication of this occurs when Annie informs Paul of how he came to be in her care:

It was while he ate the soup that she told him what had happened, and he remembered it all as she told him, and he supposed it was good to know how you happened to end up with your legs shattered, but the manner by which he was coming to this knowledge was disquieting – it was as if he was a character in a story or a play, a character whose history is not recounted like history but created like fiction (M, p. 12).

Paul's history is fictionalised in that his memories are forming simultaneously to Annie's articulation of the events which caused his injuries; this fictionalisation transcends the mere simple relation of past events. Annie is the one who is telling his history; she becomes the author of his fictionalised existence, and as such she not only imprisons Paul physically, but also textually. This correlation of entrapment within the text is reiterated as Paul reads Annie's scrapbook, *Memory Lane*. As he turns the pages of her assembled narrative, he finds himself becoming a trapped reader, imprisoned by the text:

No more, please. I don't want to look at any more. I've got the idea. I'm going to put this book down exactly where I found it. Then I am going into my room... But his hands seemed to have a mind and a will of their own; they kept on turning the pages, faster and faster (M, p. 208; italics original).

Paul's inability to stop reading illustrates the power which Annie exerts through the text. This is contrasted with the autonomy with which she constructs her own narrative. The scrapbook made up of poached narratives, excised from their original contexts and pasted into a new narrative, a narrative in which the gaps between scraps are to be interpreted alongside the scraps of text, is representative of Annie's creative force.⁷ In her textual construction, Annie has created 'the gotta' described later in the text thus:

The gotta as in: 'I think I'll stay up another fifteen–twenty minutes, honey, I gotta see how this chapter comes out.' Even though the guy who says it spent the day at work thinking about getting laid and knows the odds are good his wife is going to be asleep when he finally gets up to the bedroom.
The gotta, as in: 'I know I should be starting supper now – he'll be mad if it's TV dinners again – but I gotta see how this ends.'
 I gotta know will she live.
 I gotta know will he catch the shitheel who killed his father.
 I gotta know if she finds out her best friend's screwing her husband (M, 265).

⁷ For further reading on Annie Wilkes' scrapbook see my own article 'Poaching the Print: Theorising the Scrapbook in Stephen King's *Misery*' (2007).

Annie's possession of the 'gotta' is evident in Paul's compulsion to read her scrapbook, although it is also clear that Paul is equally adept at creating the 'gotta' in his own narratives, particularly in those aimed for the popular market. The 'gotta' 'was something he had been irritated to find he could generate in the *Misery* books almost at will but in his mainstream fiction erratically or not at all' (M, pp. 264-265). Both Annie and Paul's ability to create the 'gotta' is indicative of their own potential to manipulate and their susceptibility to the manipulations of others.

This similarity between the two is reinforced through the repeated reference to Scheherazade in connection to both the author-protagonist and the reader. Paul dreams of 'Annie Wilkes in the court of some fabulous Arabian caliph' (M, p. 74) where she calls out '*Once upon a time it came to pass. This happened in the days when my grandfather's grandfather was a boy. This is the story of how a poor boy. I heard this from a man who. Once upon a time. Once upon a time*' (M, p. 74; italics original). This dream positions Annie as Scheherazade not only through the Middle Eastern references of the 'Arabian caliph', 'genies from bottles' (M, p. 75), and a 'magic carpet' (M, p. 75), but also through the collection of folk story openings. While I discuss the relevance of folk culture in King's work in the following case study on *Bag of Bones*, it is important to note here Annie's relation to the culture of the people through this literary reference. It could further be argued that her creation of the scrapbook also positions her as a practitioner of folk art; by disassembling the fixed type of the newspaper clippings, she appropriates a mode of popular culture, thus facilitating a reclamation of her own narrative. However, Paul also asserts his own connection to the Scheherazade figure through his role as the author writing for survival. To Paul, 'it wasn't *Annie* that was

Scheherazade. *He was*' (M, p. 75). Paul's denial of the possibility of Annie's co-option of the Scheherazade role reinforces his perception of his own role as writer and manipulator. This antipathy towards the possibility of an authoritative reader with the potential to manipulate is also displayed when he measures the manipulative power of the author against that of the reader. His realization of 'how pervasive the influence of art' (M, p. 272) can be is explored through the examples of Arthur Conan Doyle's mother's reaction to the death of Sherlock Holmes, 'the way people had mobbed the Baltimore docks each month when the packet bearing the new instalment of Mr Dickens' *Little Dorrit* or *Oliver Twist* was due' (M, p. 274),⁸ the 'old woman of a hundred and five who had declared she would live until Mr Galsworthy finished *The Forsyte Saga*' (M, p. 274) and 'the young mountain climber hospitalized with a supposedly fatal case of hypothermia whose friends had read *The Lord of the Rings* to him non-stop, around the clock, until he came out of his coma' (M, p. 274). These examples of 'the gotta' are offset by Paul's own experience of the reader's potential to manipulate the author. He recalls a letter sent to him from a 'Mrs Roman D. ("Virginia") Sandpiper' (M, p. 275) which was accompanied with photographs of her own reproduction of Misery Chastain's study:

Looking at those pictures had given him a feeling which was strange yet eerily intangible – it had been like looking at photographs of his own imagination, and he knew that from that moment on, whenever he tried to imagine Misery's little combination parlor and study, Mrs Roman D. ('Virginia') Sandpiper's Polaroids would leap immediately into his mind, obscuring imagination with their cheery but one-dimensional concreteness (M, p. 275).

⁸ King returned to this anecdote in the introduction to *The Green Mile*, relating:

A large group of Dickens fans crowded onto a waterfront dock, anticipating the arrival of an English ship with copies of the final installment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* on board. According to the story, several would-be readers were jostled into the water and drowned (GM, p. viii).

It was through the serially published text that King wished to write in order to replicate this extreme form of 'the gotta,' and for which, as I have already shown, he enjoyed great popular success.

The subversive potentiality of the reader is encapsulated in this remembrance as it demonstrates how the author's imaginative creation can become concretised by the reader in such a way that affords the author no way to regain control over the material. Paul's 'eerily intangible' feeling is juxtaposed with the 'cheery one-dimensional concreteness' of Mrs Sandpiper's appropriation of that which had previously been the author's sole property.

However, it is not just the interactions with readers that cause Paul to feel trapped. The distribution of symbolic capital also contributes towards Paul's entrapment in the popular. This is evident in his equation of writing his popular fiction as an act of prostitution. When Annie equates Paul's reference to the 'business' (M, p. 81) of producing fiction to a profession of his status as a whore, Paul responds:

I'm no whore. Fast Cars was about not being a whore. That's what killing that goddamned bitch Misery was about, now that I think about it. I was driving to the West Coast to celebrate my liberation from a state of whoredom. What you did was to pull me out of the wreck when I crashed my car and stick me back in the crib again. Two dollar straight up, four dollar I take you aroun the worl (M, p. 81; italics original).

Once again, the implication of the reader in Paul's incarceration in the popular is evident, but there is another agent operating here too. Annie, in many ways, transcends her role as reader through her facilitation of Paul's new book *Misery Returns*. As she is the one attributed to positioning Paul 'back in the crib again', she is ultimately playing the role of editor to the book. She is, in fact, described as 'Merciless Editor' (M, p. 117) who is 'exercising editorial authority over his body' (M, p. 315) and his creative output. Charlie Merril, Paul's editor in New York is perhaps the most suitable character to compare Annie's capacity in this role. During a meeting to discuss the publication of *Misery's Return*, 'Charlie was begging him for a nonfiction account of his ordeal. That book, he said, would

outsell even *Misery's Return*. Would, in fact, outsell *Iacocca*' (M, p. 362). While considering Charlie's request for the 'nonfiction account of his ordeal', Paul recognizes that:

It would start out as fact, and then I'd begin to tart it up... just a little at first... then a little more... then a little more. Not to make myself look better (although I probably would) and not to make Annie look worse (she couldn't). Simply to create that roundness. I don't want to fictionalize myself. Writing may be masturbatory, but God forbid it should be an act of autocannibalism (M, pp. 362-363; italics original).

This comparison of the act of fictionalising one's own narrative to 'autocannibalism' refers back to the traumatic episode in which Annie threatens Paul with the forced consumption of his amputated thumb. At this point in the text, the style alters radically from the rest of the narrative so as to evoke the mounting hysteria clearly felt by Paul both at the time and in his remembrance of the event.

Annie is described as having

cut his thumb off in the morning and that night she swept gaily into the room where he sat in a stupid daze of drugs and pain with his wrapped left hand held against his chest and she had a cake and she was bellowing 'Happy Birthday to You' in her on-key but tuneless voice although it was not his birthday and there were candles all over the cake and sitting in the exact center pushed into the frosting like an extra big candle had been his thumb his gray dead thumb the nail slightly ragged because he sometimes chewed it when he was stuck for a word and she told him *If you promise to be good Paul you can have a piece of birthday cake but you won't have to eat any of the special candle* (M, p. 278).

The two metaphors of prostitution and autocannibalisation that Paul employs to discuss the writing of fiction, and, in particular, popular fiction, illustrate his disempowerment pertaining to his own literary production and his participation in the field. His position in the literary field is subject to the control of publishers, agents, editors, and readers; his own power to determine his position is greatly diminished upon this realisation.

The great revelatory moment for Paul occurs as he waits in the basement for Annie to return from her Laughing Place. As Paul lies on the mattress in Annie's rat-infested basement he gains a clarity previously unavailable to him. He begins to ponder how he has been affected by being labelled a 'popular writer'. He asks himself the question, 'So what was the truth? The *truth*, should you insist, was that the increasing dismissal of his work in the critical press as that of a "popular writer" (which was, as he understood it, one step – a small one – above that of "hack") had hurt him quite badly' (M, p. 314). This 'hurt' that Paul experiences is specifically related to his 'self-image as a Serious Writer who was only churning out these shitty romances in order to subsidize his... REAL WORK!' (M, p. 314), and he realises that he hated Misery because 'her face on the dustjackets had overshadowed his in his author photographs, not allowing the critics to see that they were dealing with a young Mailer or Cheever here – that they were dealing with a *heavyweight* here' (M, p. 314). These are crucial points of recognition for Paul, as they allow him to come closer to acknowledging the part that he has played in his own positioning in the field of literary production. His entrapment is no longer solely attributed to the readers or the editors or the publishers, but also to himself as a literary producer.

A Tale of Two Halves

In *The Dark Half*, King explores the role of one who produces for a bifurcated market; he delves into the duality, which allows Thad to write both popular commercial books and those considered serious and worthy of literary prizes. Despite his ability to write for both markets, this dual literary production does not liberate him from the demands of the market, as Thad, like Paul, has become trapped in his role as literary producer. Unlike Paul, however, Thad is a respected

literary author who is nominated for awards and receives critical attention. As an eleven year old, he wins an honourable mention in a writing contest sponsored by *American Teen* magazine, prefiguring his future nomination in 1972 of the National Book Award for his first novel *The Sudden Dancers*. Thad recognises, however, that this ‘sort of thing swung some weight with literary critics, but the breathless celebrity-watchers of America didn’t care a dime’ (DH, p. 20); while he has shown himself capable of accruing symbolic capital, his fiction does not bring him much in the way of remuneration. Following the publication of *The Sudden Dancers*, ‘which earned more critical acclaim than royalties’ (DH, p. 23), Thad suffers ‘serious writer’s block’ (DH, p. 23), leading his wife to suggest the practice of writing under a pseudonym:

She said I could kick up my heels for once, if I wanted to. Write any damn thing I pleased without *The New York Times Book Review* looking over my shoulder the whole time I wrote it. She said I could write a Western, a mystery, a science fiction story. Or I could write a crime novel (DH, pp. 23-24).

Interestingly, the types of fiction his wife suggests as an alternative to writing serious literary prose all require an adherence to strict generic conventions. Thad views the adoption of the pseudonym as a ‘secret escape hatch’ (DH, p. 24), which would allow him to reinvent himself (DH, p. 24) through a reinterpretation of his role as a textual producer: one who writes for entertainment rather than as an expression of serious literary endeavour. He seeks liberation from his role as serious author, from the stifling attentions of literary critics, from the expectation that he live up to his potential as ‘the next William Shakespeare’ (DH, p. 8), by turning to the pseudonym, George Stark, and the writing of immensely popular crime novels in which ‘men robbed banks, shot each other, and demonstrated how much they loved their women mostly by beating the shit out of them’ (DH, p. 74).

However, it is only following Thad's discarding of the pseudonym that he begins to realise that in writing popular generic fiction, he has simply swapped one type of entrapment for another; he is no longer trapped by his production of serious literature, but by his production of the popular.

Thad's popular novels consist of *Machine's Way*, which became 'that year's surprise success, going to number one on best-seller lists coast to coast' (DH, p. 29), and 'three extremely successful follow-up novels' (DH, p. 20), of which the first and last, *Riding to Babylon*, feature the lead character Alexis Machine,⁹ an incredibly violent protagonist determined to exact revenge upon those who have committed past wrongs against him. The difference between Stark's textual production and his own is clarified by Thad when he states that:

Thaddeus Beaumont has written two books hardly anybody has read. The second, published eleven years ago, didn't even review very well. The infinitesimal advances he got didn't earn out; it'll be a wonder if he can even get published again, with the business being what it is. Stark, on the other hand, makes money by the fistful. They're *discreet* fistfuls, but the books still earn six times what I make teaching this year (DH, p. 122).

Thad, through his writing of popular thrillers, proves that he is able to earn economic capital. The monies earned allow him to live in a 'roomy New England Colonial, maybe one wing shy of qualifying for mansionhood' (DH, p. 334); they allow him 'to live in the light and be happy...when he would otherwise have lived poor and expired in obscurity' (DH, p. 334). His accrual of economic capital provides him with the opportunity 'to face life as – flourish of trumpets, please! – a

⁹ It should be noted that this name is a play on words, "a lexis machine," perhaps alluding to the mechanical reproduction of the literary product aimed for mass-market success, which is explored further in the following case study. However, as King admits in an afterword to *The Dark Half*,
The name Alexis Machine is not original to me. Readers of *Dead City*, by Shane Stevens, will recognize it as the name of the fictional hoodlum boss in that novel. The name so perfectly summed up the character of George Stark and his own fictional crime boss that I adopted it for the work you have just read (DH, p. 469).

King describes Shane Stevens as the author of 'three of the finest novels ever written about the dark side of the American dream' (DH, p. 469).

full-time writer if he so desired' (DH, p. 21). And yet, despite this freedom from financial constraint, he still finds that he cannot escape his role as a writer of popular fiction. When he confesses to the authorship of the George Stark novels, thus effectively ending his career as bestselling genre novelist, Stark gains material form and begins to exact his revenge in much the same fashion as his fictional construct, Alexis Machine, in an attempt to continue participating in the production of literature. Thad is brought face to face with his pseudonym-made-flesh and is forced to recognise that he cannot ever truly break free from his role as a writer of popular novels and return unscathed to his role as writer of serious literary fiction. As he comes to realise, both he and Stark are the same man, despite their existence as two separate forms; the matching of their voice prints, their finger prints, and their '*sub rosa*' (DH, p. 429) similarity displayed in 'that trick of crossing the feet during the stretch, of splaying the fingers stiffly beside either thigh, the tight little crinkle of the eyes' (DH, p. 429), confirming that 'they were mirror images, just the same' (DH, p. 429). Within this one man, there is an inner conflict pertaining to the dominance of either serious or popular fiction which is ultimately irresolvable. The ambiguous ending in which Thad remains standing with his hands covering his face, while George is carried off by the flock of psychopomp sparrows, and the intertextual reference to Thad's suicide in King's later novel *Bag of Bones*, both suggest that the excision and exorcism of Stark was not only to *his* detriment, but also to Thad's. They are ultimately halves of the same whole: 'Half and half. Criss and cross. Snick and snee' (DH, p. 263). In the same way that they depend upon each other for the continuation of their existence, popular and serious textual production depend upon each other to uphold their positions within the hierarchical field of literary production. There exists a relational identity between the two, in

that they define themselves through their opposition to each other: they are what the other is not. To remove one is to consign the other to oblivion.

To proceed beyond the level of the narrative's plot in order to look at the way in which the narrative is told, it is fruitful to turn to the structuralist theories of Jerry Palmer. Analysing the text in the light of his theories, as expounded in *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre* (1978),¹⁰ it becomes clear that Thad's story of a serious literary author terrorised by his monstrously violent popular pseudonym conforms to the established conventions of the thriller genre, and consists of two halves: the first is an 'enforcer thriller', while the second is a 'negative thriller'. As 'in all Enforcer stories, the hero is totally beyond the pale of the law, but still retains the reader's sympathy, as he is – within the context of the story – more sinned against than sinning' (Palmer, 1978, p. 214). The victims of the enforcer hero 'either thoroughly deserve [their treatment] or are sufficiently anonymous to arouse no sympathy. His professionalism and isolationist competitive individualism guarantee him admiration' (Palmer, 1978, p. 214). From this description, George Stark can most clearly be identified as an 'enforcer'. It is his efforts as a producer of popular fiction that provide Thad with the income which allows him to live the way that he does. Thad, through consigning him to the grave, is perceived by George to have 'sinned against' him, and he therefore considers that he is justified in carrying out the murders of Thad's accomplices. George's presence in the narrative traps Thad within the genre of the thriller; in a paradoxical turn of events, by breaking free from the writing of the thriller genre, Thad's own narrative becomes bound to the conventions of the thriller. The explanation of his

¹⁰ For further reading on explorations of the genre can be found in *The World of the Thriller* (1969) by Ralph Harper and in Jerry Palmer's *Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction* (1991).

choice pertaining to the name of his pseudonym foreshadows his fate, in that the name is derived from another source of the enforcer narrative: Richard Stark. Stark, as I mentioned in the introduction, was the pseudonym of Donald Westlake who used it to write about an enforcer named Parker who ‘goes through the bad guys – the *other* bad guys, I mean – *exactly* like a robot that’s been programmed with one single goal. “I want my money,” he says, and that’s just about *all* he says’ (DH, pp. 26-27). As Thad indicates, this character, who conforms to the enforcer type described by Palmer, is very similar to his own fictional creation, Alexis Machine. When George takes physical form, he follows the same pattern as Alexis Machine and Parker, by pursuing the members of an organisation in order to exact his revenge. Thad finds himself a character in one of his own thrillers, in which ‘we are no longer told about a crime anterior to the moment of the narrative; the narrative coincides with the action... Prospection takes the place of retrospection’ (Todorov, 1988, p. 161).

The second half of the novel, following George’s murder of Thad’s editors, Miriam and Rick Cowley, the journalist and the photographer who helped to break the story of Thad’s adoption of the pseudonym, Fredrick Clawson who blackmailed Thad, thus forcing his hand to divulge his secret authorship of the George Stark novels, and the secretary who used to work in the accounts department at Darwin Press who gave Clawson the information in the first place, becomes a different kind of thriller: the negative thriller. Palmer describes this type of thriller as a narrative in which

what the hero works to save is no better than the conspiracy he destroys, and the guarantee of this is that in saving it he actually removes from it what was most valuable... Ultimately, all that is left is the possibility of a fresh start for everyone; and even here nothing in the text allows us to suppose that what is to come will be any better than what has gone before (Palmer, 1978, p. 47).

