

University of Pardubice  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Role of Children in Stephen King's books

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Bachelor Thesis

2020

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2018/2019

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE (projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**  
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**  
Téma práce: **Role of children in Stephen King's books**  
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se bude věnovat funkci dětských postav ve vybraných dílech amerického autora populární literatury Stephena Kinga.

V úvodu práce studentka stručně charakterizuje žánr hororu, nastíní jeho historii a autora do tohoto žánrového kontextu zařadí. Vysvětlí rovněž pojmy a teorii, s níž bude pracovat (the uncanny, the weird, the monstrous, apod.)

Jádrem práce bude analýza vybraných děl, v níž se studentka soustředí hlavně na způsob zobrazení dětských postav a jejich narativní a další role. Pojedná rovněž o literárních prostředcích, jimiž autor dociluje efektivity hororových románů. Své analýzy studentka bude ilustrovat ukázkami z primárních děl a opírat o zdroje kritické. Závěrem své analýzy přehledně shrne a vysloví obecnější závěr o tom, jak Kingovy horory využívají postavy dítěte.

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:  
Rozsah grafických prací:  
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**  
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

#### Seznam doporučené literatury:

- Zvolené romány Stephena Kinga.
- Balanzategui, Jessica. „The Child and Adult Trauma in American Horror of the 1980s.“ In *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema: Ghosts of Futurity at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, 35-66. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv80cc7v.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv80cc7v.5).
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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2019**  
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2020**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D., for allowing me to change a topic, and mainly for her helpful guidance and advice.

## **ANNOTATION**

This thesis deals with the depiction of child characters in three selected works of horror fiction by Stephen King. A brief history and the characteristics of horror literature is a part of the work. The term the uncanny child is explained as well as the analytics of characters, which is then applied to the analysis of the specific character. Besides the analytics, family environment is described as well, and from the obtained information the role of the character is concluded. A comparison of all characters helped to get to the conclusion of how Stephen King most often depicts his child characters.

## **KEYWORDS**

child characters, horror, horror literature, uncanny, victims, Stephen King

## **NÁZEV PRÁCE**

Role dětí v hororových fiktích od Stephena Kinga

## **ANOTACE**

Tato práce se zabývá funkcí vyobrazení dětských postav ve třech vybraných dílech hororové fikce od Stephena Kinga. Součástí práce je stručná historie a charakteristika hororové literatury. Dále je vysvětlen pojem “the uncanny child” a přibližná analýza postav, která je následně aplikovaná do konkrétní analýzy dané postavy. Kromě samotné analýzy je zde nastíněno i rodinné prostředí postavy a ze získaných informací je odvozená její role. Porovnání všech postav napomohlo k závěru, jak Stephen King nejčastěji své dětské postavy vyobrazuje.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

dětské postavy, horor, hororová literatura, záhadný, oběti, Stephen King

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## Introduction

Only a minority of authors are so lucky that their name is known even to people, who do not read. And even fewer of them are so lucky that the people know what genre to associate with their name. Stephen Edwin King is one of those lucky ones, and he has rightfully earned his place. This thesis analyses four of Stephen King's child characters from three selected novels, namely: *The Shining*, *Pet Sematary* and *Firestarter*. The aim is to analyse the role of those children and present the way how King uses them. In addition, there is also a focus put on some literary devices which he uses to depict specific attributes of individual characters.

Firstly, for the better background of the horror genre as such, its history, from the beginnings in the Gothic novel to contemporary horror fiction is outlined. The development and its main characteristics, such as the term monstrous, must not be omitted; therefore, they are characterized as well.

Secondly, since the focus of this thesis lies on child characters, the concept of childhood in the horror genre is characterized. Ray Bradbury or Ira Levin are mentioned as examples of the first authors who used child character as an instrument of evil. One term is often connected with child characters in horror novels – the uncanny. This term is defined with the help of some critical recourses, such as Sigmund Freud's essay *Das Unheimlich* or Jessica Balanzategui's work *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*.

Stephen King is also introduced as an author of selected novels. His life is outlined only briefly for a better overview. On the other hand, his works, both fiction or non-fiction, as well as his writing techniques, are described in greater detail.

In the analytical part, there is a focus on the role of the child character in the novel. The child is characterized first. Then the family environment is outlined, so it is clear from what family background the character comes. Parents always influence their children and thanks to the analysed family environment, it is clear, whether some patterns of the given child's behaviour are acquired from parents or even induced by them. Lastly, its role in the novel is analysed. Most of the outputs are illustrated on citations from the novels, or they are based on some critical recourses.



After the analysis of all four characters from the three novels, there is a comparison of them. King uses similar patterns, but yet the characters are not the same, and there are plenty of differences as well.

In the Conclusion, the most common role of the child character is specified as well as other attributes which King gives to them.

## 1. Horror

People have always surrounded themselves with horror elements. “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear.”<sup>1</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft claims in his study *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Some of the horror elements exist even in old myths, legends or in folk literature. It is therefore complicated to specify the roots and the reason why the horror genre came to existence. Perhaps it originated in inexplicable occurrences, for example, weird noises or eerie shadows that people needed to clarify in some way. Thus, they associated them with supernatural beings or powers. Alternatively, perhaps they started from stories which used to serve only as a warning and as intimidation. ‘Do not go alone to the woods; there are horrible creatures!’

Fear, anxiety or uncertainty - the horror genre can evoke all these feelings, even within the bravest ones. Still, despite all the negative feelings, the horror genre has always been sought after to a large extent. It is as if people wanted to willingly experience all those negative emotions such as fear, disgust, aversion or anxiety. When people go to the cinema, there is always at least one horror film on the programme. When people go to the bookshop, the bookshelves in the horror section are always full. Even in the gaming world, the horror theme prospers as it never had before. The horror genre flourishes our culture in all artistic directions. It is interesting how a genre of paraliterature could evolve into literature that has a substantial and significant share in today’s market.

Moreover, there is also the question, why anyone would want to read or watch something evoking such emotions voluntarily. Eduardo B. Andrade and Joel B. Cohen claimed in their study *On the Consumption of Negative feelings* that it is the feeling of a relief which comes with the ending that makes people want to endure such emotions. They say people are

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, ed. E.F. Bleiler, Dover Edition (1927; Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1973), 12.

willing to endure fear and anxiety so they can enjoy the happy ending and the sense of relief.<sup>2</sup> The main idea of another theory is the desire for novelty. Glenn Sparks, PhD claims that since the danger is no longer a typical pattern in peoples' lives, as it used to be, it is reasonable to be curious about it and want to experience it in a way through a horror story.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1. History of horror literature

It has been already mentioned above that people have always surrounded themselves with horror elements. However, horror as we know it, as a separate genre, is not so old. It has been here since the end of the eighteenth century. The Gothic novel is recognized as a predecessor of the horror genre as it is known it in these days. Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James define the Gothic novel in their book *A Short History of Fantasy* as “a form of fantasy combining horror, melodrama and romance.” In addition, as Gothic novels, they classify only works written between the 1760s and the 1820s.<sup>4</sup>

When reading about horror literature, there is always one title which is considered to be the first book in the genre of the Gothic novel, and that is *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole. The novel contains typical elements of a gothic novel, such as the setting in an old castle, gloomy weather, a door which closes on its own or moveable paintings.

Later on, Ann Radcliffe contributed to a Gothic novel by writing her greatest novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Mary Shelley followed with publishing *Frankenstein* (1818). It was John William Polidori who created the archetype of a vampire in his novel *The Vampyr* (1816). Another writer must be mention as a contributor to a Gothic novel, and that is Matthew Lewis with a novel called *Monk*. (1796)

All authors mentioned so far were from England. However, the Gothic novel also influenced an American writer Edgar Allan Poe. Poe is even considered to be the first classic of a modern horror story,<sup>5</sup> as Dagmar Mecná claims in her book *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*. Unlike his British predecessors, Poe focused mainly on the psychological side of the horror and evil within people. He played with people's mind and he often created very twisted characters

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<sup>2</sup> Eduardo B. Andrade and Joel B. Cohen. "On the Consumption of Negative Feelings." *Journal of Consumer Research* 34, no. 3 (October 2007): 284. doi:10.1086/519498.

<sup>3</sup> “Why Some People Love Horror Movies While Others Hate Them,” PsychCentral, last modified July 8, 2018, <https://psychcentral.com/blog/why-some-people-love-horror-movies-while-others-hate-them/>.

<sup>4</sup> Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, rev. and updated ed. Faringdon: (Libri Publishing, 2012) 14 – 17.

<sup>5</sup> Dagmar Mecná and Josef Peterka, *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*, (Praha: Paseka, 2004), 254.

who were mentally sick. He wrote many stories such as “*The Fall of the House of Usher*”, “*The Pit and the Pendulum*” or “*The Cask of Amontillado*” to mention some examples.

The Polidori’s first vampire was already mentioned, however, it is Abraham Stoker’s vampire, which came to mind as first to everyone, with all its typical features and it is famous *Dracula* (1897).

Other authors must be mentioned in creating the horror genre, and they are, for example, Nathaniel Hawthorne with his novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Robert Louis Stevenson with *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and of course, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, who was one of the first authors who used the term horror literature. In the genre of horror, he wrote, for instance, a short story *The Dunwich Horror* (1929). Besides, he is also a recognized theorist of the horror genre, and he is the author of *Cthulhu mythos*.

