

**A Phenomenological Interpretation of Consciousness and
Psychoanalytic Illustration of Unconscious Motives in Stephen
King's *Misery* and *Pet Sematary***

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Abstract

Stephen King's novels *Misery* and *Pet Sematary* reflect upon human psychology that has been important to the demonstration of conscious and unconscious activities. In other words, Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness and its processes are justified with the actions of the protagonists of the stories, Paul Sheldon and Dr. Louis Creed. At the same time, their unconscious processes are traced to justify the way in which unknown ideas penetrate into consciousness, known as preconscious thoughts. The concept of the unconscious as examined by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan have supported Hegel's model of consciousness. So, this paper derives the connection between classical psychoanalysis and phenomenology to popular horror fiction and delves into a realistic aspect of the human psychology in the fictional plot and setting of the selected texts.

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1. Introduction

Fiction has found ways to bind readers in a realm that is both fantastic as well as realistic. Perhaps, this is the power of storytelling that has now emerged in various forms, printed or screened. People have experienced a huge number of stories for instance fairy tales from Brothers Grimm to literary classics by Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and numerous prolific others. They have emerged and produced stories that have always been a great part of humanity and have steered readers to indulge into the process of time that have started hundreds of years ago, whether for entertainment or for enlightenment. They portray real life problems and experiences to give a way to the readers to relate to and at the same time escape their own reality for a while. Genre fiction is mainly popular fiction. The genre of gothic imagination has procured Stephen King in 1973 with the release of *Carrie*. King, who is author of great novels and short stories, also have film adaptations of a number of them till date. King's stories that are still read and watched worldwide include *Misery* (1987), *The Shining* (1977), *Pet Sematary* (1983), *IT* (1986) and many more. Stephen King has taken creative writing to a whole new height and this is unmistakable when one reads *On Writing*. It is an autobiographical book in which one can listen to Stephen King as he narrates fragments of his childhood memories. In his writing, the characters are profound in themselves with cells and organs that are as real as their creator himself. The world of his fictional stories and characters reflect upon reality like any work of literature does. So, I believe it is essential to mount his novels under the domain of literary fiction as well. This paper concentrates on the novels, *Misery* and *Pet Sematary* in order to justify how Stephen King illustrates unconscious motives of the characters in his narratives and how he distinguishes the characters' objective reality from their desires. Before proceeding

with further analysis, the following summaries of the selected texts would provide a better context for this paper.

Misery (1987) is a story about a popular fiction writer Paul Sheldon who had finished writing his new novel and was on his way to the publisher's office, when he meets with an accident. Annie Wilkes, who had been working as a nurse for several years at different organizations, now unemployed, takes Paul to her home from where his car crashed. She treats his legs by herself which are still immovable and gives him pain-killers only on one condition, to write a novel *Misery's Return*. This would then be a new novel in Paul's *Misery* series of romantic fiction, which was already completed by the death of his protagonist, whose name is Misery. In the process of writing a rebirth of Misery, Paul Sheldon secures his own life from Annie's homicidal motives and in the end takes his revenge and frees himself from her torturous imprisonment.

Pet Sematary (1983) is the name of a burying ground for pet animals behind an old house in Maine, where Dr. Louis Creed has moved with his wife, Rachel, and their kids, Ellie and Gage. His eighty-three year old neighbor, Jud Crandall who lived across the road with his wife became a good friend to Louis. Jud would tell Louis tales from the past and of the truck accidents that took place in the road that separated his house from Louis's. He had told him about the pet cemetery where pets used to be buried and the old Micmac ground beyond the cemetery that has powers to bring animals or humans back to life after they were buried there. Since, death was a difficult aspect for the five year old Ellie, Jud suggests Louis to bury her cat, Church, in the Micmac burying ground after it got hit by a truck in front of their house while Rachel, Ellie and Gage were out of town. When Louis saw Church the next day, he was aware of

the spiritual powers of the location behind their house. Likewise, he has started to plan Gage's reburial after he met with a similar road accident and died leaving everyone in utter pain.