By working towards the end goal of removing George from his life, Thad must occupy the role of a hero in the thriller genre. He must thwart George's plan to usurp his position within reality and retain authority over his literary production. However, as I have already suggested, the conclusion of *The Dark Half* is deeply ambiguous, as the narrative closes with Thad covering his face with his hands. Has he successfully asserted his authority and determined his own identity? Unlike the positive thriller, 'the negative is unable to hold out any real assurance: it is an open question whether the hero will be happy or not' (Palmer, 1978, p. 51). Mike Noonan's reference in *Bag of Bones* removes that ambiguity somewhat by concluding that Thad's family left him; he never wrote again and ultimately committed suicide. However, at the close of the narrative as it stands in *The Dark Half*, Thad's fate remains undecided and the finality of George's banishment questioned. Following George's demise, Alan Pangborn, the local sheriff, regards standing next to Thad as akin to

standing next to a cave some nightmarish creature came out of. The monster is gone now, but you still don't like to be too close to where it came from. Because there might be another... And even if the cave is empty forever, there are the dreams. And the memories (DH, p. 465; italics original).

The 'conflicts that threatened the order of the world' (Palmer, 1978, p. 51) are resolved albeit unconvincingly, and 'one is left with the sense that they will crop up again somewhere else, and soon' (Palmer, 1978, p. 51). Thad's narrative, told with due adherence to the thriller genre conventions, concludes without the reassurance that Thad has escaped his own personal sense of entrapment. The ambiguity of the ending provided suggests that Thad may remain trapped by his choices concerning his authorship and his participation within the field of literary production.

Thad is not only bound by generic convention, however, as he is also bound within the confines of a text. In this sense he is similar to Paul Sheldon who is also an author-protagonist trapped in the pages of a popular novel. In King's original plan for *Misery*, Paul would meet his end in Annie Wilkes' home and his skin would be used to bind the copy of *Misery's Return* she had forced him to write (OW, p. 194). This alternative ending makes a clear connection between Paul and his inability to escape the text. However, this is not the ending which King ultimately published, and so the correlation between Paul and the material text is admittedly less obvious, but it is certainly still present in the final version. As I have mentioned earlier in this case study, Annie relates the events that led to Paul's arrival at her home, and Paul comes to this knowledge 'as if he was a character in a story or a play, a character whose history is not recounted like history but created like fiction' (M, p. 12). Paul's latent perception of his participation in the text is reiterated at many points. When considering the consequences which may have taken place had Paul made a copy of his *Fast Cars* manuscript, and Annie 'had been clearly faced with the fact that she *couldn't* destroy his "dirty book"' (M, p. 62) that she might 'have decided to destroy the *creator* of the dirty book instead' (M, p. 62). A clear connection is drawn here between the body of the text and the body of the writer; if the destruction of the manuscript could not be effected then she would have to resort to the destruction of the writer; after 'all, there was no copy of Paul Sheldon' (M, p. 62). The use of the word copy here also indicates Paul's comparison to the material text, and this is furthered by other moments in the text, such as the description of Annie's placement of Paul into his wheelchair for the first time: 'She did it with the ease of a woman sliding a book into an empty slot in her bookcase' (M, p. 73). However, the nature of his status as a character in a novel, bound and marketed as

popular fiction is also communicated through the text when the events which occur during Paul's time in Annie's home are discussed as though they were a plot-line. This is exemplified in Paul's assessment of his final encounter with Annie, as he complains that in 'a book, all would have gone according to plan' (M, p. 354). He stresses that 'life was so fucking untidy' (M, p. 354) and asks 'what could you say for an existence where some of the most crucial conversations of your life took place when you needed to take a shit, or something? An existence where there weren't even any *chapters*? (M, p. 354). Paradoxically, Paul's existence, as it is narrated, is 'tidy' and divided neatly into chapters; he is an author contained within the pages of 'a book'.

In *The Dark Half*, Thad makes a similar observation during his desperate attempt to save Miriam Cowley from George's murderous intentions:

Characters in books – at least in *Stark's* books – never took pauses like this, never stopped to wonder something nonsensical like why they had never had a second telephone line put in for cases where a woman in another state might be bleeding to death. People in books never had to take time out so they could move their bowels, and they never clutched up like this (DH, p. 157).

While Thad seems at pains to point out the incompatibility of his own actions with those regularly narrated in popular fiction, the evidence suggests otherwise. As Thad asserts, the 'world would be a more efficient place if everyone in it came out of a pop novel... People in pop novels always manage to keep their thoughts on track as they move smoothly from one chapter to the next' (DH, p. 157). The validity of this statement is demonstrated by Thad himself through the telling of his own narrative through the medium of a popular novel, which sees him maintain his 'thoughts on track as' he moves 'smoothly from one chapter to the next', with no bathroom breaks. Once again the predilection of the thriller narrative to focus on

prospection rather than retrospection is evident through Thad's extolling the benefits of interacting with 'people who behave like characters in pop novels' rather than 'a Saul Bellow person' (DH, p. 162) when dealing with the aftermath of a psychotic popular writer's attack on one's editor. In fact, it is Thad's acceptance of his role as a character in a popular fiction that allows him to function in the thriller narrative in which he is confined. After telling himself to pretend '*it's a book you're writing... And pretend you're a character in that book*' (DH, p. 357; italics original), Thad begins to understand his capability to 'move not only himself but the other characters in this story... around the way he moved characters on paper' (DH, p. 357). Through his manipulations of narrative, Thad attempts to wrest authority of his own story from George, but he can only do so by accepting the rules of the genre, by accepting his entrapment in a popular novel. Both author-protagonists, Paul Sheldon and Thad Beaumont, recognise their predicament as writers who produce both serious literary texts and popular fiction, and who both find themselves as characters caught in the genre conventions of the thriller or the suspense novel. Similarly, they both experience their life becoming turned upside down by the intrusion of a figure who disrupts their understanding of the hierarchical strata that underpins the field of literary production: a figure who degrades, destabilises and disassembles.

Caught in the Carnavalesque

In both *Misery* and *The Dark Half*, the author-protagonist experiences a crisis which affects the way in which they function within the field of literary production. The figures intimately involved in the manifestation of these crises, Annie Wilkes and George Stark, act in ways that undermine Paul and Thad's sense of literary

hierarchy, and, with that sense undermined, they lose their perception of the way in which position-takings can be effected. Hence Paul and Thad, authors trapped by their own textual production, also endure another entrapment: an entrapment within the carnivalesque. The carnivalised space in which both author-protagonists find themselves causes traditional, accepted hierarchies to become inverted: all that is low becomes high, while all that is high is rendered low. The carnivalesque erupts in many ways throughout both novels, and in both cases it destabilises the way in which the author-protagonist perceives their work and themselves in relation to the field of literary production. Paul's physical entrapment exemplifies this through its shared characteristics with the carnivalesque as theorised by Bakhtin. A key scene in the narrative which highlights this correlation, is Paul's realisation of the extent of his confinement when he leaves the guest bedroom, during Annie's first trip to her 'Laughing Place' (M, p. 191). While investigating his options for escaping Annie's home, 'Paul Sheldon's Laughing Place' (M, p. 192), he discovers that 'Annie's driveway was flooded, and her yard was a quagmire of mud, standing water and gobbets of melting snow' (M, p. 197). This causes Paul to realise that:

Maybe she locked the doors to keep the Roydmans out, but she sure didn't need to lock them to keep me in. If I got out there in this wheelchair, I'd be bogged to the hubcaps in five seconds. You're not going anywhere, Paul. Not tonight and probably not for weeks – they'll be a month into the baseball season before the ground firms up enough for you to get out to the road in this wheelchair (M, p. 197).

Paul is trapped by more than Annie's locked doors; he is trapped by the world beyond. However, what is important to note here, is that it is a finite entrapment. Paul anticipates the reinstatement of his liberty at some point in the future. His confinement is temporally restricted. This feature of Paul's entrapment is shared by the carnivalesque, as the carnival 'feast is always essentially related to time' not just in that it was linked to 'the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or

to biological or historic timeliness' (Bakhtin, 1994, pp. 198-199), but also in that it provided a 'temporary suspension... of hierarchical rank' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 199). The key term here is 'temporary' as it is this which signifies that the carnival is bound temporally. Paul's assumption that there will be an end to his time in his 'Laughing Place,' indicates that his immersion in the carnivalesque is similarly bound.

Annie, as representative of the carnivalesque, has a complex relationship with time, history and the process of memory. This is first signalled during her relation of the events which led Paul to become a patient/prisoner in her home. At one point during the delivery of her part of the story, Annie stops:

There was a queer interval of silence, and Paul was frightened by what he saw on her face, because what he saw was nothing; the black nothing of a *crevasse* folded into an alpine meadow, a blackness where no flowers grew and into which the drop might be long. It was the face of a woman who has come momentarily untethered from all of the vital positions and landmarks of her life, a woman who has forgotten not only the memory she was in the process of recounting but memory itself (M, p. 13).

Her lapse into what appears to be a semi-catatonic state is described in topographical terms: the imagery of the black '*crevasse* folded into an alpine meadow' indicates a gap, a disturbing absence within the normalcy of the everyday. This drifting away from that which binds her to reality, is also signified through her temporal detachment. As a 'woman who has come momentarily untethered from all of the vital positions and landmarks of her life', she is unaware of her past, present and future. She has forgotten 'memory itself' as she has become incapable of constructing a past or conceiving a future, just as she is similarly incapable of apprehending the present. This detachment is signalled at several points in the narrative, as it becomes clear that Paul's realisation that 'her grasp of time was not

good' (M, p. 19) is well founded. Two such examples are the calendar on the guest bedroom wall and Annie's scrapbook. The former is significant in that its irregular updating further enhances the understanding of Paul's entry into the carnivalesque. The calendar 'showed a boy riding a sled down a hill. It was February according to the calendar, but if [Paul's] calculations were right it was already early March. Annie Wilkes had just forgotten to turn the page' (M, p. 65). Her forgetfulness regarding the calendar is revisited again later in the text when the town official arrives to warn her of her tardy tax payment. Upon realising that she is in arrears with her tax, Annie also realises that she has neglected to update the calendar. She '*forgot, just the way [she] keep[s] forgetting to change February on that damned calendar*' (M, p. 168; italics original). The second example of Annie's temporal lapse is an entry in her *Memory Lane*. Annie's memories are all recounted in consecutive order and are all neatly labelled; 'Annie had chronicled the whole story in her meticulous way' (M, p. 214), all apart from one specific entry which relates the news that she and Ralph Dugan have been granted a divorce:

Slashed into the bottom of the page was AUG 43rd 1880 FUCK YOU!

The paper, thick as it was, had torn in several places under the fury of the hand which had driven the pen.

It was the DIVORCES GRANTED column from the Nederland paper, but he had to turn it over to make sure that Annie and Ralph were a part of it. She had pasted it in upside down (M, pp. 212-213).

One of the most startling aspects of this entry, as signified by its prominence in its description, is the date heavily inscribed into the page. The date, August 43rd 1880, is not only jarring in its clear disruption of the narrative teleology, but also in that it is a date which has not, and never could have, existed. From this entry it is apparent that Annie is susceptible to these episodes where time becomes fractured and disjointed.

These lapses, however, are not confined to Annie, as they are similarly experienced by Paul. This loss of the ability to keep time is sometimes caused by his drug use: he ‘drifted. The tide came in and he drifted. The TV played in the other room for awhile and then didn’t. Sometimes the clock chimed and he tried to count the chimes but he kept getting lost between’ (M, p. 23). The loss of time-keeping and the drug induced state of temporal confusion is also indicated through Paul’s references to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). When Paul peers through the guest bedroom keyhole out into the rest of Annie’s house, the keyhole is described as ‘the old fashioned sort, reminding Paul of John Tenniel’s *Alice in Wonderland* drawings, set in the middle of a tarnished keyplate’ (M, p. 90). Alice’s entry into Wonderland, like Paul’s entry into Annie’s ‘funhouse [where] the laff riot just never stopped’ (M, p. 55), necessitates a loss of ‘all of the vital positions and landmarks of... life’ (M, p. 13), which are mostly temporal in nature. A second reference to *Alice in Wonderland* appears further on in the text, when Paul hears ‘the voice of the Red Queen lecturing Alice: *Down here we got our act clean yesterday, and we plan to start getting our act clean tomorrow, but we never clean up our act today*’ (M, p. 126). The suspension of action, as evinced by the imagined Red Queen, concerns Paul’s realisation that he is addicted to Novril, the codeine-based narcotic which Annie has been administering to Paul to help control his pain. These are the drugs which result in lapses of time for Paul, but which also alert him to the passing of time. He describes Annie, the provider of the medication, as ‘the moon which brought the tide’ (M, p. 28), thus suggesting that his pain is tidal in its effect; the cyclical waxing and waning of the pain in his legs allows Paul a more elemental understanding of the passage of time, one which is rooted in his physiology. When Paul is rescued by the two policemen he is described as

resembling that ‘guy in that book who’d spent forty years in solitary confinement. He hadn’t seen anybody in forty years. That’s what *this* guy looked like’ (M, p. 356). Paul recognises and is affected by the continual passage of time, and yet, during his enforced stay in Annie’s guest room there are moments at which time becomes pliable, or even lost altogether. The description of the incarcerated fictional unfortunate coupled with Paul’s own narrative of incarceration, pain and addiction illustrate Paul’s unwilling participation in the carnivalesque through his incarceration at the will of Annie.

However, despite Paul’s unwilling participation in the carnivalesque, he discovers that the act of degradation, one of the fundamental features of the carnivalesque, is tightly bound to conception, and that to degrade is ‘to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). This most natural of all cycles of birth, death and rebirth, can most clearly be seen in Paul’s fiction, and is facilitated in the first instance by Paul through his creation of Misery Chastain and through his inscription of her death in the penultimate novel, and in the second instance by Annie through her insistence on Misery’s revival. Misery’s revival is effected through her resurrection from the grave in which she was interred prematurely. The narrative that Paul concocts to allow Misery to rise from the dead involves the initial burial followed by a rescue mission to disinter her. In this way Misery herself becomes the epitome of Paul’s degradation. After all, to ‘degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). In fact the source of the idea for Misery’s

resurrection is derived in the lower stratum: 'the fruitful earth and the womb' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206) that 'is always conceiving' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). Paul is described as having layers of consciousness, of which the 'top two or three... dealt with such things as when he had last shampooed, or whether or not Annie would be on time with his next dope allotment' (M, p. 132). However, another 'part of him was furiously trying out ideas, rejecting them, trying to combine them, rejecting the combinations' (M, p. 132), and it is this part which is positioned beneath these top layers of consciousness. Paul 'sensed this going on but had no direct contact with it and wanted none. It was dirty down there in the sweatshops' (M, p. 132). Paul prefers to remain focussed on the top layers of his mind rather than to allow himself to sink 'down there' to the level where his ideas for fiction originate. When ultimately he comes up with an idea, the way in which it is narrated is to once again locate the idea 'down there', as 'the guys down below shot up a flare, as they always eventually did' (M, p. 135). When, after due consideration, Paul almost disregards the 'flare', 'a faint groan from down there in the sweatshops' (M, p. 135) is anticipated. This repetition of 'down there' and 'down below' further supports the supposition that Misery, as a creative outpouring, is reborn from the grave. Annie, along with his physical disability, traps Paul in the carnivalesque, but the outcome from that incarceration is not death, 'destruction' and 'non-existence', rather it is the birth of a new creativity; it is, as Paul perceives it, the conception of 'maybe the best thing [he] ever wrote' (M, p. 345), suggesting that Paul has begun to appreciate his talents as a popular author over and above his shortcomings as a serious one.

Degradation is also a key element in *The Dark Half*, most clearly represented in George's burial and rebirth. Despite George's lack of material form, Thad participates in a *faux* interment for a photo shoot to accompany the magazine article in which he admits authorship of the bestselling Stark novels. In the photograph,

Thad had a spade and Liz had a pick. Set off to one side was a wheelbarrow with more cemetery implements in it. On the grave itself, several bouquets of flowers had been arranged, but the gravestone itself was still perfectly readable.

GEORGE STARK
1975-1988
Not a Very Nice Guy (DH, p. 18).

The realism of the shot is offset by both Thad and Liz 'laughing cheerily' (DH, p. 19), as they shake hands across the top of the gravestone. Upon finding the photograph in the pages of *People* magazine, Thad discovers that the fake gravestone leaves him distinctly uneasy. 'That tombstone. That name. Those dates. Most of all that sour epitaph, which made him bellow laughter but was not, for some reason, one bit funny *underneath* the laughter' (DH, p. 22). His discomfort at the sight of the fake gravestone goes unexamined. Thad is aware that 'there was something not quite right about such helpless laughter – it was a form of hysteria. He knew that humor rarely if ever had anything to do with such fits. In fact, the cause was apt to be something quite the opposite of funny' (DH, p. 21). Rather than, 'laughter degrades and materializes' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206), it 'bring[s] down to earth, turn[s] their subject into flesh' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206), and this appears to be precisely the action that causes George to become reborn from the depths of his fake grave. It is as much Thad's laughter that initiates George's degradation and subsequent materialisation, as the photo shoot itself.

The sequence of events supports this supposition, as George does not rise from the earth fully formed following the breaking of the news that Thad wrote under the name of George Stark, or directly after the photo shoot; his resurrection follows Thad's laughter at the photograph and interview. His laughter is the degrading act which 'digs a bodily grave for a new birth' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206) thus exemplifying that degradation 'has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). The hole in the earth from which George is reborn is described as 'taper[ing] to a kind of cone... It looked the way a grave would look if someone had been buried before he was dead, come to, and dug his way out of the ground with nothing but his bare hands' (DH, p. 44). The birth of this fictional character, created by a popular author, is strikingly similar to Misery's rebirth at the pen of Paul Sheldon. George Stark and Misery Chastain are the fictional constructs which operate in such a way to ensnare their authors in the role of popular writer, and as such, when their author attempts to rid his fiction of them by literally degrading them, he effectively creates the conditions for their rebirth. Bachman experienced a similar rebirth, in that following his death by 'cancer of the pseudonym' (BB, p. xi), a manuscript of a novel, *The Regulators*, was found by his fictional widow and was published alongside King's *Desperation* (1996). The novels were both published in September 1996, packaged together along with a "keep-you-up-all-night" book light' (Beahm, 1998, p. 191), and shared the same cover artist, Mark Ryden.¹¹ The marketing campaign included:

¹¹ Mark Ryden (1963-) has published books of his artwork, such as *Fushigi Circus* (2006) and *Anima Mundi* (2001). His artist's statement describes his work thus:

Viewers are initially drawn in by the comforting beauty of Ryden's pop culture references, then challenged by their circumstances and finally transported to the artist's final intent – a world where creatures speak from a place of childlike honesty about the state of mankind and our relationships with ourselves, each other and our past (Ryden).

a special toll-free number (1-800-4Bachman) to get information on the Bachman book; abridged audios read by Kathy Bates (for *Desperation*) and Mary-Louise Parker (for *The Regulators*)...; thirty-second television ads (a million buck's worth) to push the books as a pair; and linked web sites for those with Internet access (Beahm, 1998, p. 191).