Specialized magazines helped to develop a separate horror genre at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the USA, they were very popular, and the magazine *Weird Tales* is the most noteworthy from all of them. Above mentioned author, H. P. Lovecraft cooperated with them and besides him, it was for example Robert Bloch.

Another milestone for the horror genre is considered to be the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this period of time, the horror began to appear more as a novel than as a story thanks to authors such as Robert Bloch with the novel *Psycho* (1959), Ira Levin with *Rosemary’s Baby* (1967) and W. P. Blatty with *Exorcists* (1971). I. Levin and W. P. Blatty also used a child in their novels as an instrument of evil.

Then, finally, came the year 1974, which was the year of Stephen King and his novel *Carrie*. However, King’s life is outlined later on so his other significant novels are not going to be mentioned just yet. However, what still remains to be important is the fact, that Stephen King’s influence has been incredibly significant in the development of the horror genre already since the mentioned year - 1974. It was a boom for the horror novel and with the new technologies, the horror genre entered to a movie screen with huge popularity.

To mention some others significant authors for the horror genre of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was for example Peter Benchley with *Jaws* (1974) or Thomas Harris with famous Hannibal Lector series first being *Red Dragon* (1981) followed with *The Silence of the Lamb* (1988), *Hannibal* (1999) and *Hannibal Rising* (2006).

## 1. 2. Characteristics of Horror literature

There are numbers of definitions of the horror genre, and they all differ in some way. It is due to its various forms and the difficulty to separate it from other similar genres such as thriller or science-fiction because some key elements often reoccur in every one of them. It is not accurate enough to describe the horror genre as a genre which invokes suspense in readers, because thrillers and crime stories invoke this feeling as well. For instance, Dagmar Mocná defines the horror genre as a genre of popular literature, whose main aim is to evoke the feeling of fear and horror.<sup>6</sup> This definition implies that the horror genre focuses on emotions rather than on the structure of works, like fantasy or science fiction genres.

According to Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn in their book *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, “the central aim of horror is to create catharsis by confronting the reader with a world in which the worst thing happens to the character with whom we identify.”<sup>7</sup> The catharsis was already defined by Aristoteles. Its definition is not firmly bound only to the literature, but it is often used in psychology or art, for example. It refers to the purification of emotions, which should come after the climax of the story.

Noël Carroll also contributes to horror studies to a great extent. For example, in his book *The Philosophy of Horror*, he mentioned that the uniqueness of the horror genre is the fact, that it often goes beyond emotions. To be more specific, besides emotional responses, people often have physical responses as well. A spine-chilling, paralysis, frozenness, muscular contractions, shuddering, or even nausea are common reactions while reading or watching the horror genre.<sup>8</sup> He also addressed a feature which monsters often have in common. They usually come from a place outside of the human world or from places in the human world which are hidden and abandoned, such as graveyards or abandoned houses. Sometimes they even come from under the sea or the earth.<sup>9</sup>

Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, among others, pointed out that gothic stories are frequently claustrophobic. Since the horror genre evolved from the gothic, this finding can be applied to horror stories as well. It is easy to demonstrate some examples using stories by E. A.

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<sup>6</sup> Dagmar Mocná et al., *Encyklopedie Literárních Žánrů*, 253.

<sup>7</sup> Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 217.

<sup>8</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, (London: Routledge, 1990. ISBN 0-415-90216-9.), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 35.

Poe. For instance, *The Fall of the house of Usher* is based on family secrets which are slowly revealed. Another example of a story based on secrets is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. *The Pit and the Pendulum* is based on a sense of imprisonment. Furthermore, when the mise-en-scene of a landscape is added, it can create a genuinely claustrophobic feeling.<sup>10</sup> The mise-en-scene refers, at least in literature, to the ‘feel’ of such story expressed through its atmosphere, setting and character.<sup>11</sup>

In her study called *The Epistemology of the Horror Story*, Susan Stewart describes a structure which is typical for the horror genre. “The hidden threads of the narrative are alternately revealed and concealed in a pattern that itself reaches a climax and resolution.”<sup>12</sup> It is possible to find this structure in many of Stephen King’s books, where initially not so relevant details gradually fit in until they reach the climax.

Monsters keep reoccurring in the horror genre; there is a countless number of them. Authors no longer stick only to archetypes such as vampires, werewolves, demons or zombies, but they are creating new ones. However, before dealing with monsters in greater detail, the term monstrous should be explained first. It is something hideously evil, horrible, unnatural and often shocking. It is the opposite of beautiful, it is an antithesis of harmony, and it creates a feeling of disgust and nausea.

Originally, the word monstrous had only been associated with something which could have been judged as such only by looking at it. However, little by little, it began to change, and the monstrosity started coming from the inside. One example for all: A siren can have the appearance of a beautiful woman when luring lonely sailors, but in fact, it is a monster with a desire to kill. Nowadays, there are many ways of expressing the monstrous. Even though ‘the monstrous’ may come in many forms and shapes, all of them have to meet a single condition: The monstrosity must be expressed either through physical anomalies or by the behaviour that opposes standards.

Stephen King’s most terrifying monsters are for example Pennywise from the novel *It*, a vampire Kurt Barlow from *Salem’s Lot* or Randall Flag whom King incorporated in *The Dark Tower* series. In a way, the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* could be considered a monster as

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<sup>10</sup> Farah Mendlesohn et al., *A Short History of Fantasy*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Mise-en-scène, *The Missouri Review*, last modified February 01, 2018, <https://www.missourireview.com/article/mise-en-scene/>.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Stewart, "The Epistemology of the Horror Story" *The Journal of American Folklore* 95, no. 375 (Jan. – Mar., 1982): 42. doi:10.2307/540021.

well. Although it is inanimate, the supernatural evil in it brings people who died there back to life, or it gives life to objects.

## 2. Stephen King

Even those people who do not read know who Stephen Edwin King is. The King, The King of Horror or The Master of Mystery - those are some of the nicknames which are associated with him and his brilliant work. He is recognized as one of the best-selling authors, and his productivity does not seem to be on the decline. Even though he is over seventy years old and he has written over 80 novels, over 100 short stories and even some film scripts, he is not planning to stop writing. He was born in in Portland, Maine, the USA in 1947.

Since his early childhood, he had been fascinated by the world of horror, and he started to create his own stories. He wrote many of them, but it was not until the year 1974 that he became publicly known for his work. Before that year, he had been writing stories to magazines that were willing to publish them. An interesting fact is that the novel which made him famous was the novel which King's wife, Tabitha, had pulled out of a trashcan.<sup>13</sup> She believed in the story and King believed his wife. The breakthrough novel was *Carrie*. It was successfully published, and it has reaped success which King had not expected and thus started his prolific career. King is also known to be an incredibly fast writer, and so he kept coming with new and new novels. *Salem's Lot*, *The Shining* and *Pet Semetary* had followed shortly after *Carrie*. As Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James claim in *A Short History of Fantasy*, by the 1990s King had dominated the horror market worldwide and his works had helped to expand the horror movie industry.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the film adaptation of *Carrie* was released only after two years.

In his memoir *On Writing*, King shares a lot of information about his writing style. One of the interesting things is that he does not really think about the plot of a story. In fact, he does not trust it, because according to him, even our lives are plotless, and he prefers a spontaneity.<sup>15</sup> He simply puts his characters into some situation and then watches them trying to get out. Moreover, he does not put a big focus on his characters, at least not right from the beginning. He works with flat characters at first, and as the story unfolds, the characters are transforming

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, paperback edition (United States: Scribner, 2000; Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), 81.

<sup>14</sup> Farah Mendlesohn et al., *A Short History of Fantasy*, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 188.

into more and more complex. For him, it is the situation which has a priority.<sup>16</sup> Another thing he puts a great emphasis on are the dialogues between his characters.

Other things for which he is well-known include, for instance, his ability to turn almost anything into a scary object. Trucks, hedge animals, an extinguisher, a hotel, a cat or a mist can be unbelievably scary in his fictions, and what is more, they can even be the leading cause of the horror. His many literary skills also include creating suspense. He does not need the traditional horror such as hideous monsters or bloody scenes, he is able to create suspense with anything, as it was already mentioned. King builds up the suspense and tension all the way through the book, he takes his time developing his characters and the situation, until it reaches the climax, which usually leaves the reader breathless.

As already mentioned, Stephen King is associated mainly with horror fiction. Still, he tried to write novels even in other genres, and the result was often equally successful. *The Stand* (1978) or *The Running Man* (1982) are science-fiction novels. *The Dark Tower* series (1982-2012) is somewhere on the border between science-fiction and fantasy. His novel *Insomnia* (1994) is considered a fantasy novel with horror elements. Those are all the genres in the world of fiction. However, Stephen King has written even some non-fiction novels, for example, *Dance Macabre* (1981) or *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (2000). The latter was used as a reference for several facts in this thesis.

His other famous works which have not been mentioned yet include, for example, *It* (1986), *Misery* (1987), *The Green Mile* (1996) or *The Shawshank Redemption* (1982).

### **3. The concept of childhood in horror literature**

The evil child begins to appear in the horror literature in the 1950s when authors began challenging the existing moral order. Furthermore, they also questioned whether evil is something that is already encoded in human nature, or whether it is something acquired for example, due to a traumatic childhood. It is, therefore, quite a recent phenomenon.