Misery and *Pet Sematary* have clearly represented the psychological aspect of human nature that interests me to study the experience of consciousness and how the unconscious nurtures human consciousness. Contemporary psychoanalytic criticism tends to look at how readers are driven to "the chain of signification" in the process of reading a text that is "a signifier that insists on expression", which prevents them to find any fixed meaning (Homer 122). Sean Homer summarizes what Shoshana Felman believes is the reason why psychoanalysis and literature is interconnected, "literature provides the language through which psychoanalysis can speak its concepts and its truths" (Homer 121). Therefore, in this thesis, I would interpret the way in which Stephen King illustrates his protagonists' unconscious motives that penetrate into their consciousness, in the novels *Misery* and *Pet Sematary*, with an aim to trace how the author signifies certain truths about human psychology.

2. Literature Review

Literary works based on King's fiction extend to a number of perspectives such as creative writing, cultural studies, media studies as well as literary criticisms. Mostly, they are students' dissertations or theses that have set forth a number of perspectives to look at. Two of these theses "Innocence Lost as a Recurring Motif in Stephen King's Novels" and "A Dark Mirror: Duality and Reflections in Stephen King's Writers" on the works of the prolific horror writer have clearly added a distinctive, yet appropriate perspective to my vision.

"Innocence Lost as a Recurring Motif in Stephen King's Novels" is a thesis by Harem Hayder Qader Qader under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr. Hacer Esra Almas from Istanbul Aydin University in 2015. Qader talks about how King demonstrates fear through loss of innocence in the stories *It*, *Needful Things* and *The Long Walk*. Here, fear is stated to exist in two forms, "cultural fears" and "personal fears" (Qader 3). According to Qader, King focuses on children in his works in order to explore the vulnerable side of human nature that also breeds fear within and that helps him enrich his fiction of good versus evil. Moreover, he highlights the social perception of innocence that is connected to being "inherently right" and how "the dogmas of society" complicate individuals to perceive and explore their own innocent nature which demands protection and thus produces a separation between a social being and his innocent self (10-11).

Similarly, Alexis Hitchcock in his thesis "A Dark Mirror: Duality and Reflections in Stephen King's Writers" under the supervision of Dr. Lynne Hinojosa, states that Stephen King has invested the characteristics of the "doppelgänger" or "the double" to varied extents in the persona of writers in the stories *The Dark Half*, *Misery* and *The Shining*. In this perspective,

Hitchcock defines doppelgänger as the other self of a character that is better kept apart from the social self of the persona. So, the idea is that of exploration or domination of that darker self that leads the story towards horror. He quotes from Tony Fonseca's chapter "The Doppelgänger" to refer to this idea of the double as, "becoming a metaphor or symbol of a mortal inner struggle" (qtd. in Hitchcock, 8).

This reminds me of how Sean Homer explains Lacan's comparison of the unconscious to language in *Jacques Lacan*. In the second chapter, "The Symbolic", He refers to Roman Jakobson, who, with the correspondence to Saussure's notion of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language, develops the idea that a "metaphor is an act of substitution" and a "metonymy is a relation to contiguity." In addition, Lacan compares Freud's "condensation" to "metaphor" and "displacement" to "metonymy" (Homer 42-43). The former refers to an image in a dream that is formed by condensing various images of real life to signify similar experiences caused by the images that have condensed together to form a dream. And the latter is the process of signs to move from one signifier to another but conveying a similar meaning and this process may be termed as "contiguity." Finally, Lacan suggests that the unconscious is structured like a language by combining Jakobson's idea of metaphor and metonymy to Freud's primary and secondary processes (42-43).