As Collings comments in *Horror Plum'd: An International Stephen King Bibliography and Guide* (2002), the two novels formed part 'of a unique publishing event' (Collings, 2002, p. 377) in that the two novels link together to give 'readers intimate glimpses as to how the two imaginations, while beginning with essentially the same cast of characters (or at least the same names for characters) might create entirely different stories' (Collings, 2002, p. 377). King's pseudonym experiment was resurrected as a marketing device to encourage the commerciality of King's work: Bachman's return emphasising King's inability to escape the stigma of his popularity.

To return to *The Dark Half*, George's physical presence in the text serves to illustrate the two-world structure at the heart of the carnivalesque in which accepted hierarchies become inverted. The 'carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 199) and George's presence in the narrative facilitates the conditions of 'temporary liberation'; his very existence is in defiance of the established order. The night George digs his way out of his grave, Thad has a nightmare in which everything he touches splits into two. This theme of the division of a whole into two halves, with the actions of one rebounding on the other, permeates the text. Thad's twin babies offer a visual explication of this connection through the sharing of their bruises; when one baby bruises their leg, the other develops a bruise the same shape and in the same location. It is also made explicit through Thad and George's twinning and

their role as authors of literature capable of accruing two different types of capital: economic and symbolic. This is demonstrated most clearly during their first and final meeting as they begin to write George's new novel *Steel Machine*. Thad considers that writing '*is not what we're doing here, not really. Writing is just the ritual. We're talking about passing some sort of baton. An exchange of power*' (DH, p. 439; italics original). This exchange is made manifest as George's appearance begins to change:

The sores were disappearing. The broken, decaying skin was growing pink again; the edges of this fresh skin were reaching across the healing sores toward each other, in some cases already knitting together. Eyebrows which had disappeared into a soup of rotting flesh were reappearing. The trickles of pus which had turned the collar of Stark's shirt an ugly sodden yellow were drying (DH, p. 449).

As his skin begins to mend itself, his body regains solidity. The disappearance of the sores, the 'knitting together' of the flesh and the drying up of the externalised bodily fluids all indicate the reinstatement of the barrier between the self and other. George's status as a separate entity begins to be realised once more, but only to be accompanied by the beginnings of Thad's subsequent physical decay, evident as 'Thad reached up with his left hand and touched the sore which was beginning to erupt on his own left temple, and held the pads of his fingers in front of his eyes for a moment. They were wet' (DH, p. 449). Thad's skin, his own barrier between the internal and external which provides him with a sense of wholeness and which separates Thad from not-Thad, is eroding, and with that erosion comes the realisation that, just as one 'end of the teeter-totter goes up, the other end has to come down. Just another law of nature' (DH, p. 450).

While the two writers were one, there existed no need for a balance; Thad and George worked in harmony together, producing literature that was either written for

critical acclaim or popularity. They complemented each other, and facilitated the maintenance of Thad's position in the field of literary production. It was only upon the separation of the two, accomplished through Thad's admission to the role he played in the production of the Stark novels, that the two halves behave antagonistically towards each other. Their only hope for survival, post-separation, is to accelerate the other's demise; they must actively seek the promotion of their own role as either a producer of literary fiction or popular fiction, to the detriment of the other. The fact that Thad is ultimately successful is unsurprising; following the temporary reign of the carnivalesque, in which the hierarchical positioning of popular and serious is undermined, traditional order must be reinstated. George, a fictional construct reborn through degradation, a popular writer determined to wrest control away from a serious writer, thus undermining the traditional hierarchy, is ultimately consigned to oblivion. As a carnivalesque figure his dominance is short lived. 'The book is closed on George Stark' (DH, p. 462). King was similarly incapable of maintaining any kind of hierarchical subversion, as he reveals that he received 'letters asking me if I was Richard Bachman from the very beginning' (BB, p. viii). He confesses that *Roadwork*, 'a "straight" novel' (BB, p. xii), was written as a response to those that asked him when he was 'going to do something serious' (BB, p. xii). However, even when writing a 'straight' novel, his authorship of the text was recognised, and throughout the experiment he aspired for Bachman to achieve success on 'the best-seller lists' (BB, p. x). He was incapable of transcending his popular roots and the hierarchical strata remained unaltered by these attempts to undermine and destabilise them, and continue to structure the field of literary production.

Conclusion

As I indicated at the outset of this case study, the carnivalesque will prove to be an important feature in the following analysis of the case studies that follow as its presence signals a disruption of hierarchical strata, causing high and low positions to become transposed. The significance of the carnivalesque to these narratives of author-protagonists engaged in the production of literature is to undermine the normal structuring of the literary field, thus articulating not only a desire to invert and destabilise, but also an acknowledgement of those structures and their permanence. Bakhtin's interpretation of the literary carnival as a space in which everyone connects through 'frank and free' (Bakhtin, 1994, p.199) discourse, a space in which the strict traditional hierarchies of feudal culture are suspended, offers a way of understanding how King's author-protagonists react to the destabilisation of an accepted hierarchy which characterises the field of literary production. As King progresses through his professional career as author, his *habitus*, his way of understanding how to participate in the field of literary production, matures and alters. In the two texts that I have analysed here, King's author-protagonists experience the literary field as 'immortalized and completed' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 199) and they struggle with the sense that their positions within that field are immovable and fixed. However, what both of these narratives show is that Thad and Paul feel equally trapped when this hierarchy is removed. Their definition of themselves as authors is fundamentally underpinned by their *habitus*, and when the carnivalesque enters the narrative and the hierarchy becomes inverted, they find that their *habitus* is incompatible with this new space; they find their identification as an author undermined. Neither can ever really find freedom as evidenced by the endings of both texts. Both end equally ambiguously with neither

author-protagonist clearly achieving a measure of liberty from their original entrapments.

The authorial struggles experienced by Thad and Paul in relation to their writing of texts deemed popular or serious correspond to King's experience with his employment of the Bachman pseudonym. Their attempts to achieve simultaneous economic and symbolic success may differ in that Paul publishes both his serious fiction and his popular genre fiction under his own name, while Thad and King adopt pseudonyms, but they all aspire towards the same fantasy of large financial profits coupled with critical acclaim. However, as the intrusion of the carnivalesque signifies, their efforts to destabilise the hierarchical structures that underpin the field of literary production, in order to effect a position-taking through an enforced re-evaluation of their work, effectively reinforce those structures. The destabilisation of the field is a temporary aberration which merely confirms its permanence and its omnipresence. King's experiments with the Bachman pseudonym ultimately enhanced the commerciality of his work through their republication under the name of Stephen King and through the resurrection of the Bachman pseudonym for the publication of *The Regulators*. King admits in his 'full disclosure' (*Blaze*, p. 1), published as the foreword for Bachman's most recent publication, *Blaze*, that he 'was actually two men' (*Blaze*, p. 1) during the years in which he surreptitiously published under both names. While the original intention may have to negate the effects of King's typing as a writer of commercial fiction, the publications of the 'two men' have fundamentally reinforced his categorisation. The use of a pseudonym has become reduced to little more than a marketing device.

Misery and *The Dark Half* are both examples of King's dramatisation of his *habitus*; they both contain an exploration of the struggle to write popular and serious fiction separately, as a strategy for achieving economic and symbolic success.¹² Through either author-protagonist, authorial anxiety becomes articulated concerning positioning within the literary hierarchy and the difficulty inherent in the practice of position-taking. King portrays the literary field as a simplistic bifurcation of serious and popular, and the practice of participation within literary production as requiring an affiliation with either pole; he proposes that the only way to achieve simultaneous success in both economic and symbolic capital is to publish separate texts aimed at succeeding where the other cannot. As King continues to explore what it is to be a writer in the late capitalist era, however, his definition of his own authority changes, and he begins to examine his involvement in the mass production of literary products in terms of a contrast with the products of folk culture. It is this focus which determines the following case study, which addresses the way in which another of King's author-protagonists, Michael Noonan, approaches his role as a popular author from the perception of one involved in producing fiction for the mass market.

¹² Despite Tabitha King's assertion that 'Paul Sheldon, the writer-protagonist in *Misery*, is not Stephen King, only a kind of thread spun from the imagination of Stephen King' (King, 1987, p. 5), it cannot be ignored that the narrative 'thread' is necessarily coloured by King's perception of the literary field.

Chapter 4 – Bag of Bones

Introduction

If *Misery* and *The Dark Half* are King's first substantive investigations of popular authorship, and its inferior position in the field of literary production, then *Bag of Bones* is the novel in which King examines the interface between two types of popular culture: what I am calling here 'mass' and 'folk' cultures; however, it should be noted that 'folk' culture functions in this novel as 'mass' culture's romanticised other, a simplified binary which seeks to negate the complexities inherent in the production of culture according to the heteronomous principle. King has often expressed an unease over the division between folk and mass culture, and has found himself in need of defending his choices to produce work that contributes to this ideal of folk culture rather than being aimed at the mass market. The most obvious examples of this are his experiments with self-publication through his own publishing house, Philitrum Press, and his decision to publish limited editions. In his defence of publishing limited editions he states that:

For me, [the limited edition] gives the book back its proper status not just as something to be sold by the pound at street auctions or to stick on shelves and forget or to stumble over in dusty attics, but as a *living object* in which the reader/owner/custodian has a vital part (King, 1985b, p. 5).

In other words, by removing it from the clutches of the mass market, and by publishing very low numbers, the text becomes imbued with an authenticity, an originality, an aura that it could never have possessed had it been produced by a commercial publisher.¹ He describes it as

¹ An article by Michael Alpert appeared in the next edition of *The Castle Rock Newsletter* (1985) in which he states that the limited edition of *The Eyes of the Dragon* was meant to serve a specific purpose – to be a lasting artistic pleasure' (Alpert, 1985, p. 4) before describing in painstaking detail the choices made pertaining to the design of the book including paper, typeface, illustrator, size of the finished product and the sourcing of the book-cloth used to cover the spine. Tirelessly attended to

a way of saying *Hello – here’s something you might like – I made it myself*. Cottage work if you can dig it... like knitting an afghan, then cutting it up and sending out the separate squares to friends, or giving away jars of home preserved jam (King, 1985a, p. 3).

Apart from King’s underestimation of his readers’ disappointment and the booksellers’ antipathy towards his decision to occasionally publish texts not available for mass distribution, King continues to publish in this way, reasoning that it makes it explicit that he is ‘not entirely for sale’ (King, 1985b, p. 5).

King restates his intention to distance himself from the commercialism of popular fiction with the publication of *The Plant* by his own publishing company Philtrum Press. Huge media interest gathered around its release in July 2000, and by the time it concluded in November of the same year, King felt moved to comment on the disparity between the perception of publishers ‘investors, and media watchers’ and his own, stressing that, in publishing *The Plant* online, he was ‘thinking something along the lines of, “Hey guys! My uncle’s got a barn! Let’s put on a show!”’ (King, 2000). He claims that ‘It’s a goofy thing, in other words. Not a business thing at all. Which, may I add, isn’t the same thing as saying there’s no money in it. Or cultural clout’ (King, 2000). King significantly plays down both his business acumen and his cultural perspicacity in order to diffuse the intense speculation over *The Plant*’s economic success or failure. In this way he attempted to refocus attention on the story itself, but his perceived abandonment of the story, in November 2000, merely reinforced the belief that economically it was proving unsuccessful. King claimed that he was leaving it at a ‘logical stopping place’ (Perry, 2000) despite stopping short at chapter six out of a proposed eight. The

by Alpert, the smallest details of this limited edition’s production underscore its differentiation from the mass-market paperback.

media reported that attention and ‘sales have steadily faded and this month the multi-millionaire decided to suspend the novel’ (Perry, 2000), supported by Marsha De Filippo, King’s personal assistant’s comments that ‘sales had fallen sharply to levels that threatened the future of the project’ (Perry, 2000). Ultimately, it was revealed on King’s official website that he made a net profit of \$463,832.27 on the internet sales of *The Plant*.² The hype surrounding the immaterial form of *The Plant* continued to overshadow the novel itself, which never gained critical interest, despite the relevance of the content to the form. According to King:

The Plant happens to be about a voracious supernatural vine that begins to grow wild in a paperback publishing house. It offers success, riches and the always desirable Bigger Market Share. All it wants in return is a little flesh...a little blood...and maybe a piece of your soul (King, 2000).

By ignoring the content in favour of the form, media analysts failed to fully appreciate King’s vision of cutting out the middle man and, therefore, negotiating a path direct to the reader bypassing the system of cultural classification. This vision became hijacked by the novelty factor of a major author joining the internet revolution.

As both his practice of publishing limited editions and his experiment with e-publishing confirm, King is keen to assert his folk culture credentials; he wants to highlight the affinity between his work and an idealised, nostalgic, even at times pre-technological fantasy of folk cultural production. In this way, he attempts to distance himself from the detrimental aspects experienced by one typed as a commercial best-selling writer. King’s exploration of this issue is not limited to his

² Emma Yates for *The Guardian Unlimited* (2001) reported that:

The figures show that the total money received from downloading of the six-part book was \$721,448.61 and after expenses, which included \$140,766.75 for advertising, \$14,000 for ‘compositing and design services’ and \$102,849.59 for ‘web hosting and maintenance’, the net profit was \$463,832.27 (Yates, 2001).

publishing methods and his paratextual posturing, however, as it is also dramatised in his fiction. Through the figure of author-protagonist Mike Noonan in *Bag of Bones*, King investigates the dialectic between popular and folk cultural production by comparing Noonan's participation in the field with that of his wife, Johanna, and the long deceased blues singer, Sara Laughs. Noonan's positioning within the field and his methods of production reveal that he is a popular, best-selling author who, unlike his wife and Sara, competes for economic capital. This case study seeks to address the question of what is achieved by this comparison, and how is it dramatised in this novel which, inevitably, became a popular bestseller in itself. This narrative of a popular author's haunting by female folk cultural producers further reveals King's perception of folk culture and its relationship to commercial fiction that he first espoused paratextually, confirming yet again that there exists a dramatisation of *habitus* through these narratives featuring an author-protagonist.

Writing for Mass Market? I Prefer Not

In *On Writing*, King advises would-be writers to write 'what you like, then imbue it with life and make it unique by blending in your own personal knowledge of life, friendship, relationships, sex, and work. Especially work' (OW, p. 185). He claims that people 'love to read about work' (OW, p. 185) and that it is this, in part, which accounts for the success of an author such as John Grisham. As King points out, 'Grisham's make-believe tale [*The Firm*] is solidly based in a reality he knows, has personally experienced, and which he wrote about with total (almost naïve) honesty' (OW, p. 187). I argue that in *Bag of Bones*, perhaps more so than in any other of his books, King follows his own advice and writes about the profession he is most familiar with: the profession of authorship. For this reason, it is a useful text

through which to consider the representation of the field of cultural production, as perceived by a popular bestselling author. In this first section, I focus specifically on this representation in order to explore King's own perceptions of the profession he has followed most of his life. As the 'author function,' Mike Noonan operates according to King's own innate understanding of the field and the position-takings effected within that field; his narrative dramatises King's *habitus*.

The beginnings of Noonan's career display an anxiety concerning the perception of his writing:

I got an agent through my old creative-writing teacher (who read my novel and damned it with faint praise, seeing its commercial qualities as a kind of heresy, I think), and the agent sold *Being Two* to Random House, the first publisher to see it (BoB, p. 22).

The university tutor who 'damns with faint praise' underscores the latent inadequacy that Noonan feels as a writer who specialises in 'popular' literature rather than the more 'serious' sort as preferred by academia. As he complains to his wife, Johanna, 'Did you see that first press release from Random House?... They're just about calling me V.C. Andrews with a prick, for God's sake' (BoB, p. 23). Johanna responds by reassuring him that, 'when I was in third grade, Patty Banning used to call me a booger-hooker. But I wasn't' (BoB, p. 23). Noonan, however, refuses to be consoled and responds that 'Perception is everything' (BoB, p. 23). This is a significant statement which recalls the growing unease felt by King concerning his typecasting as an author of horror fiction. The way that books, and by extension their authors, are marketed by the publishing houses determines the way in which the market will perceive the product. The press release, the author photograph, the publications featuring the author interviews, the front cover of the text, the reviews included in the paratext and the blurb upon the back cover, all

correspond to the inherent knowledge of the market. Fredric Jameson, in his essay 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' (1979), states that the 'atomized or serial "public" of mass culture wants to see the same thing over and over again, hence the urgency of the generic structure and the generic signal' (Jameson, 1979, p. 137). To illustrate this he calls for a consideration of 'your own consternation at finding that the paperback you selected from the mystery shelf turns out to be a romance or a science fiction novel' (Jameson, 1979, p. 137) or 'the exasperation of people in the row next to you who bought their tickets imagining that they were about to see a thriller or a political mystery instead of the horror or occult film actually underway' (Jameson, 1979, p. 137). Jameson quite rightly identifies that the way a text is marketed is interpreted by the market as belonging to a specific genre correlative to its delineation by mass culture's generic definitions. Noonan accepts this fact with his rebuttal 'perception is everything'; if he is marketed as 'V.C. Andrews with a prick' then that is the way he will be perceived, and the interpretive community will choose to read his fiction within those strict mass market, generic parameters accordingly. These communities 'share interpretive strategies' (Fish, 1976, p. 476) which 'exist *prior* to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around (Fish, 1976, p. 483; my italics). The key word here is 'prior': if the strategies employed while reading the text are fixed 'prior' to reading, then it is the paratextual, both the epitextual and the peritextual, that determine the strategies employed. As Noonan puts it, 'perception is everything'.

While Noonan reveals this fear of inadequacy as an author, due to his preference for popular fiction, he does recognise that it is his writing for a mass-market audience

that allows him and his wife to live the way they do. He admits, 'I wasn't Thomas Wolfe (not even Tom Wolfe or Tobias Wolff), but I was being paid to do what I loved, and there's no gig on earth better than that; it's like a licence to steal' (BoB, p, 25). It is this writing 'gig' that Noonan enjoys, before the onset of his writer's block, which is the subject of much debate between those who write according to either the heteronomous or autonomous principle. As Bourdieu points out,

the definition of the writer... is an issue at stake in struggles in every literary... field. In other words, the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42).

Writers producing independently of market forces would not consider Noonan a writer of 'literature' due to his production of economically profitable fiction. As Noonan confesses, he feels as though he has a 'licence to steal,' thus confirming that he himself struggles over his own definition as a writer, and is conflicted by the way in which he operates within the literary field and the conferral of the two types of capital. While Noonan never again discusses the lack of 'serious' attention his work receives, he does discuss at length his perception of his role as a professional author of popular mass-market fiction. Nowhere is this more apparent than when he is describing the kind of fiction he is producing for consumption by others:

I was what mid-list fiction used to be in the forties: critically ignored, genre orientated (in my case the genre was *Lovely Young Woman on Her Own Meets Fascinating Stranger*), but well compensated and with the kind of shabby acceptance accorded to state-sanctioned whorehouses in Nevada, the feeling seeming to be that some outlet for the baser instincts should be provided and someone had to do That Sort Of Thing. I did That Sort Of Thing enthusiastically... and at some point around the time of George Bush's election, our accountant told us we were millionaires (BoB, p. 25).