One of the first significant novels which depict a child as an instrument of evil is *The Small Assassin* (1946) by Ray Bradbury. Bradbury continued with this theme even in his following novel, *The Veldt* (1950). William Goldings' *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), where the children who had been innocent in the beginning turned into an aggressive group, is also worthy

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 190.

of mentioning. In the same year, William March wrote his very last novel, *The Bad Seed*. Ira Levin came up with a very significant novel *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), and William Peter Blatty published *The Exorcist* (1971) which became a classic in the portrayal of demonic possession. Both novels were later adapted for the screen, and these film adaptations have become an integral part of the culture. Another example of a famous novel which was adapted for a screen is *The Other* (1971) by Thomas Tryon. An evil child also appeared in a book by Ramsey Campbell, called *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* (1976).

The tendency to include children to the horror genre has lasted until these days and, what is more, it is on the rise. As a matter of the fact, it has reached the point where Karen J. Renner claims in her work *Evil Children in Film and Literature: Notes Toward a Genealogy* that “the evil child is almost a trite plot device.”<sup>17</sup>

Susan Stewart claims in her study called *The Epistemology of the Horror Story* that it is the thematic inversion which makes a horror story so effective. When people see something familiar transform into its opposite, it genuinely affects them. That is why the children in works like *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* or *Rosemary's Baby* are frightening, and in a way, they are much more frightening than monsters, such as werewolves or demons. “It is due to exaggerated inversions of our cultural notions of childhood,” she further explains.<sup>18</sup>

Children are not supposed to be scary, and perhaps that is why authors and directors like to seduce their innocence in their works. It is truly the contrast to the romantic ideas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when authors considered children as pure beings. This is implied by the term ‘tabula rasa’, which is a concept defined by many significant philosophers such as Aristotle, John Locke or even psychologists Sigmund Freud.

### **3. 1. The uncanny child**

*Cambridge Dictionary* defines the word *uncanny* as “strange or mysterious; difficult or impossible to explain.”<sup>19</sup> It can be used in situations when someone does not know what something originates from or if they have no idea how something is working, or, it can even be beyond knowing.

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<sup>17</sup> Karen J. Renner, “Evil Children in Film and Literature: Notes Toward a Genealogy,” *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 22, no. 2, (June 2011): 83.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Stewart, “The Epistemology of the Horror Story”, 42.

<sup>19</sup> Uncanny, Cambridge Dictionary, accessed December 14, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/uncanny>.



Interpretations of the uncanny child can differ with each individual. Someone can imagine a child who evokes an extremely odd feeling, not being able to explain why. Someone can imagine a child who has a supernatural overtone, or a suspiciously silent child who is staring at someone or something almost looking like a doll. The term ‘uncanny child’ can have truly many disguises, however, it always triggers anxiety.

As James Strachey, a translator of Sigmund Freud’s works stated, the concept of the ‘uncanny’ is also connected with one of Freud’s essays, *Das Unheimlich*, written in 1919. He distinguishes ‘Heimlich’ and ‘Unheimlich’, which means homely and not homely. Furthermore, he mentions, that people tend to consider this ‘uncanny’ frightening because it is not familiar and known. However, that is not enough, because not everything what is new to people must be scary.<sup>20</sup> Thus, he concludes: “...for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”<sup>21</sup>

Jessica Balanzategui analysed uncanny children in her book called *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, and she draws a conclusion that the uncanny children very often lack belonging and sense of home. They are also deterritorialized from clear origins which helps to attract a global audience.<sup>22</sup> According to her, there are two forms in which are children depicted as the uncanny. The first, and presumably even the most common form is the child which is constructed as an empty vessel for the evil that inhabits the body, such as the child characters in *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary’s Baby*. The second form is possible to see in *The Shining*, and she describes it as “...child characters are not associated with a shallow interplay of evil and innocence, but with the complex and impalpable ways in which they seem at once familiar and alien, vulnerable and threatening, innocent and dangerously indecipherable.”<sup>23</sup>

## 4. The Analysis of the Characters

This thesis analyses characters and therefore, the way how the analysis was done and what factors it mainly focused on, are going to be outlined. Authors’ style of describing their

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<sup>20</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, trans. James Strachey, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 220, [https://uncanny.la.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freud-uncanny\\_001.pdf](https://uncanny.la.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freud-uncanny_001.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, 241.

<sup>22</sup> Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 226, <http://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/bb7d3990-d16c-41b6-bd9a-fdffc8c37f6/1004118.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 11–12.

characters differs, and therefore, only the main factors which Stephen King focuses on are introduced. However, general distinction such as dynamic and static character or antagonist and protagonist is briefly described as well.

Starting with the physical description, King gives his readers only a brief description of what his characters look like. He prefers his readers' imagination when it comes to details such as faces, eye colour, the figure or clothing. In fact, when it comes to clothing, in *On Writing*, he expresses his irritation with the description of it. In his words: "Description begins in the writer's imagination, but should finish in the reader's."<sup>24</sup> Because of this conception, the physical description is not included at all.

On the other hand, a dialogue, for King, is the key in defining characters. It has already been stated that he focuses on the dialogues or character's thought processes. In *On Writing*, he gives a clear example of what he means. He said that thanks to a straight narration, he is able to write that one of his characters never went to school, but that he can convey the same thing by the character's speech. He follows his own rule that he never tells his readers something he can show it to them.<sup>25</sup>

With regard to characters, the distinction between a dynamic and a static character should not be left out. Dynamic characters are characters which are evolving during the story. We can see evolving patterns in their behaviour that can change entirely in reaction to some situation or conflict in the story. In contrast to that, static characters remain basically the same. "For me, what happens to characters as a story progress depends solely on what I discover about them as I go along – how they grow, in other words. Sometimes they grow a little. If they grow a lot, they begin to influence the course of the story instead of the other way around."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, according to what King writes about developing his characters in *On Writing*, is evident, that a character, that he planned to be a static one, can become a dynamic one with important influence on the story.

Besides dynamic and static character, there are other types, such as a protagonist, an antagonist, and a main and a minor character. While the main character has a significant role in the story and is usually a dynamic character as well, minor character plays a relatively small role and is usually a static one. Moving on to the protagonist and the antagonist. It is very

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 202 – 203.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 211.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 223 – 224.

common, that the protagonist takes the role of the hero in the story, but it does not necessarily have to. The protagonist is the leading character, and it supports the moral good. Its opposite is the antagonist, who more often than not, is the villain and is hostile to the protagonist. Stephen King holds a very interesting view with regards to the protagonist and the antagonist. He does not resonate with this simple distinction, because as he claims, no one is only ‘the bad guy’ or ‘the good guy’ in real life. Everyone regards themselves as the protagonist, and he gives a specific example on his character Annie Wilkes from the novel *Misery*. She keeps her favourite author as a prisoner and it is natural that the readers see her as a psychopath, but on the other hand, she seems normal and reasonable for herself.<sup>27</sup>

King writes in the third-person omniscient point of view. It means he is not involved in the story, and therefore, he has not got a limited view as he would have if he were writing in the first-person point of view. He can jump from place to place, from one character to another or from past to the future. As an omniscient narrator, King knows everything, but it is in his interest not to reveal everything to his readers until the time when it has the best effect. It is one of his ways of creating suspense in his stories - by unanswered questions.

## **5. The Shining**

### **5.1. Characteristics of Danny Torrance**

The character of little Daniel Anthony Torrance, mostly known only as Danny or Doc, is probably one of the best-known child characters in the books by Stephen King. The character plays a significant role in *The Shining* as well as in its sequel *Doctor Sleep*. Since in *Doctor Sleep*, Danny is already an adult, and this thesis focuses on child characters, *The Shining* will be the only focus.

Danny is a five-year-old boy, who has a psychic power called ‘shining’. This power is a combination of many abilities. He is able to read other person’s minds and communicate with other people with the ‘shining’ power, without actually needing to speak aloud. He has a strong intuition and can see some past or future events. However, Danny is only five, so he does not understand this power, does not talk about it with anyone, until he meets Dick Halloran. Dick happens to be a crucial figure in Danny’s life. Not only is he the first person with ‘shining’ whom Danny has met, moreover, he assures him it is okay and there is nothing wrong with him,

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<sup>27</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 224 – 225.

and tells him a bit more about it. It may seem like ‘shining’ has only advantages so far, but that is definitely not true. It is precisely this ‘shining’ which awakes the evil in the Overlook Hotel to the full extent and it is also the reason why Danny becomes the target of this evil.

As most of the King’s character, even Danny Torrance faces with more horrendous experiences than he should as a five-year-old. It is even worse, considering it is his father’s fault. Jack Torrance is a former alcoholic, and in his drunk condition, he physically hurt Danny more than once. For instance, he dropped Danny when he was only a baby, and a few years later, he broke his arm in anger. King gradually reveals what Jack’s behaviour stems from. His father abused him as well, thus, there is a perfect example of the proverb ‘like father, like son’. It is precisely those details, those pieces which fit together after some time, that make King’s characters so real and so brilliant. Despite these difficulties, Danny loves his father and he has a very close relationship with him.