Similarly, K. Rosenkranz and G. S. Hall demonstrate how the consciousness acts upon thoughts according to Hegel, in a journal essay, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind." For Hegel, consciousness has its own "dialectic", that moves from one stand-point to another, meaning that when something is experienced by one's sensuousness, it advances towards a generality as another object of experience arises (56-57). So, by this means of thought that is first a sense, evolves as knowledge for the subject and then "finally into action" (57). This change of signifiers

is “endless”, to cause people undergo a phenomena, the process of which makes them have several psychological and physical experiences. Clearly, Homer’s stand on the importance of Lacanian psychoanalysis is incredibly valuable to Hegel’s “experience of consciousness”, which is the key notion of this thesis, because of its “crucial link of subjectivity to the unconscious and to language” that explicates its strong relationship to literature itself.

Therefore, Carolyn Burdett’s essay “Modernity, the Occult, and Psychoanalysis,” from *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature, and Culture*, has become an important essay to look at in order to find the relevance of horror fiction to psychoanalysis, because this essay summarizes the connection between the occult and the unconscious and validates how the “magic act” of psychoanalysis can be used to read through the minds of people in reality as well as fiction (Burdett 62). Fictional works of literature such as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Great God Pan*, *Count Dracula* and many more have been reflected in this essay to have elements of occultism or occult phenomena. In the study of the mind and concepts of modern subjectivity, occult phenomena was essential during the nineteenth century as it was “the road to the discovery of the unconscious” when it was realized that consciousness on itself could not justify human motives and actions (Ffytche, Nicholls and Liebscher qtd. in Burdett, 51). Thus, psychological thrillers have a potential to add to the psychoanalytic studies of time.

As declared by Lacan, it is now necessary to ‘return to Freud’ (Homer 3). In order to introduce the notion of the unconscious, and to differentiate it from the conscious and preconscious from “A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis (1912)”, in the chapter, “The Concept of the Unconscious” from Sigmund Freud’s *The Essentials of Psycho-analysis*, selected and introduced by Anna Freud. Similarly, “The Structure of the Psychic Personality” in the same

book provides an understanding of Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (1923) that adds to the understanding of Hegel's "experience of consciousness." The way in which the consciousness is experienced by human minds is described in "Outlines of Hegel's phenomenology" from *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Similarly, a journal essay by K. Rosenkranz and G. S Hall, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind," published in the same journal explains Hegel's notion of consciousness and the process of its formation including a critical look at previous works on the topic by Immanuel Kant, Johann Gotlieb Fichte and F. W. J. Schelling. Phenomenology is a philosophical movement formed by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century. However, Johann Heinrich Lambert first introduced the term in the 18th century and Jean Paul Sartre started off his philosophical career with classic phenomenology but his ideas diverge from that of Husserl's and he then shifts to existential phenomenology. "The Phenomenology of Mind, or the Science of the Experience of Consciousness" is a critical justification of Hegel's point of view that Rosenkranz and Hall refers to in their paper and summarizes what Hegel believes about consciousness and its existence according to ones life that will be discussed clearly in the next section.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Consciousness

Hegel, in “Outlines of Hegel’s Phenomenology” (1869), calls the science of consciousness, “The Phenomenology of Spirit (or Mind)” (“Outlines” 167). This paper summarizes Hegel’s notions about consciousness as the “relation of the Ego and the object to each other” (166). That guides the subject, the person, to evaluate their actions by understanding and reason. In the book chapter “The Ego and the Id”, Freud’s notion of the ego is referred to an individual’s “coherent organization of mental processes”, which regulates the person’s behavior in a way that it is acceptable to the external world (443). He suggests that “it is to this ego that consciousness is attached” (443). Hence, in this thesis I would interpret the process of understanding and reasoning of Paul Sheldon and Dr. Louis Creed, to verify how they “dissolve themselves” into things that lie in their perspective and generality as truth (Rosenkranz and Hall 59). In Sigmund Freud’s “A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis” (1912), the conscious is all that is present to the consciousness. Stephen King writes in limited omniscient voice of narrative as he walks his readers through the consciousness of the major characters, Paul and Louis. As Hegel suggests there are three phases of consciousness, consciousness in general, self-consciousness and reason, in this paper I would justify how Paul and Louis undergo a similar process of development of their consciousness or ego.