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Noonan's appraisal of his own role within the field is his comparison of himself to a prostitute. This correlation between the

selling of one's body for the sexual gratification of others to the act of producing popular fiction is one that I have already highlighted with regards to King himself, most notably in his article 'Great Hookers I Have Known',³ as well as in *Misery* through Sheldon's perception of his role as popular author.⁴ In each of these cases, this comparison is one adopted by the popular authors themselves, perhaps as a justification that they are serving some sort of need, as expressed by the paying public. The metaphorical linking of prostitution to popular fiction production is repeated again in *Bag of Bones*, when Noonan goes to his safety deposit box to collect a manuscript to send to his demanding publishers. The bank manager leads him to the box and helps Noonan with its unlocking, and then, 'as discreetly as a pimp who has conveyed a customer to a whore's crib, he left' (BoB, p. 51). What is most intriguing about this simile is that the role of prostitute has shifted from the author of the text to the text itself, and with this shift, the author has now become the customer seeking gratification. However, it should be noted that this simile pertains to Noonan's perception of the bank manager's mode of departing; or rather, it is Noonan's projected perception of himself as a purveyor of services of the flesh. He is no longer the prostitute seeking payment; he now views himself as the customer seeking relief. This shift indicates that he accepts that the texts he

³ In 'Great Hookers I Have Known,' (1986) the 'hookers' of the title are actually referring to opening sentences that 'hook' readers and stimulate a desire to read on; however, towards the end of the article, King expands upon the metaphor, implied by the colloquialism, of reading as synonymous with a sexual relationship. He states:

Hookers come cheap on the street, and I don't really want to be one. I've been a sort of call-girl, I think, giving in my best novels and stories sensations of richness and pleasure which linger, but with little shadow or dimension. I'd like to do better, but I'm afraid that, so far, at least, I've made no reader a great wife... which is what great fiction is: neither hooker nor high-priced call girl but a helpmate, giving richness that repays the reader tenfold for his commitment (King, 1986, p. 7).

⁴ Another example is present in King's interview with Abe Peck for *Rolling Stone Magazine* (1980) in which he correlates his literary production to sexual promiscuity through his recognition that, 'I've got a reputation. I'm like a girl of easy virtue: one more won't hurt' (Peck, 1990, p. 141).

produces satisfy his own need for an ‘outlet for the baser instincts’ and that his enthusiasm to provide ‘That Sort Of Thing’ is inherent to this need.

However, Noonan also acknowledges that his responsibility as an author who provides this ‘outlet for the baser instincts’, for both himself and his readers, also extends to his publishers: the producers of the material text. He recognizes that:

What the publisher wants... especially from an author who can be counted on to sell 500,000 or so copies of each novel in hardcover and a million more in paperback, is perfectly simple: a book a year.... Less than a book a year and you’re screwing up the publisher’s investment in you, hampering your business manager’s ability to continue floating all of your credit cards, and jeopardizing your agent’s ability to pay his shrink on time (BoB, pp. 33-34).

In essence, there are contractual and financial obligations to fulfil, as well as the pressure to continue producing in order to appease all of those who financially depend upon his ability to keep up production. Upon his acceptance that he is no longer physically capable of producing popular fiction, Noonan prophesies of his agent and his editor at Putnam, that ‘Harold would scream in pain and Debra would moan in disbelief, but what could they do? Send out the Publication Police? Threaten me with the Book-Of-The-Month Club Gestapo?’ (BoB, p. 57). This is an issue King addresses directly some years earlier in his defence of publishing limited editions. The defence is delivered in two parts, and in the first he explores at length his decision to publish limited editions as a response to the accusation from the book business that he has a responsibility to publish. He concludes:

If the idea of a writer having an economic responsibility to publish what he writes seems absurd to you, I can assure you it does not seem at all absurd to the booksellers of America, or to a writer himself after he has been told that his seemingly whimsical decision to publish a book in a small-distribution format had actually taken the bread out of children’s mouths or might have been a contributing cause to the closure of an independent small-town bookstore that might otherwise have turned the corner... or at least staggered on a while longer before collapsing (King, 1985a, p. 6).

Only briefly does Noonan touch on the profitability of his fiction for booksellers, when he mentions on the first page, ‘a used bookstore named Spread It Around’ (BoB, p.1) which he asserts does ‘a very brisk business in my old paperbacks’ (BoB, p. 1). Noonan could be alluding to the disposability of his fiction by his association of his texts with their quick turnover in the second hand book store, or he could be indicating the economic capital his texts are still able to accrue, even in their second life as used objects. He does, however, seem to fully appreciate the significance of the financial gains his fiction brings to other participants within the textual production process, in particular his agent and his editor. For example, he questions, ‘*Are the pair of you trying to figure how many golden eggs you can get out of this tired old goose before you finally wring its neck and turn it into pâté?*’ (BoB, p. 63; italics original). Despite the awareness that Noonan displays concerning his obligation to publish, he is still unable to produce new fiction in order to fulfil it.

This deterioration in the productivity of one formerly fully capable of producing commercially viable fiction, therefore participating within the capitalist system, correlates with one of the main intertextual references which recurs at key points in the narrative. Many texts make an appearance throughout Noonan’s narrative: Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) and Somerset Maugham’s *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), for example, both feature in the text. However, Herman Melville’s short story, ‘Bartleby’, is arguably the most significant of all these intertextual references, as it is this text which is most intimately connected to the difficulties of writing within a capitalist society. In ‘Bartleby’ there exists the clearest expression

of Melville's problematic relationship with professional authorship. In his famous letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne (1851), Melville confesses that, 'Dollars damn me... What I feel most moved to write, that is banned, - it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches' (Melville, 1993, p. 191). His anxiety pertaining to his self-identification with the label 'writer', and the way authorship was becoming defined, resulted in his joining 'the long procession of American writers who, in their insecurity and their wish to be understood *as writers*, write literature about literature' (Charvat, 1968, p. 227), thus complying with Bourdieu's hypothesis that it is only possible to encounter 'historical definitions of the writer, corresponding to a particular state of the struggle to impose the legitimate definition of the writer' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42). Melville, as his letter and his need to contribute towards the 'legitimate definition of the writer' demonstrate, was involved with literary production in America at a time when there existed two opposing yet equally acute needs: the personal need to write and sell profitable literature in order to survive financially, and the national need to create a new distinctly American literary tradition, forged by those writers capable of producing literature appropriate for a new and dominant canon.⁵ He, along with other American authors of that time, 'attempted both to profit from and to serve as prophets of the literary word' (Post-Lauria, 1996, p. xi), finding himself faced with 'the challenge of combining personal visions with the complexities of literary production at midcentury' (Post-Lauria, 1996, p. xi) as exemplified through his 'attempt to cater simultaneously to British and American tastes, to write for divergent readerships in America, to negotiate the critical debates

⁵ This was exacerbated by the lack of an international copyright law designed to protect the interests of all the participants in the literary field involved in the production, publication, distribution and circulation of literary products. For further reading see William Charvat's *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*.

over genre and style, and to “make literary” social, political, and personal views’ (Post-Lauria, 1996, pp. xi-xii). In ‘Bartleby’, the challenge Melville directly engages in concerns the tension between writing and the participation in capitalist economics. The lawyer narrates his experience of Bartleby’s employment, and therefore the reasoning behind Bartleby’s behaviour remains mysterious and uncommunicated; however, it can be discerned that Bartleby’s reiteration of the phrase, ‘I prefer not’ (Bartleby, p. 25), has its inception in Bartleby’s passive refusal to engage in the world of copying. His occupation, to manually produce copies of words originally inscribed by another, seems particularly relevant to the narrative of Noonan, a disaffected producer of mass culture, as Bartleby fundamentally reclaims his autonomy from the marketplace economy through his withdrawal of services.

Bartleby’s first appearance in *Bag of Bones* is in the epitext, as a quotation from the narrator of ‘Bartleby’ referring to the obstinate copyist is included as the first of three intertextual references serving as epigraphs to the central text. The excerpt chosen is from towards the end of the novella, prior to the narrator’s abandonment of his premises containing Bartleby: ‘Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here’ (BoB, np). By prefacing the narrative with this excerpt, issues pertaining to writing and the rejection of economic exchange related to textual production are immediately established, before being further explored through Noonan’s relationship to the other agents involved in the publication process. It is tempting to view this excerpt as a second dedication, following King’s first dedication to his daughter - a dedication which addresses the reassurance King derives from his economic

autonomy from market forces. However, it may be more prudent to link Noonan to Bartleby himself, as this is certainly a position which is reinforced by the other points at which the copyist is referred to. The second time Bartleby appears in the text is when Noonan visits Mattie's trailer and discovers that she is reading it as part of the library book group she participates in. Mattie asks Noonan to give her his interpretation of the text, so that she can impress the other members of the group when she leads the discussion on it. Noonan describes it thus:

Bartleby is tied to life only by work. In that way he's a twentieth-century American type, not much different from Sloan Wilson's *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, or – in the dark version – Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. But then Bartleby begins to question even work, the god of middle-class American males... Think of Bartleby as a... a hot-air balloon. Only one rope still tethers him to the earth, and that rope is his scrivening. We can measure the rot in that last rope by the steadily increasing number of things Bartleby prefers not to do. Finally the rope breaks and Bartleby floats away (BoB, p. 256).

In many ways Noonan has come to resemble the man who 'prefers not'; with the loss of the ropes which bound him to a family and to his work, he has become that hot-air balloon drifting further and further away from all that could potentially anchor him again to the reality within which he has functioned throughout his entire life. Noonan explains that the reason why the publication of his fiction still matters to him is 'because without my wife *and* my work, I was a superfluous man living alone in a big house that was all paid for, doing nothing but the newspaper crossword over lunch' (BoB, p. 39). Noonan's negative preference may be in large part due to the dramatic, physical alienation that he has developed towards his role in textual production, but it nevertheless effects a similar result, in that untethered he becomes detached from the market economy; he becomes incapable of participating in the processes of textual production. As he closes his narrative,

Noonan explains, 'I've put down my scrivener's pen. These days I prefer not to' (BoB, p. 660).

Folk Culture, the Carnavalesque and the Negation of Hierarchy

Despite the dominance of mass cultural representations in Noonan's narrative, it should be recognised that it is not the only type of popular culture present in the text. Folk culture, as it is represented by the historicised past of the unincorporated township of TR90, acts as a foil for mass culture, and it is this form of popular culture that I concentrate on in this section, as it offers insights into the relationship between the industrialised commercially produced commodity and the handmade, 'cottage industry' anti-commodity. Dwight Macdonald, in defining folk culture in his rather pessimistic article, 'A Theory of Mass Culture' (1957), states that:

Folk Art grew from below. It was a spontaneous, autochthonous expression of the people, shaped by themselves, pretty much without the benefit of High Culture, to suit their own needs... Folk Art was the people's own institution, their private little garden walled off from the great formal park of their masters' High Culture (Macdonald, 1994, p. 30).

This idealised view of folk culture operating entirely independently from all commercialism is distinctly nostalgic, with little basis in actual reality. 'No matter how much we might insist on this definition, the fact remains that people do not spontaneously produce culture from raw materials of their own making' (Storey, 2001, p.10). In fact, as Michel de Certeau asserts, through his exploration of the practice of '*la perruque*' (De Certeau. 1988, p. 25),⁶ the 'operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples.

⁶ De Certeau defines '*la perruque*' as 'the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer' (De Certeau, 1988, p.25) such as 'a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or... a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 25). He asserts that, accused 'of stealing or turning material to his own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative and precisely not directed toward profit' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 25).

They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 25). However, both folk culture and its practitioners are clearly presented by Noonan from a nostalgic perspective, thus offering an idealised view of past culture as a structural contrast to a contemporary popular culture driven by mass-market forces. This perspective is articulated through the presentation of folk cultural products in terms of the primitive. Nicholas Daly argues in *Modernism, Romance and the Fin De Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880-1914* (1999), that primitive 'object-culture offered the modernist artist an image of a non-commodified aesthetic practice' (Daly, 1999, p. 24); it 'offered an escape from... the smothering effects of modernization and mass culture' (Daly, 1999, p. 23). In *Bag of Bones*, the representation of 'primitive object-culture' permits the narrative to contrast the mass-market commodity with the 'primitive object... an anti-commodity' (Daly, 1999, p. 134). In order to further explore exactly how this contrast functions, it is useful to revisit Bakhtin's carnivalesque and its exploration of a very different kind of marketplace.

The two figures who practice folk art in King's novel are Johanna and Sara. The mythologised Sara is the most carnivalesque character in the text; however, I shall first turn to address Johanna's primitive, folk art practices, as these offer a contemporary example of a culture which distinctly contrasts the industry of mass culture Noonan is so heavily involved in. Noonan recalls:

Johanna painted (although not very well), she took photographs (very good ones indeed) and sometimes sold them, she knitted, she crocheted, she wove and dyed cloth, she could play eight or ten basic chords of the guitar. She *could* write, of course; most English majors can, which is why they become English majors. Did she demonstrate any blazing degree of literary creativity? No. After a few experiments with poetry as an undergrad, she gave up that particular branch of the arts as a bad job. *You write for both of*

us, Mike, she had said once. That's all yours; I'll just take a little taste of everything else (BoB, p. 164).

Johanna is artistically autonomous; financially supported by her novelist husband, she is free to follow whichever arts take her fancy. This autonomy is emphasised by the only economic exchange present in the description of Johanna's activities, the selling of a few photographs, which underscores the sporadic nature of Johanna's involvement in producing art capable of generating economic capital. This autonomy would have allowed Johanna to produce 'serious' art: a form of art more suited to the accrual of symbolic than economic capital. Instead, Johanna prefers to 'take a little taste of everything'; she would rather be involved in the kind of artistic endeavour rooted in community craftsmanship. The community emphasis of Johanna's art is present in the types of craft she practices, in particular the activities involved in the production and treatment of textiles. She knits, crochets, weaves and dyes cloth, and is known locally for her participation in the community ladies' sewing circle. Johanna may not be directly involved in textual production, but her involvement in textile production connects her to the community of the TR90 to a far stronger degree than Noonan ever achieves, as demonstrated by her participation in the exchange of gifts. Bill Dean, Johanna and Mike's caretaker, in passing on his condolences, tells Mike that 'My wife asked if I'd give you her condolences special. Jo made her an afghan the year she had pneumonia, and Yvette ain't ever forgot it' (BoB, p. 172). The act of gift giving is addressed by Arjun Appadurai, in his introduction to *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986), when he states that gifts, 'and the spirit of reciprocity, sociability, and spontaneity in which they are typically exchanged, usually are starkly opposed to the profit-oriented, self-centred, and calculated spirit that fires the circulation of commodities' (Appadurai, 1988, p. 11). However, he proceeds to illustrate that

‘this is a simplified and overdrawn series of contrasts’ (Appadurai, 1988, p. 12) by demonstrating that ‘it is important to see the calculative dimension in all these forms of exchange’ (Appadurai, 1988, p. 13). As I stated earlier, folk culture and the products arising from that culture are presented from an idealised, nostalgic perspective in *Bag of Bones*, which serves to contrast the representation of the mass market produced commodity and the hand-crafted gift. In this way, ‘commodities are held to represent the drive – largely free of moral or cultural constraints – of goods for one another, a drive mediated by money and not by sociality’ (Appadurai, 1988, pp. 11-12). Johanna is thus established as ‘a community artist’ (Daly, 1999, p. 134) precisely because of her ‘primitive production, the manufacture of highly individuated objects’ (Daly, 1999, p. 134) and her participation in gift exchange, the goal of which ‘was not the acquisition of commodities but the establishment of bonds between giver and receiver’ (Geary, 1986, p. 173). Her view of the world is one in which everyone’s position is equally valid and appreciated: a community devoid of hierarchical organisation exists more as a collective circle of equals. Noonan, on the other hand, belongs to a world where individualism reigns and your success within this competitive environment is measured by the positioning one attains on the bestseller lists; he is, indeed, a ‘slave to the masses’ (Daly, 1999, p. 134).

Johanna’s participation in the production of community craft projects, and the act of gift-giving, is not the only example of folk culture in the text, however. Arguably, Sara Tidwell provides the dominant expression of folk culture, albeit one from the idealised past. She was a ‘turn-of-the-century blues shouter’ (BoB, p. 165) who was ‘known as Sara Laughs’ (BoB, p. 166). Her nickname is the first indication

that she is a figure deeply integrated within the carnivalesque, and it is this aspect of folk culture, ‘a culture of the people for the people’ (Storey, 2001, p. 10) which is articulated through Sara’s presence in the narrative. Laughter is categorised by Bakhtin as belonging to the carnivalesque, where it is the expression of ‘the social consciousness of all the people’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 210). Carnavalesque laughter is of a specific sort, in that,

It is, first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated ‘comic’ event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 200).

Sara Tidwell becomes synonymous with laughter; her ‘*raucous, smoke-broken laugh... is her trademark*’ (BoB, p. 611; italics original). Not only is she a source of laughter, but she also induces laughter in others. This is most clearly demonstrated by the crowd’s reaction to her performance during the Fryeburg Fair:

They were clapping and stomping and bellowing along with the music, totally involved... The few women in the crowd were blushing but clearly enjoying themselves, one of them *laughing so hard tears were streaming down her face* (BoB, p. 452; my italics).

This atmosphere of collective engagement and participation is key to Bakhtin’s explanation of carnivalesque laughter, and it is Sara’s own particular brand of folk humour which acts as the lynchpin for this specific aspect of the carnival. However, Sara not only provides the source of the laughter, she also directs it, casting her as one of King’s characters who is catalyst for a carnivalesque inversion of high and low. Sara’s laughter is ‘universal in its scope’, and it is through her laughter that she degrades as she directs her laughter towards Jared Devore: a man who displays a ‘crude but powerful magnetism’ (BoB, p. 460) and who controls the actions of

'his crew... his boys' (BoB, p. 607). As she is facing him down, just prior to her attack, Jared trips over and rips his trousers. Sara '*just cannot help herself*' (BoB, p. 611; italics original) and '*she laughs.... And her laugh becomes her doom*' (BoB, p. 611; italics original). Following her gale of laughter, Devore orders his crew to attack and rape her, but when she discovers Devore's impotence, '*that raucous laugh bursts all unexpected from her again*' (BoB, p. 614; italics original). Even in her dire situation, '*she can't help but see the funny side*' (BoB, p. 614; italics original). However, the type of laughter she employs at this point is deeply ambivalent, as is her laughter throughout the narrative. When she calls after Noonan at the fair, she sounds 'angry, but not too angry to laugh' (BoB, p. 456). Even her tone of voice is described as 'laughing and urgent and ominous all at the same time' (BoB, p. 265). Sara Laughs, through her own laughter and the laughter she inspires, which is both universal and ambivalent, is the embodiment of carnivalesque laughter, and as such she becomes the 'expression of folk consciousness, of folk culture' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6), the 'expression of the people' (Storey, 2001, p. 30): an agent capable of destabilising the hierarchical strata which determine the field of cultural production.