Like most children, even Danny perceives more of his surroundings than his parents know. He is very intelligent for a five-year-old, and his intelligence is enhanced by his shining. “He understood a great deal of things about his parents, and he knew that many times they didn’t like his understandings and many other times refused to believe them.”<sup>28</sup>

What he senses most, is a strong tension between his parents, without them even knowing. They are careful not to speak about their problems when Danny is close, but they cannot control their thoughts. These thoughts are what Danny hears. Naturally, he is terrified of the idea of his parents’ divorce. In fact, he fears it so much, that even when the evil in the Overlook is awakened, he still feels the need to make sure they are going to stay together. “The greatest terror of Danny’s life was DIVORCE, a word that always appeared in his mind as a sign painted in red letters which were covered with hissing, poisonous snakes.”<sup>29</sup>

Despite having loving parents, Danny feels lonely inside. They have moved recently, and Danny has lost the only friends he had. In the new place, there are no kids to socialize with. He feels different, isolated from the world. With the isolation also comes the fear of opening up to someone. He wishes to tell his parents that he simply knows things. He wishes to tell them that he knows about mother’s sister Aileen who died in the car accident when she was young, even though no one has told him. He wishes to tell them that he knows that Uncle All was angry

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, paperback edition (United States: Doubleday, 1977; Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton: 2011), 28.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, 29.

with Daddy on the phone and that All has forbidden his father to write a book about the Overlook Hotel, without hearing their conversation. However, he is scared that his parents would think that he has *lost his marbles* and that *men in white coats* would come for him, put him into *bughouse* and *no one knows* when he would come back to his Mommy and Daddy.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of being alone, Danny has one special friend after all. An imaginary friend named Tony, who is helping him in situations when Danny cannot help himself. But Tony is not just an ordinary imaginary friend whom some children make up not to feel lonely. Tony is a part of Danny's shining. His parents see Tony as a harmless creation of Danny's imagination, since he has no friend, but just to be sure, they told about Tony to Danny's doctor anyway. The doctor is aware of Jack's temperament, so he concluded that the creation of Tony stems from Jack's rage, in order to help Danny to cope with it. However, things change when moving to the Overlook Hotel gets closer. It seems that Tony is turning into an enemy and is showing to Danny some horrible figments of events or scary images which Danny does not understand yet. Tony intervenes in Danny's life quite seriously and not only once. For a while, Tony becomes Danny. He takes control over Danny's body, and Danny's mind is pushed aside. Metaphorically speaking, Tony shoves Danny into the trunk of a car, and he takes over the steering wheel. Nevertheless, by the end of the novel, Danny finds out that Tony was only trying to warn him about the Overlook and prepared him in a way for the horrible things which have happened later. What is more, he finds out that Tony is actually an older version of him. After all, King's choice about the name Tony is not a coincidence. It is a short version of Anthony, which is Danny's middle name.

Curiosity inherently belongs to childhood and Danny is not an exception. He is curious like every other child. His prying around the room 217 is a perfect example. In addition, room 217 is also a perfect illustration of what has been demonstrated before about King's suspense. The mysterious room raises questions every time it is mentioned, however, King does not reveal what is in the room until a particular time. Danny has been warned about this room, he knows someone saw bad things happen in there, and he even promises never to go there.

And a promise was, of course, very important. Still, his curiosity itched at him as maddeningly as poison ivy in a place you aren't supposed to scratch. But it was a dreadful kind of curiosity. The kind of that makes you peek through your fingers during the scariest parts of a scary movie.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, 213 – 215.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, 187.

On the other hand, he knows the boundaries. He is well aware of the fact that he could read his mother's, father's or anyone else's thoughts, but does not do it, because he knows it would be rude to peek into someone's privacy like that. Even many adults would not be able to resist such a temptation to know what other people think about. It is mainly his thought processes which show the readership his maturity as well as his intelligence.

Even in the time of horrendous fear, when Danny finds the dead lady from the room 217, he manages to keep calm and reasonable. This, once again, is something even an adult would often not be able to do. He remembers what Dick Halloran had told him, that those things in the Overlook cannot hurt him, just like scary pictures in books cannot hurt him. Keeping this in mind, he manages to calm down. Unfortunately, Dick's reassurance turns out not to be true in case of Danny's experiences. Thanks to the dead lady from room 217, he realizes that those things in the Overlook can hurt him and what is more, they want to hurt him. That is why panic always overwhelms him in the following experiences, which the supernatural power in the Overlook has prepared for him in order to get him finally.

## **5. 2. Family Environment**

Danny Torrance's family is presented as not ideal. His parents love him, and he loves them, however, that is not enough when there are so many shadows lurking behind every corner of Torrance's family. The biggest evil is undoubtedly hidden in Danny's father, Jack Torrance. In the introduction to *The Shining* Stephen King admitted that his decision to create Jack the way he did was very risky and crucial.<sup>32</sup>

Jack's behaviour reflects the worst patterns of his father's behaviour - alcoholism and rage. Jack loved his father despite his attitude towards him. It is the same case with Danny, who loves Jack despite his outrageous moments. However, King does not reveal the influence of Jack's upbringing until the second part of the book. Until that, he gives his readers only hints in the form of sentences such as "come on and take your medicine!"<sup>33</sup> which Danny hears but does not know what it means, neither do the readers. In the chapter, where Jack remembers his childhood, Jack's actions became more understandable, as it becomes clear that they are also rooted in his childhood and that Jack's father is to blame. Danny realizes it too, by the end of

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, xi.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, 142.

the book and thanks to this, he is able to say goodbye to the real Jack, not the Jack possessed by the evil force of the Overlook.

Danny's mother, Wendy, is a way too tolerant woman when it comes to Jack's behaviour in general, but mainly as regards his behaviour towards Danny. She tolerates his drinking problems as well as his outrageous moments when he hurt Danny. When the novel turns its focus on Wendy, it eventually becomes clear from her thoughts, that she is staying with him because of herself and not for the good of her son. She loves Jack and she still naively hopes he will change.

Even after the accident – if you could call it an accident – she had not been able to bring it all the way out, to admit that her marriage was a lopsided defeat. She had waited, dumbly hoping that a miracle would occur and Jack would see what was happening, not only to him but to her.<sup>34</sup>

Besides, she would not be able to make a living on her own, and she does not have anywhere to go since her relationship with her mother is very poor. Kate Sullivan confirms this idea in her work *(Re)imagining the Masculine* by saying: “Wendy, chooses her erotic attraction to and support of Jack over Danny's safety.”<sup>35</sup> When she finally talks to Jack about a divorce, it is not for the good of Danny. It is because everything has started going worse. However, when the things in the Overlook Hotel end up in a disaster, she eventually fights back for the sole safety of her son. She realizes Jack is under control of the Overlook and that there is no chance for him, but she and Danny might still get out. Although hurt after fighting with Jack, Danny is the only thing she can think of and she is desperately looking for him, hoping Jack would not get to him first.

### **5. 3. The Role of Danny in The Shining**

Danny is the protagonist of the novel, and although the main focus is put on his father Jack, Danny still takes the role of the main characters together with Jack.

Furthermore, Danny's characteristics and mainly his family environment imply that his role in this novel is the role of a victim. He is a victim of a failed parenting, a victim of inadequate protection and a victim of evil which is represented by the Overlook Hotel. The evil in the Overlook hotel destroys his innocence in several ways. For instance, when he sees the

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen King, *The Shining*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Kate Sullivan, “Stephen King's Bookish Boys: (Re)imagining the Masculine,” *Masculinities* vol. 14, (1999-2000), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.ark5583.0014.002>.

consequences of the murder in the presidential suite as well as when he is exposed to sexual innuendo and sexual content. Such violence or erotic contents can change a child's perception of the world and, as a consequence, the child may suffer from mental illnesses such as post-traumatic syndrome or depression. They can try to cope with it via alcohol or drugs when they are older, or it can even result in committing delinquent acts or in criminality. Sara Martín Alerge has confirmed this observation in her work *Nightmares of Childhood*. The traumatic experiences which King builds around his child characters must result in bad adulthood, at least in most of the cases.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to the sequel *Doctor Sleep* it is possible to peek into Danny's adulthood and indeed, he ends up being an alcoholic with a tendency to aggression like his father.

Because of the Overlook Hotel, Danny stands on the border between childhood and adulthood much earlier than he is supposed to. His thought processes are more mature, and as a result, he seems to be an adult in a child's body. However, his intelligence is still intertwined with a typical child naivety, therefore, it does not create a feeling of deception. It does stand out in some situations, however. For instance, at the end of the novel, when he not only remains calm but even looks after his injured mother, even though it is Wendy, who should look after him.

It is not a coincidence that Stephen King has chosen a child character for this and many other of his books. Undoubtedly, the majority of people sympathise with children, and as Alerge furthermore believes, this story is inconspicuously sending them a message 'take good care of your children'.<sup>37</sup>

Jessica Balanzategui also deals with *The Shining* in connection with the uncanny. She stated that:

*The Shining* presents a vision of childhood that is disturbing not because the child is possessed or evil – as is emphasized by the true nature of Danny's 'invisible friend' – but because the child is impossibly intertwined with yet simultaneously impenetrable to the adult's psyche.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Sara Martín Alerge, "Nightmares of Childhood: The Child and the Monster in Four Novels by Stephen King," *Atlantis* 23, no. 1 (2001): 106.

<sup>37</sup> Sara Martín Alerge, "Nightmares of Childhood," 105.