Consciousness, in general can be sensuous, perceiving and understanding. Firstly, the sensuous consciousness is the “immediate certitude” of an external object that one senses. The object is perceived immediately as “it is” and also as a “this”, at the time that is “now” and at the place that is “here”. Now, what Hegel points out is that these references of “this”, “now” and

“here” are ever-changing. There is nothing constant in these references. Therefore, “sensuous determinateness” is truth that exists at a certain time frame and that is a general sense of experiencing the thing (“Outlines” 168). Moreover, the sensuous determinateness is not the abstract definition of the object but a general notion of it as noticed by the consciousness. Secondly, perception is defined as “the mingling of sensuous determinations with those of Reflection” (169). For the consciousness of perception, the object is “the Thing with its Properties”, properties which are “subject to change,” Hegel called them “only accidents” because the subject has perception about the things that continue to grow and “perish through the change of those properties, and become an alteration of birth and decay”. Finally, the change of the changeable perception becomes abiding “in and for itself Subsisting and Internal” (169). Thirdly, “things” become phenomena as the understanding contemplates the “Internal of things” (170). Therefore, when an event or a phenomenon is experienced, the consciousness comprehends it in a way that it gives a certain “definition,” “thought” or “reflection” to the phenomenon or thing and that becomes the object for the consciousness itself. In other words, a force acts upon the consciousness to determine “things” and their “properties”, based on previous perception that becomes object for the consciousness itself, known as “understanding” (Rosenkranz and Hall 59).

The second phase, the self-consciousness again has three parts, desire, the relation of master and slave and universality of self-consciousness. Desire allows ones consciousness to be in itself that is separate from ones self-consciousness. It is destructive in general because it can cause conflict between the self that desires and the self that is conscious of itself and its surroundings. Next, in the relation of master and slave, the consciousness finds two selves, Hegel says, “the comprehension of self-consciousness as subject which is at the same time object, gives

the mediating relation: that another self-consciousness exists for the self-consciousness” (172). Both of these selves strive to be recognized by each other and desires to be free from the other. The Ego is developed when the self identifies to be free in itself from the sensuous. “Thus it shows conformity with its comprehension (ideal), and must be recognized because it gives reality to the Ego” (172). However, the two self-consciousness opposes each other, one acts as a master and another as the slave. The slave resigns from his “selfhood” and “individual ego” out of fear of the master, whereas the master “looks upon the servant (the other Ego) as cancelled and his own individual will as preserved” (173). The slave negates his own desire to a certain extent in order to lead “positive transformation of external things through labor” (173). “The renunciation of the unessential arbitrary will constitutes the moment of true obedience” (173). Here Hegel refers to Athenians who were taught to obey which led them to remain under the dominion and power of their ruler. The self-consciousness makes its transition to the universal will by the renunciation of individuality as self and thus transits towards positive freedom (173-174).

Desire is connected to the objectivity because of its lack of connection and comprehension of the subject. On the other hand, consciousness at this point is rather “theoretical” which is detached from selfhood, which the self-consciousness tends to negate while forming a desire (171). This is because consciousness, as explored previously, now has a perception as well understanding that has passed its sensuous certainty of experiencing something. Evidently, here the consciousness distinguishes itself “by coming to itself in another ego” and chooses between fulfilling a desire or controlling it to prevent itself as it strives to become lustful or attached to that want (Rosenkranz and Hall 59). Furthermore, the universality of self-consciousness is the “intuition of the self-existent universal self”, it recognizes itself and every other self- present in itself, it recognizes its own echo (“Outlines” 174).