The way in which Sara inspires laughter is also deeply entrenched in the carnivalesque, as it is through her 'frank and free' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 199) songs, which employ sexual imagery, that she communicates her folk humour. An example of one of her songs is *Fishin' Blues*:

*Do you want to go fishin
here in my fishin hole?
Said do you want to fish some, honey,
here in my fishin hole?
You want to fish in my pond, baby,
you better have a big long pole* (BoB, p. 426; italics original).

As Noonan confirms, the song was ‘written by Sara Tidwell, originally performed by Sara and the Red-Top Boys... The raunchy ones had been her speciality, double-entendre so thin you could read a newspaper through it’ (BoB, p. 427). The subject of her songs is degradation, and they ‘therefore [relate] to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). Her emphasis on the physical, through the thinly veiled fishing metaphors, is echoed through her delivery of the music. Her movements during her performance are dynamic and energetic as she draws attention to ‘the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). She is described as ‘shaking her ungirdled, unbustled fanny and laughing’ (BoB, p. 453), as well as sticking ‘out her breasts’ (BoB, p. 454) and shaking them, ‘laughing her trademark laugh as she did’ (BoB, p. 454). These movements designed to highlight her sexuality are all accompanied, once again, by her laughter. Bakhtin states that the ‘people’s laughter which characterized all the forms of grotesque realism from immemorial times was linked with the bodily lower stratum’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206) and Sara, through her association of the sexual subject matter of her songs, her physical movements stressing her femininity and her ambivalent laughter, becomes a vehicle for this carnivalesque degradation within the narrative. In fact, just before her own degradation, the scene upon which the entire narrative hinges, the link is made once again between her physical sexuality and her laughter. When the voice of one of her assailants breaks, *‘she laughs. She knows how unwise that is, but she can’t help it – she’s never been able to help her laughter, any more than she’s been able to help the way men like this look at her breasts and bottom’* (BoB, p. 609; italics original). Of course, it is following her next laugh that she comes to grief as the group of men attack her. During this long and brutal attack she is sexually

degraded, and ultimately she is killed and quite literally degraded, as she is buried in the earth beneath where she was raped. However, as I have already established in the previous chapter with respect to the rebirth of Misery Chastain and George Stark, ‘degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206), and so Sara is reborn, albeit in ghostly form. Her fate confirms Bakhtin’s assertion that carnivalesque laughter ‘is also directed at those who laugh’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 12), and that ‘they also die and are revived and renewed’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 12). For King, she too represents the creativity inherent in the act of degradation.

One final aspect of the carnivalesque that Sara enacts, along with her bawdy physicality, her ambivalent, universal laughter and her narrative of degradation, is her ability to negate hierarchy, and it is through this role that she prefigures King’s reprimand of the National Book Award audience in 2003. In that speech, King chastised the foundation for ‘deliberately staying out of touch with your own culture’ (King, 2003). He attempted to act as a leveller: one who could connect the producers of high and low literature. Sara achieves this levelling through the type of music she sings. Her songs may be ribald and bordering on sexual impropriety, but they are also examples of African American blues music. Accordingly, Sara exemplifies the ‘expressive achievement of’ blues musicians, which ‘lay in their translation of technological innovativeness, unsettling demographic fluidity, and boundless frontier energy into expression which attracted avid interest from the American masses’ (Baker Jr. 1984, p. 11). Baker perceives that the blues ‘comprise a mediational site where familiar antinomies are resolved (or dissolved) in the office of adequate cultural understanding’ (Baker Jr. 1984, p. 6). They are a matrix; they

are a 'point of ceaseless input and output, a web intersecting, crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit' (Baker Jr. 1984, p. 3). They do not exist within a hierarchical structure, as they are the 'spontaneous, autochthonous expression of the people', as described by Macdonald in his definition of folk culture. Sara, the locus for this music, as the name of the band, Sara and the Red-Top Boys, confirms, acts as a blues force within the society of TR90. She and her folk cultural production 'are always at this intersection, this crossing, codifying force, providing resonance for experience's multiplicities' (Baker Jr, 1984, p. 7). The best example of this occurs on the strip of land that accompanies the lake; running 'north and south along its edge, bordering the entire east side of the lake, was a right-of-way path (it's called "common property" in the deeds) which folks on the TR simply call The Street' (BoB, p. 142). As Devore describes, it 'belongs to anyone who wants to use it... It's our version of the town common' (BoB, p. 362). As the term 'common' suggests, it is a place of universal experience, and a place of free interchange. Sara's experience of The Street, prior to her attack, is a very positive one in which she exists as a member of equal standing in TR90 society despite her disadvantaged status at the turn of the century as a black woman. Despite Devore's belief that she should be 'treated like a nigger' (BoB, p. 607) rather than 'like a neighbour' (BoB, p. 607), Sara '*walks The Street as if she has a right to be there*' (BoB, p. 606; italics original), and as for the townspeople:

They *did* talk to her. She had a way about her – that laugh, maybe. Men talked to her about crops and the women showed off their babies. In fact they gave her their babies to hold and when she laughed down at them, they laughed back up at her. The girls asked her advice about boys. The boys... they just looked. But *how* they looked, huh? (BoB, p. 607).

Sara freely intermingles with TR90 society, connecting to them and connecting them to each other by her laughter; her laughter is what eliminates any notion of a

lowly social standing stemming from her race, and instead it embeds her in the community. The town common area of The Street, becomes Bakhtin's town square where 'a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 199). It is Sara's presence as a figure of the blues matrix that provides the conditions of the carnivalesque, and which results in her success building those bridges that King called for four years after the publication of *Bag of Bones*.

The result of Sara's cultural production are very different from Noonan's: whereas Sara's negates hierarchy and eliminates barriers between herself as cultural producer and the culture she is producing for, Noonan's reinforces the barriers between producer and market, and even between producer and producer. This is best evidenced through Noonan's familiarity with the bestseller lists, the positioning of his texts within those lists, and the positioning which can hope to be achieved by his competitors. He explains, 'I was never a Clancy, Ludlum, or Grisham, but I moved a fair number of hardcovers... and once got as high as number five on the *Times* list' (BoB, p. 24). He recognises that he stands 'just outside the magic circle of the mega-bestsellers' (BoB, p. 24), and he accepts that the highest positions are only achievable by the Clancys, the Ludlums and the Grishams of the publishing world.⁷ However, as his agent Harold Oblowski confirms, the mid-list positions are available to more texts than there are positions:

There are five writers for every one of those spots down on the list, and you know who they are – hell, they're your neighbors three months a year. Some are going up, the way Patricia Cornwell went up with her last two

⁷ King reiterates these novelists' domination of the bestseller lists in his *Paris Review* interview stating, 'We're a competitive society, and I think I have a tendency to measure whether I'm as successful as one of these guys based on the amount of money that I can get. But the bottom line is always sales, and these guys outsell me. Grisham outsells me four to one' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, pp. 94-95).

books, some are going down, and some are staying steady, like you (BoB, p. 38).

The competition is more intense amongst the mid-list writers, as there is no guaranteed success for them. It cannot be ignored that these bestseller lists offer a visual and quantifiable example of Bourdieu's field of literary production, replete with position takings and acknowledgement of economic capital accrued. The consequences of this competition for Noonan are most fully explored when Oblowski informs Noonan of the difficulties pertaining to the success of his next novel:

“There may be as many as five other writers that we didn't expect publishing next fall: Ken Follett... it's supposed to be his best since *Eye of the Needle*... Belva Plain... John Jakes...”

“None of those guys plays tennis on my court,” I said, although I knew that was not exactly Harold's point; Harold's point was that there are only fifteen slots in the *Times* list (BoB, p. 43).

By ‘playing on his court’, Noonan is referring to his target market. In other words, the authors mentioned produce a genre of fiction different from his own. However, this, as Noonan points out, is not relevant to the problem Oblowski is trying to clarify; the other authors may appeal to different target audiences, but they all still occupy positions upon the bestseller list and within the field of literary production. Then Oblowski informs him that Mary Higgins Clark is also due to publish a novel at the same time as him. Noonan believes that:

Going nose to nose, she would cream me. As the late Jim Croce so wisely observed, you don't tug on Superman's cape, you don't spit into the wind, you don't pull the mask off that old Lone Ranger, and you don't mess around with Mary Higgins Clark. Not if you're Michael Noonan, anyway (BoB, p. 44).

What is interesting to note about this expression of inadequacy, is that he, as well as in his previous discussions pertaining to the bestseller lists, refers to names of actual authors. King does not employ fictional names as he wants to draw upon his

audience's knowledge of the field and to give them points of reference within that field. In this way, King reaffirms Noonan's position within the field while simultaneously emphasising the reduction of the names of these well-known authors to signifiers of the author-function.

The contrast between the ways in which cultural goods are produced, marketed and received, as well as the effect that they have on their recipients, are obvious and far-reaching. Johanna, Sara and Noonan are all invested in producing popular culture, and yet the different kinds of cultural products function in ways which are completely antithetical to each other. Whereas Johanna and Sara are embedded within their community and are part of a culture which grows 'from below', Noonan is elevated from his community, ignorant of its ways and its taboos, and knowledgeable of only how the members of that community translate into potential participants within interpretive communities. He is a producer within the juggernaut that is mass culture, and as such, he imposes his contribution 'from above'.

The Two Ages of Reproduction: Maternal and Mechanical

It is difficult to ignore the fact that the difference between folk and mass culture is split along the gender line, thus highlighting the difference between methods of reproduction: maternal and mechanical. While both Johanna and Sara represent the presence of folk culture in the text, it is also clear that they share other resemblances, namely that they are both female, they are both mothers (although Johanna's child is still foetal) and both they and their children are dead at the outset of Noonan's narrative. They embody the process of maternal reproduction, while

Noonan's reproductions are wholly mechanical. As I mentioned in the first section, Noonan frequently refers to the machinations of textual production, and it is my intention to further explore this metaphor of the machine and the writing process using Walter Benjamin's famous essay from *Illuminations* (1935), 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. As feminist critics of popular culture have been at pains to point out, production and consumption of popular culture are generally viewed from a gendered perspective: masculine production, feminine consumption.⁸ What I am arguing in this section is that this gendered view of popular culture can, and should, be extended to the producers of mass and folk culture, as they are represented in this text. In this way, King's alignment of popular, mechanically produced culture with the masculine and folk, maternally produced culture with the feminine allows him to explore the dialectic present within culture produced according to the heteronomous principle. This exploration is most apparent when the differing products manufactured by both cultures, and the way in which the producers relate to their products, is contrasted.

The most obvious product is the one which Noonan himself is concerned with the production of: the popular novel. Noonan considers his production of these texts as being akin to the output of a machine, thus recalling King's metaphor of the juggernaut first employed in his defence of publishing limited editions and then again in reference to Bill Denbrough's literary production in *It*, and in *The Dark Half* through his decision to name George Stark's violent protagonist, Alexis Machine. Noonan's correlation of mechanised production to the act of producing fiction is evidenced throughout the narrative. For example, he claims to produce a

⁸ For further reading see Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, Christine Geraghty's *Women and Soap Opera* (1991) and Tania Modleski's *Loving With A Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982).

new novel every autumn ‘like clockwork’ (BoB, p. 34), and he expresses the thought that ‘novelists may come equipped with a certain number of stories to tell – they’re built into the software’ (BoB, p. 234). But perhaps the most thorough exploration of this particular metaphor comes towards the end of the text where he concedes that

...the machine which ran so sweet for so long has stopped. It isn’t broken – this memoir came out with nary a gasp or missed heartbeat – but the machine has stopped, just the same. There’s gas in the tank, the sparkplugs spark and the battery bats, but the wordygurdy stands there quiet in the middle of my head. I’ve put a tarp over it. It’s served me well, you see, and I don’t like to think of it getting dusty (BoB, p. 658).

The ‘wordygurdy’ as Noonan refers to it, is the internalised machine that functions solely in order to crank out popular fictions: the juggernaut has come to a juddering halt. However, the machine malfunctions following the completion of the novel Noonan was working on when Johanna dies, resulting in Noonan’s inability to use the tools of his trade. His experience corresponds to the argument posited by Umberto Eco in *The Open Work* (1989), that we ‘produce a machine, and then the machine oppresses us with an inhuman reality that renders the relationship we have with it, and the world through it, disagreeable’ (Eco, 1989, p. 128). Noonan’s utilisation of writing tools prior to the breakdown of his ‘wordygurdy’ indicates that the problem of alienation has been solved, albeit temporarily. Alienation, which occurs inevitably within the machine/human interface, is negated by the manufacturing of ‘pleasant’ (Eco, 1989, p. 128) machines, which, through a fusing of ‘beauty with utility’ (Eco, 1989, p. 128), induce the worker to ‘touch it, stroke it, use it’ (Eco, 1989, p. 128). Noonan’s experience with using writing tools confirms the success of this solution, as he becomes oblivious to the world exterior to the writing process when utilising either the computer or the typewriter. He admits that ‘when I write I pretty much trance out’ (BoB, p. 12), which is a fact demonstrated

often throughout the novel as Noonan attempts to recollect memories of the months leading up to Johanna's death. He was so absorbed in the writing process that he was oblivious to his wife's comings and goings, and to any concerns she may have had prior to her stroke. He had become completely assimilated by the machine; the 'wordygurdy' and his word processing application were working in symbiosis: an assimilation which recalls King's description of writing to escape the pain he suffered following his accident in 1999. He states that writing is 'like lifting off in an airplane: you're on the ground, on the ground, on the ground... and then you're up, riding on a magical cushion of air and prince of all you survey' (OW, p. 326). While writing did not save his life, 'it has continued to do what it always has done: it makes my life a brighter and more pleasant place' (OW, p. 326). The process of interacting with the 'wordygurdy' for King, is one of pleasure and escape, rather than an affirmation of alienation.

Following the breakdown of Noonan's 'wordygurdy', however, there follows a comprehensive incompatibility between writer and machine, as demonstrated by the physical reaction which occurs when Noonan attempts to operate the computer:

Sometimes I tried to write, and every time I did, I locked up. Once, when I tried to force a sentence or two... I had to grab the wastebasket and vomit into it. I vomited until I thought it was going to kill me... and I did have to literally crawl away from the desk and the computer, pulling myself across the deep-pile rug on my hands and knees (BoB, p. 40).

Noonan's extreme physical aversion to producing text, utilising the tool with which he formerly felt an affinity with, symbolises more than just a breakdown of the relationship between man and machine; it is the embodiment of Noonan's inability to function within the economic exchange of words for economic capital. The last attempt to reconnect with his Word 6 programme ends in such an extreme physical

assault that it results in Noonan's loss of consciousness. Following this incident, Noonan selects the Word 6 icon on his desktop and drops it into the trash, erasing the word processing software from his computer, thus effectively ending his professional life as a popular author. He relinquishes his role as a user who works 'as if in a trance, not for a common profit but rather in total surrender to the charm of the object' (Eco, 1989, p. 129). It is an act that King portrays in many of his novels, as writing tools become a tool with which to inflict pain upon the authorial body. In *Misery*, Paul Sheldon's hands become crippled by his turning to writing by hand due to the deterioration of the typewriter. In *The Dark Half*, Thad Beaumont and George Stark suffer impalement by pencil and in his more recent *Cell* (2006), Headmaster Ardai is forced to stab himself through the eye with a fountain pen. 'The tools represent in concrete form the torturous knowledge, sharp sinuosities, perforating ruses, and incisive detours that penetration into the labyrinthine body requires and produces' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 145). Through these writing tools, King augments the alienation felt by the author-protagonist, forcing them to recognize their role in the production of commodities.

It is here that I would like to draw attention to the fact that, whereas Noonan is the only cultural producer within the narrative to be directly engaged in the mass marketed article, he is also the only male who is invested in the production of cultural products. Therefore, it is significant that he perceives of his production as mechanical, as the reproduction of his product is most certainly manufactured in this way. However, when compared with the folk cultural products made by the female producers, Noonan's machine-like process of production is thrown into sharp relief by Johanna and Sara's distinctly organic methods. As I have already

touched upon, in carnivalesque terms, folk culture and the maternal body are intricately linked, as the carnival is essentially concerned with ‘degradation’: the cyclic nature of birth, death and regeneration. As I alluded to in my analysis of the degradation and consequent materialisation of both Misery Chastain and George Stark, the degradation of ‘an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of non-existence, into absolute destruction’ but rather it positions it in ‘the zone in which conception and a new birth take place... the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). Both Joanna and Sara are figures of the carnivalesque, and it is in part their role as producers of folk cultural products which situates them as such. In Johanna’s case, one particular product that she is responsible for creating is a photograph of Sara herself. Benjamin, in discussing the technical and process reproduction of photography, acknowledges that ‘process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction’ (Benjamin, 1970, p. 222) as it allows the ‘capture [of] images which escape natural vision’ (Benjamin, 1970, p. 222). Despite this recognition of the independent nature of the photographic medium, its technological methods are still a means of reproduction and, as such, it is denied the authenticity accorded to an original artifact.

However, the photograph that Noonan discovers in Johanna’s studio, which he assumes she found in ‘some local’s attic’ and had ‘printed it herself’ before she ‘then hand-tinted the result’ (BoB, p. 165), demands the redressing of the concept of originality, with regards to this creative reappropriation of a photographic image. In effect, Johanna’s alteration of the photograph has created a new original piece of work, which exists side by side the original archived in ‘some local’s attic’.

Johanna is practising a core principle of folk culture, that of variance and adaptation. The concept of originality becomes diffused as the 'true' original becomes obscured by a multitude of reconstituted versions. It can be said that the opposite exists for the folk cultural products which are reappropriated for the purposes of mass reproduction, such as Sara's songs. Sara 'had never been recorded' (BoB, p. 157), but it was still possible for Noonan to purchase a version recorded by another artist, for example, Blind Lemon Jefferson (BoB, p.157) or Aerosmith (BoB, p. 166). It should be stressed though that the original remains completely inaccessible, as does any reproduction of the original, as might be found in a folk cultural enthusiast's collection of 'folk songs, just one more dusty American butterfly in a glass case full of them' (BoB, p. 449). As this metaphor suggests, to place a folk cultural product in stasis, as the lepidopterist does with the butterflies in his collection, is to render it a dead thing: a metaphor which King had already employed to describe the effect of academic criticism upon a piece of literature. However, in the case of Sara's songs, these are not even accessible for commercial or academic study in the dead form of a lifeless butterfly collection or otherwise; they exist as a contained and unapproachable piece of folk cultural history. The recorded adaptations of her songs, mechanically reproduced for mass consumption by male recording artists remaining the sole connection between the past and the present.

These two forms of reproduction, the maternal and the mechanical, have a profound effect on the authenticity of the product in question, and it is this 'authenticity' which lies at the heart of Benjamin's Marxist exploration of reproduction. He deliberates that:

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter (Benjamin, 1970, p. 223).