<sup>38</sup> Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 52.



## 6. Pet Sematary

### 6. 1. Characteristics of Ellie Creed

Ellie Creed is a five-year-old girl, an older sister of little Gage. She is the one who discovers a secret path to the Pet Sematary and she is the one who insists on going there and learning more. Her mother, Rachel, is not found of the idea, because she does not want Ellie to be around anything that evokes death. On the other hand, her father, Louis, thinks the very opposite since he is a doctor and sees death as a natural part of life. After the visit to the Pet Sematary, Ellie is very upset about the concept of death when she realizes even her beloved pet, a tomcat called Church, will eventually die. “I don’t want to Church to be ever dead! He’s my cat! He’s not God’s cat! Let God have his own cat! Let God have all the damn old cats He wants, and kill them all! Church is mine!”<sup>39</sup> This part about Ellie’s indignation is not only authentic but also evocative. It is due to the fact that King basically wrote about his own daughter’s indignation. “I’ve always loved her for that defiant cry,”<sup>40</sup> he admits in the introduction of *Pet Sematary*. Later on, Ellie begins to understand death, and she even manages to cope with the death of Norma Crandall, Creeds’ neighbour and friend, very well. Nevertheless, the death of an acquaintance differs from the death of a family member. She loves her younger brother Gage. She plays with him and sometimes teases him, as older siblings often do. His death is a horrible shock for her as it is for the rest of the family, and she does not cope well with it. “It was as if the death of her brother in the road in front of the house had shocked away most of her vocabulary.”<sup>41</sup>

Like many other children, even Ellie is scared of the kindergarten first, but after experiencing it, she cannot stop talking about how she likes it there. Ellie seems to be a perfectly ordinary child, whose behaviour does not deviate in any way - almost. When one reads *Pet Sematary* after having read *The Shining*, it might seem that Ellie possesses the ‘shining’ ability as well, only not so strong. She knows something is wrong, and she knows that it will get even worse, without being able to explain how she knows these things. It starts with a dream of Church being run over by a car, which then actually happens and then it continues with an inexplicably bad feeling about her father. “I don’t know what’s wrong,’ she said. ‘But I knew

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, paperback edition, (United States: Doubleday, 1983; Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), 46.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, xii.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 275.

something was wrong ever since Daddy told me about the trip. Because something was wrong with him.”<sup>42</sup>

Her parents are both devastated from the death of their baby boy, which is more than understandable. However, it is as if they have forgotten that they still have one more child. Ellie does not get the attention and affection she needs. Louis secretly plans to bring Gage back to life, and in order to do that, he sends Ellie with Rachel to Rachel’s parents in another state. Rachel does not seem strong enough to support her daughter either, even though she trusts Ellie’s intuition, and she eventually comes back to Louis. “Don’t let them stop you Mommy,” Ellie said in a low voice. ‘Please.’ No way, big sister,’ Rachel said.”<sup>43</sup>

The end raises many questions about Ellie’s future because she is the only one from the Creed’s family who has survived, even though it is not explicitly mentioned.

## 6. 2. Characteristics of Gage Creed

Gage William Creed is an exception when it comes to King’s child characters. That is the main reason why *Pet Sematary* is included in this thesis. At the end of the book, Gage is depicted as a pure evil, which makes him different from other characters. He is not the sweet little boy who asks innocent “and why?” questions all the time anymore. He is a cunning monster that can see everybody’s weaknesses, fears and shame. He spits at them the worst swearing, he looks at them with the most supercilious look and he wants to hurt them very badly, not only psychically but also physically. “‘Hello Jud,’ Gage piped in a babyish but perfectly understandable voice. ‘I’ve come to send your rotten, stinking old soul straight to hell.’”<sup>44</sup>

And of course, no child should be like this. Children are supposed to be just like Gage as depicted in the first half of the book. He is only a 3-year-old boy, a typical toddler. An innocent and a cute boy who is only exploring the world. It is this transformation which evokes such suspense and anxious feeling. And it is also this transformation, thanks to which Gage is considered to be one of the scariest villains by Stephen King according to Caitlin Bush in the article on *Inverse*.<sup>45</sup> King does not devote much to Gage’s character, which is understandable

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 352.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 367.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 247.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen King's 8 Scariest Monsters and Villains, *Inverse*, last modified May 24, 2017, <https://www.inverse.com/article/31737-stephen-king-villain-monster-ranking-horror-scary>.

since he is just a toddler. Before his transformation, he toddles around, playing with his toys or with Ellie, barely talking: “Birt, Daddy! Got a birt!”<sup>46</sup> Despite having little space for the development in the story, King managed to create a similar, if not even prominent, emotional attachment to Gage.

The transformation and its consequence should be described in greater detail. Gage is run over by a truck in such a speed, that even an adult would not stand a chance to survive. Despite his doctoral knowledge, Louis decides to bring Gage back to life in the same way he brought Church back to life earlier in the novel. When reanimated, Gage’s body is possessed by a Wendigo, a supernatural being associated with the cursed Micmac burial ground. As a result, Gage gains a knowledge, which no child should have. And according to Steven Bruhm in *Nightmare on Sesame Street: or, The Self-Possessed Child*, that is the reason why Gage symbolizes the loss of innocence. Essentially, Gage kills Jud Crandall and his mother Rachel, who have just come back home to Louis. Louis realizes far too late what mistake he has made, and Gage has to die again, this time by his father’s hands.

Stephen King himself thought that he had really crossed the line by describing how a father digs a grave of his son and put his remains into a bag. Furthermore, burying him again, this time on the cursed Micmac burial ground to bring him back to life, knowing very well that, he will be different. King himself described it as a topic, which is forbidden, a topic, which should not be talked about.<sup>47</sup> That is why he considers *Pet Sematary* to be his the most frightening book he has ever written, as he claims in the introduction to this book.<sup>48</sup>

On the subject of the monstrosity, Gage after his transition is often compared to one of the horror archetypes – a zombie. However, that is a misconception. The only thing Gage has in common with a zombie is the reanimation, but it must be mentioned that even the way of reanimation is different.

### **6. 3. Family Environment**

The Creeds family, unlike the Torrance’s family, represents an ideal traditional family. Louis works at the University of Maine as a doctor, while Rachel is a housewife. They moved from the city to the countryside in hope of a better life. From this aspect, the first half of the

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 247.

<sup>47</sup> Manufacturing Intellect. “Stephen King interview (1993)”. *YouTube* video, 34:15. May 24, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDyN8d3xM0U>.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, xi.

book evokes the ideal family environment. However, King likes to destroy such ideals, which he presents in his novels, and *Pet Sematary* is not the exception.

“When will something finally happen?” This is a question, which the reader can ask quite often. Nevertheless, with this seemingly peaceful environment, Stephen King is only preparing for what comes next. He lets the reader be almost a part of the Creed family, he lets him or her understand those characters, and he let him or her commiserate with them. And then it all begins.

Erica Joan Dymond made an excellent point in her study *From the Present to the Past: An Exploration of Family Dynamics in Stephen King’s Pet Sematary*: “In essence, Rachel is a “good” mother and wife but a flat stereotype. Whether in the kitchen or in the bedroom, Rachel has virtually no substantial impact on the plot.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, most of the times Rachel is either cooking, baking or ironing. However, King does not neglect any of his characters completely. In *On Writing*, he wrote about the importance of a back story. According to him, it helps to define the character, but it must be rather short than long.<sup>50</sup> That is what he does with the character of Rachel. He reveals a short, but emotional and scary story about her past, thanks to which it is clear why she is always anxious when someone speaks about death. She even has to be sedated several times, and she might not resemble a portrait of a particularly strong woman. Nevertheless, a similar pattern as with Wendy’s character, Danny’s mother in *The Shining*, reappears with Rachel. Almost in the end, she manages to pull herself together, finds the strength which she has not seemed to have all the way through the novel and goes back to Louis so she could bring him back in order to bring the family together.

As regards Louis, he desires to shield his children from any danger. For instance, he has Church neutered because he is scared Church might roam and be run over by a car, and of course, Ellie would be devastated by the death of her beloved pet. It might seem miniscule, but the reason why this is a noticeable act by Louis is that he was previously firmly against it. King strengthened Louis’s masculinity when he made him strongly against Church’s castration. “Rachel had wanted to get Church spayed; had even made the appointment with the vet. Louis

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<sup>49</sup> Erica Joan Dymond, “From the Present to the Past: An Exploration of Family Dynamics in Stephen King’s Pet Sematary,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 46, no. 4 (August 2013): 794.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 268.

cancelled it. Even now he wasn't really sure why. ... most of it had been a vague but strong feeling that it would destroy something in Church that he himself valued."<sup>51</sup>

King positions Louis as a good father in the beginning. Louis loves his children and, as already mentioned, King does not say it with a simple sentence, but he shows it many times in the novel. For instance, when Louis is gently explaining things to Ellie or when he goes trick-or-treating with her, when he is changing Gage's diapers, when he puts him to sleep or flies a kite with him.