Authenticity is definitely an issue within the narrative, if not of direct concern, which is most clearly evident when Noonan notices the art prints in Mattie's trailer. Prior to his first visit to the trailer, Noonan makes negative judgements pertaining to its décor, in which he imagines a 'velvet Elvis painting on the wall' (BoB, p224) and 'commemorative plates from the Franklin Mint' (BoB, 224).⁹ Both of these expectations stem from what little knowledge he has of Mattie: a white single mother living in a trailer in backwoods, Maine. Later, once he has actually had the opportunity to survey the trailer's interior, he confesses, 'I still felt ashamed of my casual preconceptions' as he discovers that:

On the wall above and behind us there was an Edward Hopper print – that one of a lonely lunch counter late at night – and across the room, over the small Formica-topped table in the kitchen nook, was one of Vincent van Gogh's '*Sunflowers*.' Even more than the Hopper, it looked at home in Mattie Devore's doublewide (BoB, p. 226).

These prints of original pieces of art have been mechanically reproduced for mass consumption, and consequently, have become stripped of their 'presence in time and space, [their] unique existence at the place where [they happen] to be' (Benjamin, 1970, p. 222). In Bakhtinian terms, they have become dislocated from their position within the chronotope, a critical concept which, I believe, is key to understanding the difference between the two types of culture, folk and mass, as determined by time and space, and one which underpins King's practice of publishing handmade limited editions and mass market paperbacks. It provides a way of comprehending the connections between the two time periods encompassed

⁹ For further reading on the position kitsch products, such as those described here, occupy within field of cultural production see Umberto Eco's *The Open Work*, in particular the chapter 'The Structure of Bad Taste.'

by the narrative of *Bag of Bones*, and the two types of popular culture which predominated in either time. While Bakhtin's exploration of the term 'chronotope' is 'as a formally constitutive category of literature' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 184), I would like to broaden the scope of the term to include the way material products of culture function within the parameters of time and space. It is my contention that the chronotope of the cultural product has a critical effect upon that article's authenticity, as explored by Benjamin. If, as Benjamin contends, the 'uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition' (Benjamin, 1970, p. 225), and that the quality of 'uniqueness' is fundamental to that item's authenticity, then it stands to reason that the chronotope the item exists within, reflects its inherent authenticity or lack thereof, and it is this which fundamentally differentiates the cultural production of Noonan, Sara and Johanna, or, indeed, King's commercial and limited editions.

In order to explore this representation of cultural products, an analysis of the chronotope, as it is expressed within the narrative, is required. There are two main ways in which the interface between time and space are configured, 'where the knots of narrative are tied and untied' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 187): the 'invisible cables' (BoB, p. 331) and Thomas Hardy's concept of literary characters and a 'bag of bones' (BoB, p. 41). The former provides a way of conceptualising space and time by emphasising the connectedness of people, events and places. The 'image of the TR crisscrossed with invisible cables, connections that were unseen but as strong as steel' (BoB, p. 331) facilitates the perception that the community which belongs to this space, TR90, is connected in a way that remains unseen by those outwith the community. This is confirmed by Bill Dean, as he attempts to describe the

polyvalence of the community to Noonan: 'In little towns things are kind of connected under the surface' (BoB, p. 348), before Noonan supplies the simile 'like cables you couldn't quite see' (BoB, p. 348). I argue that these cables are metaphorically employed by Noonan to give a visual image to represent the threads of narrative as they progress through time and space, while the chronotopes act as 'the organizing centres' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 187): 'the intersection of axes and fusion of indicators' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 184). As Bakhtin asserts, this provides a way of conceiving narrative as it is conveyed through the form of the novel: 'the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a centre for the concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 187). So not only should the chronotope provide a framework for the perception of the novel in its entirety, but it should also be employed to understand those events, tied to time and place, that lend the narrative its momentum. One such event is Noonan's discovery of another photograph, this time in a town history of TR90. Once again it is a photograph which includes Sara, and it provides a moment in the narrative where the two temporal spheres of the distant past and the present can meet and deliver to Noonan a partial understanding allowing the narrative to progress. These connections lead Noonan to ponder again those 'cables that were felt rather than seen' (BoB, p. 340), reinforcing the link between narrative progression and the chronotope.

The second way the chronotope features in the text relates to the quote attributed to Thomas Hardy by Dennison Carville, that compared 'to the dullest human being actually walking about on the face of the earth and casting his shadow there... the most brilliantly drawn character in a novel is but a bag of bones' (BoB, p 41). Of

course, there is an actual bag of bones in Noonan's narrative, as he discovers the remains of Sara and her son, Kito, buried in The Street, but it is actually the ghosts, those who are incapable of casting shadows, that most clearly represent Hardy's pronouncement. These characters, as ethereal, intangible constructs from the past, offer instances in which the chronotope can be perceived. It is at those points, however, that the physical make-up of the ghosts alters and they 'take on flesh and blood' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 187). This is shown during Noonan's encounter with Jared/Max Devore on the spot where Sara was murdered, as Noonan notes, that there 'was some substance to the man in Jared Devore's clothes, perhaps because in life he had been a man of enormous vitality, perhaps because he was so recently dead' (BoB, p. 602). Noonan views this figure standing in his way, prohibiting him from proceeding down onto The Street, as a conflation of the recently deceased Max Devore and his long dead grandfather, Jared Devore, the ringleader responsible for Sara's death. Bakhtin claims that 'the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 187); it reanimates those bags of bones.

However, as I indicated before, I believe that the concept of the chronotope can serve to elucidate more than just narrative and narratological progression; I believe that it can facilitate an understanding of the way cultural products embody a temporal/spatial specificity, which either establishes or diminishes their claim to authenticity. As a carnivalesque figure, Sara and her folk cultural products, i.e. her songs, offer perhaps the clearest exploration of this correlation of the chronotope and authenticity, through her presence within a finite, temporal and spatial matrix. Her songs redolent with a 'frank and free' disclosure of sexuality, and Sara herself,

as an agent of unification, degradation, and ambivalence, remain temporally bound: trapped within a closed circuit of production. Her products form her contribution to folk culture; they represent her absolute integration into ‘the fabric of tradition’ (Benjamin, 1970, p. 225). They are the products of a feminised folk culture which gains its sense of authenticity, its originality, through its maternal reproduction. When compared with Noonan’s novels, it becomes clear that they function in an entirely different way. Rather than grounding Noonan within a tangible community, his fiction positions him in the hierarchical realm of booklists, market shares, and target audiences, in much the same way that King’s participation in the production of popular literature does for him. They facilitate his positioning within the field of literary production complete with its necessary drive to effect position-takings, thus fuelling its competitive nature. For Noonan, his participation in the mechanical production of mass culture ultimately results in his disaffection for the technology he works with in order to contribute his product. As mass market objects, his texts lose their authenticity because they do not belong to a unique chronotope. They are multiple and detached.

King’s own texts, their publication commercially driven and widely available, suffer a similar fate, as can be discerned by the final line of *Bag of Bones*, which is delivered with no explanation or qualification, and merely consists of ‘*Center Lovell, Maine: 25 May, 1997 – 6 February, 1998*’ (BoB, p. 660; italics original). This is similar to the concluding lines of *Misery*, ‘*Lovell, Maine: September 23rd 1984/Bangor, Maine: October 7th 1986: Now my tale is told*’ (M, p. 369) and to the text which the next case study introduces, *Lisey’s Story*, ‘*Centre Lovell, Maine August 4, 2005*’ (LS, p. 559). In each of the cases I have cited, the dates are all at

least six months prior to their dates of publication, suggesting that the dates are linked to the writing of the text, and the place to the location where it was written. King's inclusion of these details are sporadic throughout the rest of his work; sometimes all that is given is a date, such as in *The Dark Half*, in which the dates 'November 3, 1987 – March 16, 1989' (DH, p. 468) conclude the text, and sometimes that is not specified either. I would argue that the date and place occupy a transgressive position within the text as they are included as if they belong to the text, while providing information, albeit unqualified information, which is intrinsically paratextual. The presence of these concluding lines offer a point at which the world of the author, and the fictional world he has created, bleed together. Thus the date and location cited ground King in a chronotope, a temporal/spatial specificity, which he in turn attempts to confer on his fiction. By fixing the fiction in a unique time and place, he tries to reconstitute its authenticity, although its very existence as a mass cultural product prevents it from ever obtaining this status. *Bag of Bones* itself remains a product of mechanical reproduction, and so consequently it is irredeemable as an article imbued with authenticity.

Conclusion

Through the narrative of the author-protagonist, Mike Noonan, and his perspective as a producer of popular fiction, King has dramatised his own understanding of cultural production underpinned by the heteronomous principle. He has explored within his fiction the dialectic between folk and mass culture by juxtaposing the production and the products of Noonan and Johanna and Sara, thus facilitating an appreciation of either culture's modes of production, circulation, and reception. As I have stressed at the outset of this case study, the depiction of folk culture is

deliberately nostalgic and idealised in order to exaggerate the differentiation of the two, but by doing so, King portrays a belief in the anti-commodity status of folk cultural products. As I have shown through his paratextual inclusion of the location and date pertinent to the writing of the text in question, King attempts to appropriate some of the tropes that he recognises as belonging to those products of folk culture as a way to redeem his commercially popular fiction from their sole status as commodities of the entertainment industry.

However, it is his participation in the publication of limited editions which exist as the most obvious examples of the rendering of King's fiction as products of folk culture through their cottage industry production and King's emphasis on their anti-commodity status. He encourages the appreciation of the book as a textual object by asking questions such as 'Do you know the difference between a sewn binding, a cloth binding, and a glued binding?' (King, 1985b, p. 2) and 'When was the last time that you stuck your nose into a book and smelled it? When was the last time you *weighed* a book?' (King, 1985b, p. 2). He claims that the 'reworking of the book-image' (King, 1985b, p. 5) emphasises that 'it really *is* an actual object that has weight and dimension and physical presence' (King, 1985b, p. 5), thus providing the reader 'with the rather startling knowledge that he is not just a book *reader* or a book *owner* but is actually a book *custodian* – and in our current society, that is something almost as unique as a road without electrical wires running beside it' (King, 1985b, p. 5). As his choice of simile indicates, with its reference to the connecting cables, the notion of the reader assuming the role of book custodian affirms the limited edition as existing within its own chronotope. It has retained its authenticity, its aura, its individuality.

In *Bag of Bones*, King articulates the difference between the autochthonous folk culture that results in unrecorded folk songs, gifted afghans and ‘jars of home-preserved jam’ with the ‘mutually parasitic business of publishing and bookselling, where commerce now exists in a feverish hype-world of pre-publication news, bloated advertising budgets, subsidiary sales, and gigantic print runs’ (King, 1985b, p. 5). As his statements concerning his reasons for publishing limited editions and for self-publishing his serial novel *The Plant* online confirm, King perceives that the invocation of folk culture contributes towards the redemption of culture that operates according to the heteronomous principle. It marks a movement away from the profit-driven economics of the commercially focused ‘business of publishing and bookselling’ and in this way, it attempts to reinvest popular fiction with a worth that transcends economic capital. In the following chapter, which focuses on King’s most recent fiction, I shall show that King employs a similar invocation in his narrative of agonism as it exists between authors and the Academy.

Conclusion - Lisey's and Other Stories

Introduction

Throughout this thesis it has been my intent to assess the relevance of the author-protagonist to King's pronouncements concerning authorial anxiety. I have demonstrated that there exists an articulation of King's understanding of the hierarchisation of literary production in his paratexts, non-fiction and fiction. Through my analysis of his narratives which feature an author-protagonist, I have argued that there is a dramatisation of habitus which provides insight into his perception of the literary field and into the way position-takings may be effected within that field. In order to show this, I have necessarily limited my research to a small number of King's texts; however, it should be noted that while I have demonstrated the way in which the figure of the author-protagonist functions within a selection of King's fiction, examples of his articulation of the authorial experience are present throughout his work. As I have shown in my case studies on *The Shining*, *Misery*, *The Dark Half* and *Bag of Bones*, authorial anxieties find their clearest expression through the figure of the author-protagonist who agonises over their production of literature, and the way in which those literary products will be marketed, distributed, critiqued and received. It is through these narratives that questions pertaining to the hierarchical strata that structure the field are explored, and King's understanding of the ways in which an author produces within these hierarchies, in order to achieve success of both an economic and a symbolic nature, is rendered explicit.

From the outset of his career, King has explored through his fiction his perception of the literary field, which, as I have stressed previously, is a dynamic 'complex,

multi-dimensional model' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. 169), that operates according to the opposing principles of autonomous and heteronomous literary production. In my analysis of *The Shining*, I demonstrated the way in which the narrative expresses the anxieties of authorial production according to the autonomous principle. Jack's failure to successfully embody the role of the poète maudit undermines the belief that one can participate in literary production while remaining wholly separate from the pursuit of economic capital. In *Misery* and *The Dark Half*, however, the focus shifts to those endeavouring to produce literature according to the heteronomous principle as well as that which complies with the autonomous. As both Paul Sheldon and Thad Beaumont illustrate, King's experience as one of the best-selling novelists of the eighties dictates that, for him, this occupation of both roles of popular and serious author is an impossible achievement. *Bag of Bones* signals another change in focus through a narratorial investigation into heteronomous cultural production, and the differentiation between mass culture and an idealised representation of folk culture. By way of concluding, however, I shall demonstrate the way in which King's literary production continues to explore these anxieties of authorship through his most recent novels, *Lisey's Story* and *Duma Key*, his role as editor of the Houghton Mifflin publication of *The Best American Short Stories for 2007* and his latest collection of short stories, *Just After Sunset*.

The earliest of these texts, *Lisey's Story* was written during King's period of crisis. King, recovering from an attack of pneumonia, in which, he claims, 'I almost died. It was really close' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 99), returned home to find his wife in the midst of redecorating his study. He recalls that, 'When I came back from the

hospital, everything had been pulled out, and I felt like a ghost. I thought, Maybe I died. This is what the study would look like after I died' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 99). It was at this point that he began 'to write this story about a famous writer who died, and about his wife, Lisey, who is trying to get on with her life two years later' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 99): a story in which the themes of literary legacy are explored to a greater extent than in any of his previous fiction. Unlike King's earlier novels, *Lisey's Story* is only marginally concerned with the practicalities of literary production. There is very little mention of the act of authorship, negotiations with publishers, or interaction with his fan-base. Primarily it is a text which focuses on the consecration of literature, the role of the academy in literary legitimisation and the fashioning of an author's reputation. While King has discussed all of these issues at length in his many interviews, afterwords, forewords, editorials and non-fictional texts, *Lisey's Story* is his first full-length, fictional interrogation of literary longevity. Written during a period in which King had come face to face with his mortality, it marks a shift of focus in his writing about writing; it is, I want to suggest, an attempt to effect position-taking by emphasizing the importance of literary reputation rather than of textual production. And as I shall show in my concluding remarks, the dilemmas *Lisey's Story* dramatizes have become the dominant ones in King's subsequent writing.

King and the Incunks

There were lots of words for the stuff Scott had left behind. The only one she completely understood was *memorabilia*, but there was another one, a funny one, that sounded like *incuncabilla*. That was what the impatient people wanted, the wheedlers, and the angry ones – Scott's *incuncabilla*. Lisey began to think of them as Incunks (LS, p. 5).

One of the primary institutions invested with the power to give credit, in the form of increasing the amount of symbolic capital available to a text, and, by extension, to its author, is the university. King has had a long and complex relationship with the university from his early days as a student at the University of Maine to his teaching there in later years. His interactions with the university system, particularly with respect to literary production and criticism, have influenced his disposition towards the system of cultural consecration, structuring his *habitus* and, ultimately, becoming dramatised in his fiction. For example, *It* and *The Dark Half* both feature an academic presence which acts as a signifier for literary legitimacy; however, *Lisey's Story* offers the most prevalent and ongoing fictionalisation of the author/academy relationship. This relationship is characterised by the 'two-hearted' (LS, p. 301) nature of the text, in that it is simultaneously supported and subverted. Just as there exists an attempt to undermine and endorse the reifying structure and to incorporate dialogized heteroglossia while conceding to centripetal force, the treatment of academics, and of the university institution in general, similarly reflects a desire to conflate two opposing elements. In the narrative's treatment of both the academics explicitly named, Joseph Woodbody and Roger Dashmiel, the narrator is particularly scathing and seeks to portray them as disempowered, as illustrated by Dashmiel's cowardice and his inability to achieve a literary status equal to Scott's, and by Woodbody's inability to control Dooley's aggressive actions towards Lisey.

However, in its treatment of the Academy as an institution capable of bestowing literary consecration, the narrative is far more ambivalent and conflicted, particularly as the Academy is shown to endorse Scott's work as worthy of serious critical attention.

I argue that by adopting this 'two-hearted' approach King hopes to effect position-taking, by simultaneously undermining and endorsing those structured structures and structuring structures which maintain the functioning of the field of literary production. If the hierarchy was to remain undermined, then the author's *habitus*, their understanding of how to operate within the field of literary production, would be deemed incompatible and any attempt to position-take would ultimately be superfluous and ineffectual. The dramatisation of this aspect of King's *habitus*, as it pertains to the esteem in which his work is held by academics and other cultural custodians, articulates his understanding of the Academy as the institution largely responsible for the sacralisation of literature, consequently facilitating position-taking and upholding cultural hierarchy. King's relationship to the university is necessarily agonistic; authors 'attempting to impose an *auctoritas* that recognizes no other principle of legitimation than itself' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124), are, in fact, 'embittered by that type of teacher, the *lector*, who comments on and explains the work of others... and whose own production owes much to the professional practice of its author and to the position... and circulation of symbolic goods' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124). However, despite this,

producers cannot fail to pay attention to the judgements of university institutions. They cannot ignore the fact that it is these who will have the last word, and that ultimate consecration can only be accorded them by an authority whose legitimacy is challenged by their entire practice, their entire professional ideology (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124).

It is this which is ‘the principle underlying the ambivalent relations between producers and scholastic authority’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124), and it is also this which, I argue, is demonstrated in King’s interactions with the Academy, which become dramatised in *Lisey’s Story*. Indeed, the representation of academics in Lisey’s narrative would most certainly be an example recognised by Bourdieu, as one of those ‘attacks upon the university which bear witness to the fact that their authors recognize the legitimacy of its verdicts sufficiently to reproach it for not having recognized them’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 124).

One way in which this ‘two-hearted’ approach can be best understood is, once again, through the presence of the carnivalesque. Some theorists approaching the carnivalesque in popular culture have suggested that its presence ‘is a recognition of the strength and endurance of those oppositional, disruptive, popular forces’ (Fiske, 1987, p. 249), and that it ‘remains an always dangerous supplement, challenging, destabilising, relativising, pluralising single notions of true culture, true reason, true broadcasting, true art’ (Docker, 1994, p. 284). However, Simon Dentith in his introductory reader *Bakhtinian Thought* (1995) posits that:

it is hard to accede to a version of carnival which stresses its capacity to invert hierarchies and undermine boundaries, without at the same time recalling that many carnival and carnival-like degradations clearly functioned to reinforce communal and hierarchical norms... The carnival inversions, the world-turned-upside-down of these festivities, were clearly not aimed at loosening people’s sense of the rightness of the rules which kept the world the right way up, but on the contrary at reinforcing them (Dentith, 1995, p. 74).

The carnivalesque is, as already demonstrated throughout these case studies, characterised by its inherent temporality. The opportunity to ‘invert hierarchy and undermine boundaries’ is finite, framed by an existence in which the high and the

low are held securely in place, position-takings are made according to a shared understanding of the field of literary production and the authority to sacralize belongs to agreed custodians of culture, such as academics. In this sense, *Lisey's Story*, through its articulation of the carnivalesque, provides an 'outletting' (LS, p. 130), 'a safety valve, which in some overall functional way reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension' (Dentith, 1995, p. 73). As both Docker and Fiske suggest, the carnivalesque is 'dangerous', 'oppositional' and 'disruptive'; however, the way in which the carnivalesque operates in *Lisey's Story*, and in the other texts I have focussed on in these case studies, is to temporarily destabilise hierarchical strata before they are once again reasserted.

The figure who best embodies this practice of temporary subversion, as signalled through the presence of the carnivalesque, is Scott as he negotiates, through his participation in the field of literary production, a balance between the carnivalesque sphere of Boo'ya Moon and the highly hierarchical sphere of literary legitimisation.

As Amanda, following her own return from a break with reality, explains:

most kids have a place they go to when they're scared or lonely or just plain bored. They call it Neverland or the Shire, Boo'ya Moon if they've got big imaginations and make it up for themselves. Most of them forget. The talented few – like Scott – harness their dreams and turn them into horses (LS, p. 499).

Boo'ya Moon is a place constructed by the imaginings of Scott as a small boy, and it remains a place to retreat to while also acting as a way to contain threats and fears, throughout his adult life. His affiliation with this carnivalesque space manifests itself in several ways throughout Lisey's narrative of marital reminiscence and grieving widowhood. His role as serious literary author is frequently subverted by his childish love for practical jokes, which he calls 'bools' (LS, p. 105). One

example of this love is described by Amanda who recalls a trip she once made with him to Auburn:

I hooked a ride with him up the city once – he needed to go to the office-supply store and I needed new shoes... And we happened to drive by Auburn Novelty. He'd never seen it before and nothing would do but he had to park and go right in. He was like a ten-year-old! I needed Eddie Bauer shitkickers so I could walk in the woods without getting poison ivy all over me and all *he* wanted to do was buy out that whole freakin store. Itchy-powder, joy buzzers, pepper gum, plastic puke, X-ray glasses, you name it, he had it piled up on the counter... He must have bought a hundred dollars' worth of that crazy made-in-Taiwan shite, Lisey (LS, p. 124).

Reference to this impulsive shopping spree at the local joke shop is included in the narrative to undermine the perception of Scott as a 'serious' author. His active enjoyment of the practical joke, or 'bool', destabilises any attempt to cast him in the role of one who upholds any form of 'one-sided tone of seriousness' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 208) as embodied by the Academy; the king becomes the clown. This is demonstrated through his final practical joke intended for the academic establishment: his seemingly epic novel, *Ike Comes Home*:

Was it a novel? A short story? Just looking into the box, it was impossible to tell. But there had to be a thousand or more pages in there, most of them in a single high stack under that title-page but still more crammed in sideways in two directions, like packing. If it was a novel, and this box contained all of it, it had to be longer than *Gone With the Wind* (LS, p. 97).

However, upon closer inspection, it is revealed to be a practical joke; the box is stuffed full of blank pages. 'This giant bogus novel was Scott Landon's idea of a knee-slapper' (LS, p. 105). Lisey ponders whether the joke was intended for 'Incunks like Woodbody? That made a certain amount of sense, Scott liked to poke fun at the folks he'd called "text-crazies"' (LS, p. 105). Scott is directly engaging with the Academy in order to 'poke fun' at their dependence upon the creative output of authors such as himself.

His refusal to play this role of upholder of seriousness is once again ambivalent as Lisey reveals that Scott actively participated in the Academy's propagation of the perception of him as a serious author, through his frequent visits to university campuses. Scott's intensive schedule of ninety campuses a year throughout twenty-five years of marriage betrays a significant desire to develop and maintain a literary profile as an author whose creative output is worthy of study. His regular visits to universities across the country reveals his need to be appreciated within the field of academia and for his texts to be legitimised by that field, thus ensuring their future on course syllabi as classics of late twentieth-century America. However, when this is compared with the actuality as perceived by his wife Lisey, who has a unique insight into his life beyond the concerns of literary critics, it becomes clear that his persona as author of high literature is very different from the actual writing process:

Lisey thought of Scott at the desk he called Dumbo's Big Jumbo, sitting before his big-screen Mac and laughing at something he'd just written. Chewing either a plastic straw or his own fingernails. Sometimes singing along with the music. Making arm-farts if it was summer and hot and his shirt was off. That was how he agonized over his smucking creations (LS, p. 320).

Scott recognizes Lisey's objectivity when he tells her, 'when you look at me you see me top to bottom and side to side and to you everything weighs the same' (LS, p. 159). She remembers 'a period of about ten years when Scott had somehow gotten larger than life – to others, and sometimes to himself. (Not to Lisey; she was the one who had to fetch him a fresh roll of toilet paper if he ran out while he was on the john)' (LS, p. 21). She is the one who sees and remembers these two distinctly different components of Scott's identity, and therefore it is through her narrative that Scott's true ambivalence towards the academic institution is brought into light. Although Scott is the figure most closely linked to the carnivalesque space that is *Boo'ya Moon*, it is Lisey's narrative which articulates the

carnavalesque; it is through her narrative of antagonistic academics, the disruptive force of the carnivalesque and of the necessary re-establishment of hierarchy that insight into the agonistic relationship between Academy and literary producer is provided.

It should also be noted that it is through this articulation that the narrative assumes many of its popular fiction tropes, as Lisey's terrorisation closely conforms to the generic conventions of the thriller as outlined in the previous case study on *Misery* and *The Dark Half*. It is this part of the narrative which can most truly be described as Lisey's story as it occurs two years after Scott's death. As shown through the contrast of Lisey and Scott, in which Scott is allied with thought and Lisey with action, this shift from the reflective prose of recounted memories to the fast-paced action of Lisey's efforts to escape the threat of violence is mirrored in the characterisation of both Lisey and Scott. This contrast is particularly evident when Lisey attempts to travel to Boo'ya Moon for the first time since 1996. She recalls that if 'Scott Landon had had a fatal flaw, it might have been thinking too much, but that had never been *her* problem. If she had stopped to consider the situation on that hot day in Nashville, Scott almost certainly would have died. Instead she had simply acted' (LS, p. 427). This identification of either character with thought and action respectively, is also shared by Scott, whom Lisey once overheard at a party saying that '*Lisey's smart as the devil, as long as she doesn't think about it*' (LS, p. 265; italics original). Lisey's bypassing of thought feeds directly into that portion of the narrative that operates according to the thriller genre, in which Jim Dooley is on a mission to retrieve Scott's literary papers from Lisey in order to place them in the custody of University of Pittsburgh professor, Joseph Woodbody. Lisey refers

to Woodbody as ‘King of the Incunks’ (LS, p. 101), and Dooley, as Woodbody’s missive, is thus labelled ‘Black Prince of the Incunks’ (LS, p. 558), as he is the physical embodiment of the Academy’s expressed animosity towards her as withholder of an ‘intellectual treasure-trove of unpublished Landon manuscripts’ (LS, p. 231). He comes to represent, for Lisey, the academic institution: the institution which possesses the power to establish and reinforce literary hierarchy through its role in the system of literary sacralization. Lisey has dared to usurp their role as ‘literary executor’ (LS, p. 7) and so consequently this responsibility must be wrested back under the Academy’s control. Dooley has been the one invested with this responsibility, and therefore, he is the one with whom Lisey must engage with in a fight which concludes in the carnivalesque space of Boo’ya Moon.

There are many aspects of Boo’ya Moon that resonate with Bakhtin’s exploration of the carnival and of the carnivalesque, one of which is the presence of laughter. In the Fairy Forest, there exist some strange, human-like creatures which ‘run on all fours, but sometimes they... Stand up. Like people’ (pp. 422-423), that Scott has named, ‘laughers’ (LS, p. 422). When Lisey recalls that brief initial visit to Boo’ya Moon, she describes her memory of her first encounter with the laughers. She states that, to ‘her those things don’t sound like hyenas, they sound like *people*, lunatics cast into the deepest depths of some nineteenth-century Bedlam’ (LS, p. 422). There is an unhinged quality to the laughter which is emitted by these strange half beast, half human creatures. Lisey recalls:

More laughers join the chorus. In a matter of moments there are dozens of them. Some of the laughter runs up a jagged scale and turns into broken-glass screams that make Lisey feel like screaming back. Then they descend again, sometimes to guttering chuckles that sound as if they’re coming from mud (LS, p. 422).

The presence of laughter in Boo'ya Moon is ambivalent through its derivation from these strange creatures which possess both human and beast-like qualities, through its comparison with the laughter of the insane, and through its fluctuation between 'broken glass screams' to 'guttering chuckle'. It destabilises, dislocates and degrades; their 'laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 210). The indiscriminate laughter emanating from the Fairy Forest exemplifies this, as does Lisey's own laughter when she faces Jim Dooley. It is in this final encounter that Lisey uses laughter as a weapon; she 'was frightened – terrified – but it felt good to laugh, perhaps because she understood that her laughter was her knife. Every peal from her burning throat drove the point deeper into his flesh' (LS, p. 571). Her laughter undermines Dooley's image of himself as one who would be doing 'a service to mankind' (LS, p. 232) by prying 'a great treasure away from a woman who was too stupid to understand what it was she was sitting on' (LS, p. 232). It is a degrading laughter; a laughter which ultimately leads to Dooley's premature burial in the giant maw of Boo'ya Moon's most grotesque inhabitant.

The presence of this grotesque creature '*with the piebald side*' (LS, p. 13; italics original), 'Scott's long boy' (LS, p. 428) and the role that it plays in the life-in-death fate of Jim Dooley, is another example of Boo'ya Moon's affinity with literary carnival. Bakhtin describes the grotesque body as 'grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 205) and suggests that its 'essential principle' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 205) is 'the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their

indissoluble unity' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 205). As I have already asserted, Dooley is a figure Lisey associates with the high literary field of cultural production: a field in which authorial hierarchy is heavily policed by academics and literary critics and which embodies 'all that is high'. So, it is particularly relevant that he meets his end in the way that he does, which is by being consumed by this immense creature that has haunted the Landons for all their married years. Its mouth is described in terms which appear to compare it to the female 'reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 206). This is made manifest, in particular, through Lisey's perspective of it just prior to its consumption of Dooley, where she sees 'an opening in the meat of its vast questing blunt head and intuited that the things it took in through that vast straw of flesh did not precisely die but lived and *screamed*... lived and *screamed*... lived and *screamed*' (LS, p. 578). This description of the opening in the flesh is furthered when Lisey is haunted by a vision of 'that blunt head that wasn't a head at all but only a maw, a straw, a funnel into blackness filled with endless swirling bad-gunky. In it she still heard Jim Dooley screaming, but the sound was now thin, and mixed with other screams' (LS, p. 582). This emphasis on the orifice which takes Dooley in, giving him an eternal life within death, affirms its role as degrader of 'all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract'. In fact, it is through Lisey's overriding impression of this creature's 'puffickly *huh-yooge* batch of orifice' (LS, p. 28), to borrow a phrase from the interior discourse of the Landons' marriage, that it reveals itself to be 'a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 234).

However, the consumption of Dooley by Scott's Long Boy fails in its attempt to disempower the Academy, in that the institution persists as the dominant force of cultural consecration. Lisey's ultimate act of defiance against the Academy, the decision to send Scott's papers to the University of Maine rather than the University of Pittsburgh, so as to render them out of convenient reach for Woodbody, is petty and ineffectual, and the structures upholding the hierarchical strata remain intact and continue to act according to expectation. In this way, they illustrate the validity of Dentith's theory that the carnivalesque does not effect a fundamental 'loosening [of] people's sense of rightness of the rules which kept the world the right way up' rather than they reinforce those rules. Thus King's *habitus* continues to structure and be structured according to a set of possibles determined by a range of dispositions cultivated through his understanding of the field of literary production. The intrusion of the carnivalesque temporarily destabilises this understanding, but it must always revert back to operating within the set of possibles as perceived by those who participate within the field. Accordingly, the field remains unaffected, and King and his literary production are still subject to its rules and hierarchical positioning.

One of the key phrases repeated throughout *Lisey's Story* is 'everything the same' (LS, p. 8). Designated a phrase of power, it possess two meanings: firstly it means '*is everything all right, is everything cool*' (LS, p. 8; italics original) and secondly it contains 'an inside meaning' (LS, p. 8) which means to take a balanced view in which all factors are weighted equally. It is this second meaning that provides insight into the seemingly paradoxical textual elements of which *Lisey's Story* is composed. King harbours a desire to be appreciated as a serious writer: as one who

is worthy of critical acclaim and cultural consecration. The bridge of which he spoke during his acceptance speech in 2003 between the ‘so-called popular fiction and the so-called literary fiction’ (King, 2003, np) is rendered textually manifest in this narrative of a writer’s widow, and yet, because King still perceives these elements to be mutually exclusive of either popular or literary fiction, the outcome is not wholly successful. King has said of this hybrid, ‘two-hearted’ novel that ‘to me it feels like a very special book’ (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 100), and certainly he has encouraged the perception that this book is the most important of his career.¹ As he has admitted in the past, however, that ‘I don’t think writers are very good judges of their own work’ (Dewes Moore, 1990, p. 100) and that ‘you have to evaluate the critical reaction to your work and decide from that what you’re doing’ (Dewes Moore, 1990, p. 100).

The success that Scott enjoys remains an unrealised fantasy for King who continues to labour under the label of ‘popular fiction writer’. Only time will tell if *Lisey’s Story* makes a significant contribution towards his literary longevity, although even King recognised that ‘there will be some people who are going to be ugly to this book’ (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 100). He knew before the first reviews were written on *Lisey’s Story* that there would be some who would condemn it as ‘a supermarket, best-selling, gothic, piece-of-schlock trash, pulp crap by writer Stephen King’ (Kilgore, 1990, p. 154) and, as he confessed, ‘I couldn’t stand that, the way you would hate people to be ugly to someone you love. And I love this book’ (Lehmann-Haupt, 2006, p. 100). I contend that the reason King loves this book is because it represents for him that bridge between the popular and the

¹ King states that, ‘It’s like surfers and the seventh wave... You ride six waves that are O.K., and then the seventh one is really great. But with every seventh wave, you mess up the ride, so really it’s only every 49th wave that’s really a great, great wave, and I felt that way with *Lisey*’ (Rich, 2006).

literary; it is his attempt at producing a hybrid text that he perceives will offer him the opportunity to achieve simultaneous critical and popular success: 'everything the same'.

And if there is a repeated pattern in King's subsequent work, it has been this concern with the high/low dialectic in its institutional forms. Despite voicing concern that he will never publish a book that is 'better' (Lehman-Haupt, 2006, p. 101) than *Lisey's Story*, King has continued to publish, releasing a novel, *Duma Key*, and a collection of short stories, *Just After Sunset*, as well as assuming the role of editor for Houghton Mifflin's annual *Best American Short Stories* anthology in 2007. He is still deeply invested in questioning the professionalism of authorship, the mechanisms of economic and symbolic exchange and the hierarchical principles which determine the field of literary production. While it is impossible to estimate the extent to which King will continue to explore the participation in the literary field through the figure of the author-protagonist, it would appear that there will be plenty of new material published by King over the next few years, the most significant of which is a new novel, *Beyond the Dome*, scheduled for publication in 2009. Despite the fact that King is still working on the manuscript for this new novel, he has divulged that it will be an epic on a scale similar to *The Stand* and *It*. It looks to be a major contribution to King's oeuvre; however, there are another two novels on the horizon: a collaboration with his son, Joe Hill, and a collaboration with Peter Straub. As *Duma Key* signals, however, there appears to be no sign of an abatement in King's dramatisation of the high/low dialectic and the role of the producer within the field of cultural production.

***Duma Key* and the Artist-Protagonist**

Unlike the novels I addressed earlier, *Duma Key* does not feature an author-protagonist, but it does continue to engage in issues pertaining to the field of cultural production through the presence of an artist-protagonist. Edgar Freemantle is a property developer who, following a horrific accident in which he loses his right arm, discovers an artistic talent leading to success within the Florida art scene. As with many of King's novels, there is a strong supernatural presence which permeates the narrative; an ancient, manipulative spirit named Perse is bent on causing chaos and ruin through the medium of Freemantle's surrealist paintings. However, the aspect of the narrative that most interests me for the purposes of this thesis is the expression of *habitus* through Freemantle's perspective, practice, and prejudice as a new producer within the field of cultural production. The relevance of this approach is confirmed by King himself when he stated in an interview for *Lilja's Library* (2008) that 'Edgar's paintings are like my work... Edgar really is like me (Lilja, 2008). As I have already mentioned, King admits that he always writes from a position of familiarity; he takes not only what he feels, but also what he knows, and inscribes it within his fiction. *Duma Key* may be a novel with an artist-protagonist, but it could just as easily have been written from the perspective of an author-protagonist. That said, however, the artist-protagonist allows King to address an aspect of the field of cultural production not readily available through his previous adoption of the author-protagonist. While he has written of restricted production with reference to the limited edition, *Duma Key* gives King the opportunity to write about a form of production which is so restricted that only one copy exists. It allows him the scope to tackle similar issues as he has done in

previous texts, but it also facilitates an articulation of the extremes of cultural production, of which he has not written before.

Freemantle, like all of King's recent cultural producer-protagonists, is a millionaire at the outset of the narrative. Unlike Mike Noonan and Scott Landon, however, Freemantle has made his money in his 'other life' (DK, p. 3) as a 'big deal in the building and contracting business' (DK, p. 3). As Edgar readily admits, 'I was a genuine American-boy success' (DK, p. 3), working his 'way up in the company' (DK, p. 3), before launching his own business, The Freemantle Company, which resulted in the creation of his net worth of forty million dollars at the time of his accident. It is clear from this back-story that Freemantle measures success according to the amount of economic capital generated by his efforts within the construction industry. Following his accident, however, his financial success brings him little more comfort than the peace of mind his ability to afford medical care and support provides. It does, however, influence the artistic production he embarks upon subsequent to his move to Duma Key. The economic capital accrued in his 'other life' provides him with an autonomy necessary to produce art for art's sake. The production of art for art's sake is always posited in opposition to the production of art for commercial success within the mass market, as his neighbour and landlady, the Alzheimer's afflicted Elizabeth Eastlake, confirms in her enquiry, 'Are you one who creates art for money, or do you believe in art for art's sake?' (DK, p. 169). Freemantle's financial independence allows him to exercise artistic autonomy: he does not have to paint pictures for the specific purpose of accruing enough capital to afford the art supplies and materials he requires in order to participate within the field of cultural production, he does not have to engage in the

production of work which could be mass produced to meet a mass demand so as to effect his survival in a capitalist economy, and he retains the option to withhold his products from sale, thus preventing them from entering the market.