"Louis paused there looking in at his son, his heart abruptly filling with a love for the boy so strong that it seemed almost dangerous."<sup>52</sup> This sentence appears at the beginning of the novel, and it becomes clear very soon that Louis's love for Gage is indeed dangerous. According to Erica Joan Dymond, Louis wants to save his family after the terrible accident, and he positions himself in the role of a hero. But the fact that he distanced himself from his wife and daughter, he actually becomes a villain.<sup>53</sup>

Although Louis is a loving father, he believes he has failed in protecting his son as a father. As a result, he does something which he - as a doctor - should know is impossible - brings his son back to life. What is even worse than that, he does not learn from his mistakes, and after killing Gage, he brings Rachel back the same way. "A cold hand fell on Louis's shoulder. Rachel's voice was grating, full of dirt. 'Darling,' it said."<sup>54</sup>

#### **6. 4. The Role of Ellie and Gage in Pet Sematary**

Ellie represents a sort of solid point in the novel. She is the opposition of the alien element and the chaos in the story. The only exception where she deviates from the normal is her strong intuition, but that is a minor alien element of alien compared to other things which are happening.

It is Ellie who brings the main topic of the novel, the death, to her family. As already mentioned in her characteristics, it was she who discovered the path to the pet sematary, and she insists on knowing more about death. It further develops through conversation with Louis, who tries to explain it to her in a gentle way, but still from a doctor's point of view. She also

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<sup>51</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Erica Joan Dymond, "From the Present to the Past: An Exploration of Family Dynamics in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*," 799 - 800.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, 465.

raises several questions connected to the death of Creeds' neighbour Norma. Lastly, there is, of course, the death of her little brother, Gage.

Using Ellie's and Louis's on-going thinking, King touches the difficult matter of a horror that can happen to anyone and in any time - the matter of the death of a relative. After finishing the novel, no one can resist asking the disturbing question: "What would you do?"

Despite the enormous difference in depictions of the evil, Gage has something in common with other child characters - the role of a victim. His body and mind were victimized by an evil force in the form of the Wendigo. Taken Jessica Balanzategui's distinction of uncanny children in two forms, which have already been mentioned, Gage fits into the first form, which is a vessel for evil. Even though it is not his fault, this horrible transformation causes him to adopt the role of the antagonist in the story. King knew that the transformation of something familiar into its opposite works very well and that it will cause anxiety in his readership.

In the introduction to *Pet Sematary*, King explains that he has been inspired by his own experiences. He nearly lost his son the same way Louis loses his son, and thanks to such a horrifying experience, he is able to impart the story with something more than just plain words. That is why he managed to maintain his questions "what if" in a such a brilliant way.

## **7. The Firestarter**

### **7. 1. Characteristics of Charlie McGee**

Charlene Norma McGee, or simply, Charlie, is an 8-year-old little girl, who is affected by a genetic experiment which her parents underwent when they were on college. The experiment was mediated by The Shop, a secret government agency, which is now interested in Charlie. As a result of that experiment, Charlie has the dominant ability of pyrokinesis, as well as powers, which she inherited from her parents, such as mental domination, telepathy, telekinesis and also precognition.

Her parents, Andy and Victoria McGee, found out about her abilities when she was one week old when a pillow in her crib started to smoulder. Numerous similar incidents followed soon and sadly, burning wastebaskets, curtains or her teddy bear was not the worst. One time, Charlie set her mother's hair on fire without even knowing. As a consequence, Charlie has been

instilled since childhood, that her powers are very bad, and when she uses them, she is a very bad girl. “Bad girl! Very bad! You mustn’t, Charlie! Never! Never! Never!”<sup>55</sup> Such an attitude has made her feel frightened of her abilities. As a consequence of one incident, when she kills some of The Shop’s men, she becomes more than aware of the possibility of killing someone, perhaps not intentionally but in horrendous fear. Her father is the only stable point in her life, and that only reinforces the fear that her father would stop loving her if something like that happened again. Therefore, she makes a promise to herself that she will never use her powers again no matter the circumstances. But as Irv Manders, a side character in the novel, mentions: “God loves to make a man break a vow.”<sup>56</sup>

The novel begins in medias res when Charlie and her father Andy are on a one year run from The Shop. Charlie and Andy are exhausted, and they are just narrowly escaping, with no time to rest. It is interesting that King decided to write a novel which would begin in medias res considering the fact that he claims in his book *On Writing* that he does not like such a technique.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps he considered it suitable for this novel. And indeed, thanks to it, he maintains the suspense all the way through the story.

An increasing number of dangerous situations forces Andy to change Charlie’s conceptions about her powers, and thus he makes her to use them. She is intelligent, and she is able to recognize the danger of a situation from which there is no way out. In such situations, she is willing to use her powers, knowing she is going to save her father’s life. Whenever she uses her powers, she does not act like a child anymore. She acts with confidence and with calmness, like an adult who knows perfectly well what she is doing. However, when she stops, the child in her wakes up again together with fear, guilt and confusion.

More than half of the book focuses on the time when Charlie is already held captive together with Andy by The Shop. They are kept separately in The Shop’s secret area for five months and these months become the critical months in forming Charlie’s identity.

The Shop wants to examine Charlie’s power, but she refuses to light up anything for them. They try all sorts of methods to convince her to help them. They offer her candies, new clothes or a visit to an amusement park. Sometimes they try using even threats. The only thing Charlie wants is to see her father, but that is a request that they do not accept. Nothing works

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, paperback edition, (United States: Viking Press, 1980; Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), 123.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 255.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 269.

and Charlie has to be fed intravenously, otherwise, she would starve herself to death. She becomes apathetic, and she does not care about anything else than her father. King inserts an adult element into Charlie's characteristics when he makes Charlie think it is fair. She murdered men, protecting her and Andy's life, and she thinks it is fair that they have imprisoned her like that.

Things start to change when another character, The Shop's hitman John Rainbird, becomes a friend with Charlie. It must be clarified that John Rainbird is an antagonist in the novel and he only pretends to be Charlie's friend. Charlie starts to talk and shares things with him, she even laughs eventually. She believes him, and she thinks that with his help, she can see her father soon. The most important thing that comes out of this relationship is, that Charlie starts to make fires for The Shop. Rainbird is a professional killer, and his colleagues talk about him as a psychopath, and indeed, he is one. He knows very well what psychological games he can play with Charlie. He is careful, he realizes how smart Charlie is, unlike his superiors in The Shop. "You don't understand how smart she is," Rainbird cut him off. "You don't understand how... how adept she is at seeing the causes and effects of things. Working with her is like picking your way through a minefield."<sup>58</sup>

Because of the strong bond, she has made with Rainbird, Charlie is heartbroken when she finally realizes who Rainbird is. It hits her perhaps even more than being caught and separated from her father because that was something, she knew it may happen. Rainbird's betrayal has not been expected at all.

The feeling of desolation in her, the heartbreak, seemed too great to be contained.... Either way the hurt, the cost, was enormous. Was this what being grownup was about? Dealing with that hurt? That cost? If it was, she hoped she would die young.<sup>59</sup>

He makes her mad, furious. But at that time, her father sends her an escape plan and she can focus on something else than the fury inside her. She is supposed to meet Andy in the stable, but Rainbird is there earlier than him, hidden and waiting for Charlie. When she hears his voice, Charlie is immediately ready to set him on fire in anger, and the only thing that keeps her back are horses in the stable, already whinnying with fear. Andy finally arrives, but Rainbird immediately uses him and threatens to kill him if Charlie does not give up. At that point, Charlie's motives change completely from killing Rainbird to sacrificing herself if it means

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 375.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 460.



saving her father's life. Unfortunately, her father dies just a few moments later, and his death triggers the most transformation in Charlie's character. Rainbird and everyone from The Shop pay for the loss of her father. She does not become a cold-blooded murderer; she still does not want to kill people - unless they stand in her way.

King does not turn Charlie into an evil-walking-fire-lighter, instead, he turns her into an adult in a child's body. She matures and she matures very quickly due to the circumstances she is exposed to. She even learns how to stand up for herself and does not blame herself for things which are not her fault. "None of this was my fault; they brought it on themselves, and I won't take the blame, and I won't kill myself! Do you hear me! Do you?"<sup>60</sup>

In the end, all alone, she decides to do what her father has planned - share the story with the Rolling Stone magazine and hope for the public protection from The Shop. Sadly, King decided to stop it right there and thus it is completely up to a reader to imagine his own ending of Charlie's story.

## **7. 2. Family Environment**

The family environment is very crucial in this novel. More precisely, the relationship between father and daughter. The father, Andy, plays a significant role in Charlie's life. Their relationship is often the reason for the novel's popularity among readers.

As already mentioned, the novel focuses on the father-daughter relationship. It is mainly due to the fact that the mother element is oppressed when Vicky is killed by The Shop. Thus, Charlie naturally clings to her father more than she ever has before. The loss of a parent is probably one of the worst experiences which a child can go through. Nevertheless, there are only a few paragraphs which depicts how Charlie misses her mother. However, it does not seem strange, since it is clear from the story, that there are more important things to focus on when one is running for life.

The father is the authority figure. He holds the psychic reins of every fixation in the female child. Oral, anal, genital; behind each, like a shadowy figure standing behind a curtain, is the father-authority figure. To the girl-child he is Moses; the laws are his laws, handed down she knows not how, but his to enforce.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 537.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 111.

Even under such dangerous and exhausting circumstances, Andy is trying to be a good father. He is aware of how powerful his daughter is and how the exhausting run and the death of her mother has damaged her innocence. He is trying to prepare her for what might happen and does not lie to her about the severity of the situation. There are many situations in which he does not treat Charlie as a child, but rather as an adult.