This autonomy is also reflected in the subject matter of his paintings. As the gallery owner, Dario Nannuzzi, asserts after his first viewing of Freemantle's paintings, 'you're looking for a way to reinvent the most popular and hackneyed of all Florida subjects, the tropical sunset. You've been trying to find your way past the cliché' (DK, p. 162). Rather than reproducing the 'hackneyed' Florida sunset, Freemantle positions objects found on his 'Great Beach Walks' (DK, p. 20) upon the horizon of his clichéd sunsets. He states that 'almost every night when the sun went down, I drew the sunset. I knew sunsets were a cliché, and that's why I did them. It seemed to me that if I could break through that wall of been-there-done-that even once, I might be getting somewhere' (DK, p. 55). The result initially is 'a penciled piece of shit where the colours said *I'm trying to tell you the horizon's on fire*' (DK, p. 55), leading Freemantle to surmise that you 'could undoubtedly have bought forty better ones at any sidewalk art show in a Saturday in Sarasota or Venice Beach' (DK, p. 55). After his first experiment with painting a local wildflower upon the line of the horizon he finds that:

The sophora bracelet seemed to rear over the horizon-line like the tentacle of a sea creature big enough to swallow a supertanker. The single yellow blossom could have been an alien eye. More important to me, it had somehow given the sunset back the truth of its ordinary I-do-this-every-night beauty (DK, p. 56).

This is just the first of a series of paintings Freemantle creates in which he obscures part of the sunset with disproportionately large shells, wildflowers and general flotsam and jetsam. The subject of this series facilitates Freemantle's expression of

the ‘truth, and the truth deserves to be spoken... *if you can say it in a new way*’ (DK, p. 302).

In depicting this ‘truth’, Freemantle’s paintings prove to be worthy of accruing significant symbolic capital. Upon unveiling his work to Nannuzzi, in order to hear his opinion on the artistic value of his painting, a crowd gathers to admire and appreciate the pieces that he has brought along with him. In amongst that crowd is art critic, Mary Ire, who describes Freemantle as ‘a true American primitive’ (DK, p. 159): an opinion Nannuzzi agrees with shortly before inviting Freemantle to exhibit at the Scoto gallery. Freemantle’s decision to take Nannuzzi up on his offer results in a series of three events arranged by the gallery designed to gain Freemantle the maximum amount of critical attention, in an attempt to attract symbolic capital. The first of these events is a lecture to be given by Freemantle, accompanied by slides of some of his paintings due to be exhibited at the Scoto. The lecture is to be attended by ‘two hundred art mavens’ (DK, p. 297), including Mary Ire: ‘important people...interested in new artists and each one knows three more who feel the same’ (DK, p. 260). Nannuzzi assures Freemantle that after ‘the lecture – *your* lecture – the talk will start. The kind of talk that almost always turns into that magical thing called “buzz”’ (DK, p. 260). In his introduction to Freemantle’s lecture, Nannuzzi contextualizes his work by drawing upon other artists such as ‘Joan Miró’ (DK, p. 297) and on key documents such as ‘Breton’s Surrealist Manifesto’ (DK, p. 297). Freemantle, listening in the wings, states that names ‘went past like floats in a parade. A few, like Edward Hopper and Salvador Dali, I knew. Others, like Yves Tanguy and Kay Sage, I didn’t’ (DK, p. 297). The cultural cachet of these key figures and moments from art history are drawn upon in

order to encourage the perception of Freemantle as an artist of similar import and stature. The following event is a scheduled interview with Mary Ire in which Freemantle is questioned about his ‘influences’ (DK, p. 309) and his ‘technique’ (DK, p. 309). After the publication of Mary’s interview, Freemantle becomes ‘a local celebrity’ (DK, p. 330) with follow-up interviews conducted at the local news station and with an AP reporter. The final event is the exhibition of the paintings themselves, an event which proves to be wildly successful as demonstrated by the reviews published the following morning:

The reviews in the Sarasota *Herald Tribune* and the Venice *Gondolier* were great, but short. Mary Ire’s piece in the Tampa *Trib*, on the other hand, took up nearly a whole page and was lyrical. She must have written most of it ahead of time. She called me ‘a major new American talent’ (DK, pp. 393-394).

Nannuzzi may claim that, ‘I don’t want to think too much about art, you see. I don’t want to criticize it. I don’t want to attend symposia, listen to papers, or discuss it at cocktail parties – although sometimes in my line of work I’m forced to do all those things’ (DK, p. 162), but he recognizes that it is through these activities that the ‘magical thing called “buzz”’ is created, and that this buzz facilitates the accrual of symbolic capital.

Of course, it cannot be disregarded that this buzz also attracts money. Elizabeth Eastlake in her questioning of Freemantle asks, ‘And surely if you believe in art for art’s sake, the painting is the important part, isn’t it?... Even if you don’t need to sell your paintings to buy your daily bread, sharing work... giving it to the world... surely artists care about such things, don’t they? The giving?’ (DK, p. 170). When producing art for art’s sake, art designed to attract symbolic rather than economic capital, the artist is still involved in the process of producing a commodity. In fact,

it is the commodity's exclusivity, its authenticity, its chronotopic positioning, that allows it to be exchanged for large amounts of economic capital. It is this aspect of the 'art for art's sake' market that is rendered prominent in the novel of *Duma Key*; Freemantle may not need to sell his products to buy his 'daily bread', but that certainly does not mean that his products are bereft of economic value. As the alterations Freemantle's friend and lawyer, Jerome Wireman, makes to the gallery's contract attest, the market for high art is a lucrative one. Wireman explains the changes thus:

It says you and the gallery split right down the middle, but I'm gonna cap that. Fifty-fifty shall not live after gross sales reach a quarter-mil. Once you pass that point, the split goes to sixty-forty, your favor... I'm also going to propose that the split goes to seventy-thirty at half a million (DK, p. 258).

Wireman's alterations to the contract are made after he watches a wealthy customer at the gallery offer to buy one of Freemantle's paintings for the price of Freemantle's asking. Nannuzzi denigrates Mr Costenza, the wealthy customer, as one of those who is 'too rich for their own good' (DK, p. 160), and states that they rely on docents such as Mary Ire to maintain the 'nice artist-and-gallery economy here on the west coast of Florida' (DK, p. 160). According to both Wireman and Nannuzzi, 'if the Happy Art Galleria down the street discovers they can sell paintings of Elvis done in macaroni on velvet for ten thousand dollars a pop, Mary would ... blow them out of the water' (DK, p. 160). Nannuzzi pointedly remarks that art curators and buyers are 'not venal' (DK, 160), however, from the contract issued to Freemantle, they are quite clearly participants within the market economy. This correlation between the acquisition of economic capital and the Scoto Gallery is most evident during the opening night of Freemantle's exhibition. During the evening, Freemantle is called in to the gallery office where he is informed that 'the

show's a sell' (DK, p. 359): 'every painting and sketch that *was* for sale *has* been sold' (DK, p. 359). The gallery's accountant, Jacob Rosenblatt, states that:

The paintings fetched four hundred and eighty-seven thousand dollars, the sketches an additional nineteen. The total comes to a little over half a million dollars. It's the greatest sum the Scoto has ever taken in during the exhibition of a single artist's work. An amazing coup. Congratulations (DK, p. 359).

The preceding lecture and interviews, designed to promote Freemantle as a significant artist and to generate symbolic capital, have also succeeded in raising a large amount of money for both gallery and artist. Freemantle's work is commodified by the gallery, and consequently it proceeds to accrue both economic and symbolic capital.

In the same way that King undermined the role of the *poète maudit* in *The Shining*, by underscoring the latent economic strategy in assuming such a role, King similarly reveals the circulation of money in art produced according to the autonomous principle. However, Freemantle becomes significantly more successful than Jack Torrance, both in his work's capacity to attract symbolic capital and accrue economic capital, as he does not have to feign disinterestedness; he already has the funds to be financially autonomous from the market. When Freemantle becomes a producer of art, he enjoys absolute freedom from financial constraint, unlike Jack, who is condemned always to be the supplicant in the patron/supplicant relationship. In this way, Freemantle also differs from all of King's recent author-protagonists (significantly excluding Scott Landon), and from King himself, in that their millionaire status has come at the cost of their credibility as cultural producers. The economic necessity experienced by this author and his author-protagonists compelled them to write for financial profit, and it is this which has damaged their

literary reputation, thus situating them in an inferior position in the hierarchical strata that structures that part of the literary field influenced by symbolic capital. Freemantle, in this sense, is not typical of King's fictionalisation of the field of cultural production, in that he produces from a privileged economic position and has always done so; there exists no period of economic impoverishment in the timeline of Freemantle's cultural production. King has created a character unhindered by their poor economic background, and uses that character in order to show that it is possible to achieve success economically and symbolically in the cultural field, but that it is in such a way that can never be replicated by King himself. He is an author condemned by his history of literary production for the masses.

Just After Sunset and The Best American Short Stories

King's other recent projects have involved the short story: firstly, his editing of the annual anthology of Houghton Mifflin's *The Best American Short Stories* for 2007,² and secondly, his latest publication of a new collection of short stories, *Just After Sunset*. The production of short fiction has a long history within the field of American literary production, and it has always been tightly bound up with hierarchical issues pertaining to the acquisition of symbolic and economic capital. As I claim in the first chapter of this thesis, King has published short stories both for economic necessity during his days prior to becoming a bestselling author, and as a strategy to increase the symbolic capital of his work, as shown by his recent

² The decision to employ King as editor for this prestigious anthology, a role previously occupied by Ann Patchett and subsequently by Salman Rushdie, was a surprising move by Houghton Mifflin and should perhaps be considered in the same light as the NBA board's decision to honour King with an award. Just as that decision generated a 'buzz about the NBA ceremonies' that had been lacking, it is feasible that Houghton Mifflin hoped to achieve a similar level of 'buzz' in order to revivify interest in this literary product.

acceptance of the O. Henry prize for best short story,³ and the recent publication of his short stories in *The New Yorker* and *The Paris Review*. In his introduction to *Everything's Eventual*, he claims that he continues to write short stories 'because it's the way I affirm, at least to myself, the fact that I haven't sold out, no matter what the more unkind critics may think. Short stories are still piecework, the equivalent of those one-of-a-kind items you can buy in an artisan's shop' (EE, p. xvi). I believe that it would prove fruitful to approach King's short stories using the framework I developed in my research and analysis on *Bag of Bones*, in which issues of mass and folk cultural production are addressed. His affiliation of his production of short stories with 'piecework' juxtaposed with his disclosure of the economic capital some of his most profitable short stories have accrued, displays a tension between the production of literature as a contribution towards mass or folk culture similar to that found in Noonan's narrative.

It is this tension which King once again articulates in the forewords to both the anthology and his new collection. In the former, King's focus in the foreword is largely upon the marketing of the stories chosen for that year's inclusion rather than on the quality of the stories themselves. He describes a trip to a bookstore to purchase the latest issues of magazines containing short fiction, and places strong emphasis in this description on the positioning of these magazines. He relates that he passes a 'table filled with best-selling hardcover fiction at prices ranging from 20 to 40 percent off. James Patterson is represented, as is Danielle Steel, as is your faithful correspondent' (BASS, p. xiv). He proclaims that most 'of this stuff is disposable' (BASS, p. xiv); these 'are the moneymakers and rent payers; these are

³ For 'The Man in the Black Suit' in 1996.

the glamour ponies' (BASS, p. xiv). Aside from the denigration of his own fiction, through its presence alongside Danielle Steel and James Patterson, both authors he has scorned in the past, there exists a paradox in the way in which these texts are published and their classification as 'disposable'. It is a paradox shown in bas relief when King moves on to address the publication of the short stories in their disposable format: the magazine. He claims that his selection of stories 'show how *vital* short stories can be when they are done with heart, mind, and soul by people who care about them and think they still matter' (BASS, p. xvii; my italics); it is their vitality which I suggest sharply contrasts their initial medium of publication.

This literary paradox is reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's practice of writing short stories which were then published in magazine format. Poe 'insisted that the ideal short story be constituted as a disposable artifact' (Levy, 1993, p. 22) and 'explicitly linked the superiority of the shorter form to the very fact of its expendability. Like the magazine within which it was published, Poe's short story was meant to be thrown away and revered at the same time' (Levy, 1993, p. 22). However, as the numerous anthologies of Poe's short fiction evidence, his work was not disposed of despite its disposable medium. It is precisely this incongruity which is apparent in the continued publication of short stories in literary magazines; whereas the blockbuster novels published in hardback are deemed disposable, the magazine-published short story is considered 'vital' and worth of collation in this annual showcase anthology. King compounds this paradoxical relationship between content and medium through noting that the hardcover books are all discounted by between twenty and forty percent, in contrast to the selection of six magazines which cost him 'over eighty dollars' (BASS, p. xv). As King notes, there 'are no

discounts in the magazine section' (BASS, p. xv). The disposable medium in which these stories are published is not reflected in the cost, just as the price of the 'disposable' novels is disproportionate to their publication in hardcover form.

However, the comparison between the literary magazine containing short fiction and the bestselling hardback novels is not limited to the form in which both have been published or the difference of price, as it also extends to their accessibility; whereas the novels of Steel, Patterson and King are all readily available at the front of the bookstore, King discovers that he has to go to some physical effort in order to attain his monthly allotment of short fiction. He describes assuming the position of 'a school janitor trying to scrape a particularly stubborn wad of gum off the gym floor' (BASS, p. xiv) so as to access titles such as *Zoetrope*, *Tin House*, *Five Points*, *The Kenyon Review*, *American Short Fiction*, *The Iowa Review* and the *Alaska Quarterly Review*. The 'Wall of Magazines' (BASS, p. xiv) is structured as a physical embodiment of that hierarchy of the literary field determined by the heteronomous principle. As King describes:

I stare at the racks of magazines, and the racks of magazines stare eagerly back. Celebrities in gowns and tuxes, models in lo-rise jeans, luxury stereo equipment, talk-show hosts with can't-miss diet plans – they all scream *Buy me, buy me! Take me home and I'll change your life! I'll light it up!* (BASS, p. xiv; italics original).

These prominently placed ephemeral celebrations of the rich and famous signify 'fiction's out-migration from the eye-level shelves' (BASS, p. xv) to the 'lowest shelf, where neatness alone suggests few ever go' (BASS, p. xv): this 'out-migration' exacerbated in an environment in which 'Britney Spears has become a cultural icon, available at every checkout, while an American talent like William Gay labors in relative obscurity' (BASS, p. xv).

King chooses which of these stories that initially resided in the ‘relative obscurity’ of the lower shelves according to very different criteria from that of his co-editor, Heidi Pitlor. Pitlor states that she chose the short stories

that transcended something. Whether it was a particular cliché of character... or language or situation, the stories I chose twisted and turned away from the familiar and ultimately took flight, demanding their own particular characters and structure and prose’ (Pitlor, 2007, p. x).

King, on the other hand, claims that the commonality these stories share poses ‘that sense of emotional involvement, of flipped-out amazement’ (BASS, p. xvii). He claims that ‘I look for stories that care about my feelings as well as my intellect’ (BASS, p. xvii) and questions, ‘Do I want something that appeals to my critical nose?’ (BASS, p. xvii) before conceding ‘Maybe later (and, I admit it, maybe never)’ (BASS, p. xvii). In other words, his choice reflects a preference for those texts which engage ‘on an emotional level’ (Lehman-Haupt, 2006, p. 87), thus differentiating him from the ‘serious critics’ (Lehman-Haupt, 2006, p. 87) who ‘start to shake their heads and say, No’ ‘once those levers start to get pushed’ (Lehman-Haupt, 2006, p. 87). He claims:

I want the ancient pleasure that probably goes back to the cave: to be blown clean out of myself for a while, as violently as a fighter pilot who pushes the EJECT button in his F-111. I certainly don’t want some fraidy-cat’s writing school imitation of Faulkner, or some stream-of-consciousness bullshit about what Bob Dylan once called ‘the true meaning of a peach’ (BASS, p. xvii).

King’s perception of transcendence is more akin to escapism, than to Pitlor’s sense of a literary transcendence in which the author has broken free of the bonds of an anxiety of influence. Pitlor focuses on the transcendence of the author, while King focuses on the reader’s, and yet both participate in another form of transcendence

altogether: the transcendental rise of these stories from the bottom shelf to inclusion in a ‘series that is still popular *and* discussed’ (BASS, p. xvii; my italics).

Apparently it was his participation in facilitating these stories’ liberation ‘from the bottom shelf’ (BASS, p. xvii) that inspired King to start writing short fiction again, which resulted in the publication of *Just After Sunset*, a collection of thirteen short stories, in November 2008. He confesses in the introduction to that collection that he agreed to edit *Best American Short Stories* for ‘all sorts of reasons, some even altruistic, but I would be a black liar indeed if I didn’t admit self-interest played a part’ (JAS, p. 3). He hoped that by immersing ‘myself in the best the American literary magazines had to offer, I might be able to recapture some of the effortless that had been slipping away’ (JAS, p. 3). Once again King correlates literary worth with escapism, questioning, ‘Are these stories any good? I hope so. Will they help you pass a dull airplane flight... or a long car trip...? I *really* hope so, because when that happens, it’s a kind of magic spell’ (JAS, p. 4).

However, the most noticeable emphasis in this introduction is once again on the way in which the publication of short stories became an economic strategy during King’s early career, a subject that he has returned to many times prior to *Just After Sunset*. He recalls that:

In those days it was never about writing literature, and any discussion of my fiction’s ‘lasting value’ would have been as much a luxury as that Texaco card. The stories, when they sold (they didn’t always), were simply a welcome bit of found money. I viewed them as a series of *piñatas* I banged on, not with a stick but my imagination. Sometimes they broke and showered down a few hundred bucks. Other times they didn’t (JAS, p. 2).

After emphasising the financial aspect of writing short fiction, King then proceeds to note that many ‘bestselling novelists in America don’t write short stories’ (JAS,

p. 2), thus differentiating himself and his publications from that of most bestselling American authors. He doubts 'if it's a money issue; financially successful writers don't need to think about that part of it' (JAS, p. 2), surmising that the majority of popular novelists do not write short fiction because they have lost 'the knack' (JAS, p. 2). Claiming in *Just After Sunrise*, and in the introductions to his other collections of short stories, that he dedicates himself to the difficult task of writing short stories, King attempts to heighten the contrast between himself and those others such as Steel and Patterson that he is most often marketed alongside on bookstore shelves.

It is not only his method of writing short stories that King has recuperated, however, as the publications in which these stories were initially published prior to being collected in *Just After Sunset* mirror those that he published in during his early career. In those days he sold stories 'to men's magazines like *Cavalier*, *Dude*, and *Adam*' (JAS, p. 2), while today, despite publishing some of the stories in respected literary magazines such as *The Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*, he also published two stories in *Esquire* and two in *Playboy*. By collating these short stories, originally published in such disparate sources, targeted towards seemingly oppositional markets, King is performing that function that he called upon others to facilitate: the building of bridges between the popular and the literary. As a text composed of stories first published in highly regarded literary magazines and in popular mass market men's magazines, *Just After Sunset* exists as King's attempt to bring together the two sides of the divide that he defined in his acceptance speech at the NBA ceremony in 2003. Whether this attempt is deemed successful or not, only time will tell. What can be discerned, however, is that King is still determined to

subvert the structures that separate the 'so-called literary and the so-called popular' (King, 2003, np). Not only is his resolve evident in his early fiction, but its presence persists undiminished in the fiction he still publishes today, thus demonstrating his ongoing commitment to build a bridge between the popular and the serious.

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