“Daddy, will things ever be all right for us again? Will I be able to go to school and things?”<sup>62</sup> Such a question should evoke a need to comfort a child, a need to promise her that everything will be alright again. However, Andy chooses an honest answer, an answer which he would give to an adult, not to a child: “I don’t know Charlie.”<sup>63</sup>

He teaches her self-control; the most essential attribute Charlie needs in such tense situations they are both often exposed to. Initially, The Shop wants to kill Andy, because he represents an obstacle to the task of capturing Charlie. Later they begin to understand it is necessary to keep him alive, as they realise Andy has formed Charlie in a way, that it is only up to her will whether to use her power or not. And if they killed him, Charlie would not light up anything for them even if they threatened her with death. Under those circumstances, they split them up. Doing that, they take away the only stable point in Andy’s life. He has lost his wife and caring about Charlie’s safety is the only thing, which keeps him going. He gets fat, apathetic and even becomes addicted to meds the doctors give him. But when he finally gets the chance to fight for his daughter again, he does so without hesitation.

### **7. 3. The Role of Charlie in Firestarter**

Charlie is a protagonist of the novel and, similarly to the characters analysed above, even Charlie takes the role of a victim. And once more, adults are to blame, since it is adults who take away not only her parents but also her innocence and her childhood. She is deprived of the possibility to be a normal child who has lots of friends and goes to school. As a result, she wants revenge. It is not directly evident, but in a way, even Charlie is a victim of her parent’s actions. She has to pay for their decision to undergo an experiment for money. It is not possible to blame them since they did not know what experiment they were actually undergoing and they did not know each other, but still, without that, Charlie would have been a normal child.

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<sup>62</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 200.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 200.

Once again, King depicts a specific growth of his child character. Charlie's mental growth at the age of 8 is something no child should experience. She is used and abused for something she has never asked for. This results in the fact that Charlie has never learned how to use her power in a positive sense.

Through Charlie's character King also portrayed the fear of loneliness in a hostile world. Another theme which he depicted in *Firestarter* via Charlie's character, perhaps more specifically via her ability of pyrokinesis, is how difficult it is to close the Pandora's box once it is open. He even mentioned this theme in *On Writing*, and he used it even in his other novels such as *The Stand* or *Tommyknockers*.<sup>64</sup>

Had King not created such a mentally strong character, Charlie could have easily become an innocent monster created by irresponsible adults, as happened, for example, in his short story called *The Children of the Corn*.

## 8. Comparison of characters

### 8. 1. Differences

Those parts which deal with family environment imply that Ellie and Gage are the only ones, whom King decided to put in a healthy family environment. Danny is the one, who has grown up in an abusive child-parent relationship. King seems to write about it a lot, for example, those kinds of abusive relationships also appeared in *It* or *Carrie*. In the case of Charlie, she fully depends only on her father, since her mother was murdered by The Shop. The Creed's family do not last long in these "healthy family environment terms" but what remains important is that when starting reading this novel, there are no prominent problems like in *The Shining* or *Pet Sematary*.

Another difference we can find is the depiction of monstrosity in King's books. In *Pet Sematary* and even in *The Shining*, the evil is depicted through some sort of evil supernatural power. To be more specific, In *Pet Sematary* it is a Micmac burial ground and the supernatural being called Wendigo, while in *The Shining* it is an unspecified evil force in the Overlook Hotel. Compared to that, in *Firestarter*, the monsters are represented by humans. They not only hurt

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<sup>64</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing*, 246.

but even killed many people, and they masked their motives and intentions with ‘the greater good’.

As mentioned before, King often creates his child characters more matured than they should be in their age and characters in *Pet Sematary* might be the only ones who actually behave in correspondence with their age. There are no contradictions between their behaviour and age, except for the part where Gage comes back from the dead.

Gage is the only character who is depicted as an instrument of evil and therefore the only character acting as an antagonist. He is possessed by the Wendigo. In *The Shining*, the instrument of evil is portrayed as the Overlook Hotel, but Danny himself is not possessed by it. In *Firestarter*, Charlie might have become an instrument of evil if The Shop had managed to break her and start to use her for their needs, but that did not happen.

An approach to narration does not define the characters, but it helps to perceive them more attractively. King knew what approach would best suit his novels. *Firestarter* differs from the other two novels to the greatest extent. It starts in media res and therefore it is not chronological like *Pet Sematary*. *Firestarter* is full of action right from the beginning, while there is almost no horror in *Pet Sematary* until the very end. *The Shining* just to mention, is mostly chronological, however, there are quite a lot of flashbacks.

## 8. 2. Shared characteristics

The main attribute they all share is the role of a victim. People often have compassion for the weak ones, the underdogs of society and the harmed ones. Thus, it is almost guaranteed that the characters would earn sympathies of the readership. In addition, the acts that have been committed against those children can raise several questions and doubts.

Both Danny and Charlie possess some ability. While the origin of Charlie’s pyrokinesis is explained, the origin of Danny’s ‘shining’ is a mystery. Neither one of them can control their powers in the beginning, and they are slowly learning to use them. They are both scared of them in a way, however, it is clearly said that Charlie profoundly enjoys it, and she is probably more scared of this fact than the ability itself. “She thought about doing it and was again disgusted and frightened to find herself wanting to do it.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Stephen King, *Firestarter*, 397.

Once again, the characters of Danny and Charlie share another attribute. They have to deal with psychological isolation, which comes from the feeling of being different. They are both aware of their difference, and they do not know how to work with it. Neither do they know anybody with the same abilities who would thus understand them and help them control it. Speaking about isolation, once again, the same characters deal with physical isolation as well. Danny and his family are isolated from the civilization in the Overlook Hotel due to the harsh winter in the Colorado Rockies, where the snow cut them off. Charlie is isolated in the area owned by The Shop, where she is imprisoned in a flat for several months without the possibility of going out. She earns this privilege much later.

Except for Gage, all of the child characters possess the ‘shining’ ability in a way. They have presentiments about events which are going to happen. Of course, Danny possesses the strongest shining, he knows what is about to happen months ahead, even though he could not figure out the meaning of his dreams or visions. Charlie knows in advance that The Shop’s men are coming for her and Andy. Lastly, Ellie has bad dreams which tell her that something is going on, but she does not understand them as well as Danny.

A common trait which many King’s child characters share is that they behave more maturely. Their thought processes and conversations which they have with adults simply do not correspond to their actual age. Often, there is a very sudden switch from this mature version of theirs to the behaviour appropriate to their actual age, and these switches might cause a rather sketchy feeling. Such switches are noticeable with Charlie’s and Danny’s characters. For instance, when Charlie lights fires, she resembles with confidence and a hardihood, but when she stops, she immediately starts to crying. Danny’s thought processes often resemble the thoughts processes of an intellectual.

In addition, all the characters have to cope with the death of their close relative. King places his young characters in a very hard position and what is more, he makes the whole situation even harder in some way. Danny has to cope with his father’s death and all the evil happening in the Overlook Hotel is an aggravating circumstance. Charlie has to cope with her mother’s death and still be on a run. Ellie has to cope with the death of her brother Gage. Ellie loses both of her parents on the top of that, but due to the open ending, the way how she copes with it remains unknown. Gage himself does not have to cope with the death of his relative, but the death touches him more than others.

All the characters have a significant role in the story, if not the leading role. In *The Shining* and *Pet Sematary* the greatest focus lies on the father characters, namely Jack Torrance and Louis Creed, but it does not make the role of the child characters any less significant. In *Firestarter*, a great focus is put on Andy, but the focus on Charlie still outbalances it.

Danny's and Charlie's motives are the same – protection of their families. Danny's initial wish changes from his parents staying together to saving their lives. He tries to save his dad from the possession of the Overlook and when he realizes it is too late, he tries to save his mother with the help of Dick Halloran. As regards Charlie, she tries to save her father because she knows they want to kill him, she is even willing to sacrifice her life.

Although it is not a characteristic, it is something, which connects characters of Ellie and Charlie. The open endings of *Pet Sematary* and *Firestarter* evoke questions of what is going to happen to the characters.

## 9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyse four child characters and specify their role within a certain novel. This conclusion is based mainly on certain novels in which the child characters plays one of the main roles, however, to support some ideas, critical sources were helpful as well.

The theoretical part deals mainly with information which provides a background for the better overview of the horror literature, such as its history, characteristics, the position of childhood in the horror literature, a brief overview of Stephen King's works and such. Also, the uncanny child is discussed and when applying it to the four chosen child characters, Jessica Balanzategui's point of view in her work, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema* on the existence of two major forms of uncanny children is right. While Gage, as the only one falls into the category of being a vessel for evil, other characters fall into the category which is more complex, familiar but yet alien at the same time. The major part, however, is the analytical part which deals with the analysis of specific child's characters.

Danny's, Ellie's, Gage's and Charlie's characteristics and their specific roles in the novels imply that King uses child characters mainly to portray the mistakes of adults. Such a mistake is appreciable in every character. How exactly he does that has already been

demonstrated, but for a short overview, in *The Shining* and *Pet Sematary*, the mistake is made by the father character, while in *Firestarter* it is a mistake of a whole organization. Portraying mistakes of adults is often connected to a problematic family environment. That is another element which King's child characters have in common. Any issue in the nuclear family helps not only to attract sympathy, but also focus on the consequences of the issue on the child character.

It has been mentioned many times that King's child's characters are portrayed as victims. It is the fundamental element of each character, and what is more, the role of a victim appears not only in the selected books but also in other King's novels such as *It*, *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, *Children of the Corn* or *Carrie*, so it is not a matter of only selected works for this thesis. King's child characters are mostly the victims of bad parenting, victims of society or victims of the supernatural evil.

It seems that Stephen King likes to use the element of isolation, and it does not really matter whether it is physiological or physical isolation. The isolation makes his characters more vulnerable, and they are usually feeling trapped but they do not give up either way. That leads to another point, which is, that in many cases, King creates his young characters as little heroes. They are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the lives of someone they love. They voluntarily expose themselves to danger in order to destroy it. In such moments, they do not behave like children anymore. In their childish innocence, which they are slowly and gradually losing, they are exposed to the world of adults and they are forced to cope with all the consequences.

To sum up, the main things they all have common is the role of a victim, the loss of innocence, isolation, loneliness, defenceless at some point and a bad relationship within the family. It is these attributes which are mostly reoccurring in Stephen King's novels in which a child character plays one of the main roles.

From what has been stated, it is clear that every single child's character has to experience something horrifying and eerie. It is no wonder King often gets asked in interviews, what had happened to him as a child and what his childhood looked like. People quite understandably think he experienced something horrible. But his answer to this question is always: "My childhood was perfectly normal."<sup>66</sup> Although he gets inspired by his own experiences quite often, it is mainly his fantasy, that creates stories, for which he will not be forgotten.

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<sup>66</sup> Manufacturing Intellect. „Stephen King interview (1993)". *YouTube* video, 34:15. 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDyN8d3xM0U>.

## Resumé

V dnešní době je hororový žánr již neodmyslitelnou součástí naší kultury a ovlivňuje snad všechny umělecké činnosti. Přes literaturu, malbu, divadlo, film až po moderní fenomén, kterým jsou například počítačové hry. Zatímco v dávné minulosti se hororovému elementu snažili lidé co nejvíce vyhýbat, po postupném mizení nebezpečí a strachu z jejich života, začal být horor naopak vyhledáván. Tato práce se nezaměřuje na hororový žánr obecně, ale pouze na hororový žánr v literatuře, konkrétně pak na role dětských postav ve vybraných hororových fikcích od světoznámého autora, kterému se nepřezdívá „Mistr Strachu“ jen tak pro nic za nic. Zcela jasně se jedná o Stephena Kinga. Fikcemi, kterým se tato práce věnuje, jsou tři knihy, kterými jsou *Osvícení*, *Řbitov zviřátek* a *Žhářka*. Postavy, které jsou analyzovány, jsou Danny Torrance, sourozenci Ellie a Gage Creedovi a nakonec Charlie McGee.

Hororová literatura jako samostatný žánr nesahá tak daleko do historie jako například žánr satiry. V kapitole zabývající se vývojem, významnými autory a důležitými milníky hororové literatury jsou proto zobrazena i díla, která se řadí do žánru gotického románu. Z tohoto žánru právě horor, jak ho známe dnes, v podstatné míře pramení, a proto důležitost gotického románu nemůže být opomenuta.

V charakteristice hororového žánru je vymezena jak jedna z jeho mnoha definic, tak jsou tu s pomocí odborných či kritických zdrojů vypsány klíčové vlastnosti, které má tato literatura společné. Je to například pocit klaustrofobie, katarze nebo skutečnost, že hororový žánr na rozdíl od jiných žánrů, může na čtenáře působit nejenom emociálně, jako například strachem, ale může na něj působit až tak, že jeho reakce budou fyzické, jako například ztuhnutí svalů nebo dokonce pocit nevolnosti. Vysvětlen je i pojem „monstrous“, neboli monstrózní či obludný, který je dále rozvinut do role příšer v hororech obecně. Zmíněny jsou i ty nejznámější příšery právě od Stephena Kinga.

Jelikož je Stephen King autorem všech vybraných děl, je jenom správné, aby zde jeho práce a literární otisk byly alespoň zmíněny. Je zde zobrazeno několikero prvků typických pro jeho psaní, které jsou dále rozebírány v kapitole zabývající se analýzou a následně jsou aplikovány do samostatných analýz vybraných dětských postav. Mimo jiné jsou tu zmíněna i jeho další díla, která ho proslavila, ať už se jedná o fikci v hororovém či v sci-fi žánru, nebo například memoár *On Writing*.



Jak již bylo zmíněno, tato práce se zabývá výhradně dětskými postavami, a proto je zde i samostatná kapitola zaměřující se na historii dětských postav v hororové literatuře, kde dětské postavy začaly získávat popularitu přibližně ve stejné době, kdy hororový žánr v literatuře vznikl. Pro takové romány je velmi běžné, že se děti již narodí zlé, nebo se zlými teprve stanou, například po nějaké události, která je takovým negativním způsobem ovlivnila. Není zde opomenut ani kontrast s romantickým vnímáním dětských postav v literatuře osmnáctého století.

Termín „the uncanny child“, kdy „uncanny“, v doslovném překladu znamená záhadný, tajemný či zlověstný, se v souvislosti s dětskými postavami v hororovém žánru objevuje poměrně často. Proto je zde, pro lepší představu a pochopení tento termín, který v českém jazyce nemá přímý ekvivalent, vysvětlen nejen za pomoci odborných zdrojů, ale i na konkrétních případech.

Již zmíněná Kingova monografie *On Writing* byla hlavním zdrojem pro kapitolu věnující se analýze literárních postav, protože v ní King přímo sděluje, na co se při psaní soustřeďuje a čemu naopak ponechává volný průběh. Mimo jiné je zde také zmíněno obecné rozdělení postav, jako například protagonista a antagonist. Sepsané poznatky jsou nadále použity právě v analýze dětských postav.

Analytická část této práce se již soustředí na konkrétní postavy z vybraných děl. Analýza se týká podstatných povahových rysů, klíčových změn v povaze po zažití něčeho podnětného a vztahů postav s okolím. Dále je zde nastíněno i rodinné prostředí, ze kterého daná dětská postava pochází. Důvodem, proč byla rodina zařazena do analýzy v samostatné podkapitole je to, že jsou to velmi často právě rodiče, kteří předávají dětem konkrétní povahové rysy, které byly pro analýzu klíčové anebo jiným způsobem sehrály v jejich vývoji velmi důležitou roli. Ze získaných informací je následně vyvozena role určité postavy v konkrétní knize. K podložení faktů či názorů posloužila hlavně primární literatura, ale i kritické zdroje. Tento vzorec se následně opakuje u všech čtyř postav. Jako první byla analyzována postava Dannyho Torrance z *Osvícení*, obdařeného mimořádnými schopnostmi, který se s rodiči na zimu stěhuje do hotelu Overlook, ve kterém se s jejich příjezdem probudí zlá síla. Následovala analýza sourozenců Ellie a Gage Creedových z knihy *Řbitov zvířátek*, jejichž otec se po strašlivé nehodě, ve které mladší sourozenec Gage přišel o život, snaží přivést Gage zpět mezi živé. Tento plán však nedopadne podle otcových představ. Přestože se Gage vrátí, nemá se svou osobností již nic společného a nyní je jeho úmyslem pouze zabít.

Poslední postavou je Charlie McGee ze *Žhářky*, která je se svým otcem už rok na útěku před tajnou státní organizací zvanou Dílna, která ji chce získat kvůli její schopnosti pyrokineze.

Po této komplexní analýze následuje porovnání všech postav a vyzdvihnutí těch vlastností, které všechny postavy mají společné nebo naopak ty, ve kterých se rozcházejí. Jasně vyšlo například najevo, že postava Gage je jako jediná zobrazena jako postava, která je nástrojem zla. Právě z tohoto shrnutí a porovnání všech klíčových vlastností bylo nejvíce čerpáno při formulaci závěru této práce, jelikož poukazuje konkrétně na ty vlastnosti, které Stephen King u svých dětských postav nejvíce používá a zdůrazňuje.

Vybraná díla *Osvícení*, *Řbitov zvířátek* a *Žhářka* tedy dokazují, že Stephen King zobrazuje své dětské postavy nejčastěji v rolích obětí. Nejednou jsou bohužel obětmi svých rodičů, což opět vyzdvihuje důležitost analýzy rodinného prostředí. Kvůli nebezpečným situacím, kterým jsou často vystaveny, kdy jejich chování mnohdy nekoresponduje s jejich věkem, se chovají mnohem vyspěleji. Jsou tedy nuceny takzvaně rychleji mentálně vyrůst. Navíc se často staví do pozice malých hrdinů, kteří se nebezpečným situacím vystavují dobrovolně, aby zničili zlo dřív, než by zničilo ono je anebo jejich blízké. Tyto události jsou nejednou doprovázeny pocitem izolace, a to jak psychické – z pocitu odlišnosti, tak i fyzické – z odříznutí od civilizace. Všechny tyto dětské postavy přišly o svou dětskou nevinnost a byly nuceny nejenom vstoupit do světa dospělých mnohem dříve, než by měly, ale především prožít a následně se i vyrovnat s naprosto hrůznými událostmi.

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