The third phase, “Reason” is created by the ego and it is the “highest union of consciousness and self-consciousness, or of the knowing of an object and of the knowing of itself”. It produces “objective reality” existing in the “subjective notions and thoughts”. Hegel calls the knowing of reason truth as truth exists in unity, “of certitude and Being, or of certitude and objectivity” (174).

3.2 The Unconscious

The unconscious is the polar opposite of what is conscious- it is defined to be a “conception” or “any other psychical element” that may now be present to the consciousness and may be absent from it the next moment. So, the unconscious is latent to the consciousness that “we have no means of guessing” (“Unconscious” 135). “Thus the unconscious conception is one of which we are not aware, but the existence of which we are nevertheless ready to admit on account of other proofs or signs” (136). Rene Descartes has found the unconscious during the 17th century and ties it to the existence of man as created by God. This clarifies that “Descartes moves from a position of doubt to the certainty of conscious mind,” unlike Freud who emphasizes on the doubt “that supports certainty” (Homer 67). In Sean Homer’s book chapter “The Subject of the Unconscious”, he accumulates the greatest ideas of the unconscious by Descartes, Freud and Lacan to reach to the statement, “The unconscious is the unknown that lies beyond doubt” (67). According to Jacques Lacan, “the unconscious consists of signifying material”, he defines the unconscious as “a process of signification that is beyond our control” (44). Sean Homer has underlined three ways in which Lacan has perceived the unconscious. Firstly, he compares the unconscious with “a gap or rupture” to the “symbolic chain” that is a system ordered and structured by signifiers of universal experiences of humankind that may transcend from generations that passed, that Lacan calls “a circuit of discourse” (44). Secondly,

Lacan believes that the unconscious is “structured like a language”. So, if we combine these two perceptions together, we get what Freud talks about in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* on “Parapraxes” that lead what people may experience in their daily life but do not offer a thought to such as “misreading”, “mishearing” or “mislaying” and most commonly, “the slip of a tongue”, which are little gaps in the process of using language (39-40). However, Homer states that Freud considers the unconscious to be “a realm without temporality or contradiction” and at the same time refers to the least analyzed aspect of Freud’s psychoanalysis i.e. “the secondary processes of conscious thought as ‘word presentations’” and “the primary processes of the unconscious as ‘thing presentations’” (68). According to Lacan, the unconscious exists in the existence of the gap between a signifier and signified and in the idea that the signified meaning is never fixed (69). Lastly, the unconscious is perceived “as the discourse of the Other”, in which the Other is the symbolic order to which every human being is subject (70-71).

Clearly, it is well-known by now that both Freud and Lacan have agreed to the fact that the unconscious is never fully known, which leads us to identify gaps in which ideas are “repressed.” However, what is repressed is again unknown and it is not possible to identify their form and Lacan believes that what is repressed is rather something very “fundamental.” Lacan reflects upon “the hard impenetrable core” of dreams that Freud talks about in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and compares it to “a core of the real” that is absent and when we embody signifiers in terms of speech or images or any other form of signification, we try to fill this gap, which according to Lacan is known as das Ding or The Thing (84). This “thing” is nothing unless it is desired by a subject. The motive is to find pure phenomena and the notion of “the real” which Lacan identifies as “the thing” which is an indefinite desire that demands fulfillment but cannot

actually be fulfilled because of its varying nature. Moreover, the Thing or the real is “no-thing” unless a subject desires to pursue it (85). For Lacan “desire is at the very core of our being” and he defines “desire as the remainder that arises from the subtraction of *need* and *demand*”, known as “*objet petit a*” (73). This gap that is never fulfilled causes the feeling of “separation” because people desire for something that is “separate from the signifying chain” and therefore it is unattainable (72).

3.3 Preconscious

An experiment executed by Bernheim suggested that the patient, when given a certain order in a hypnotic state to act upon when he arises from the hypnotic state, performed it without being conscious about the hypnotic state itself (“Unconscious” 136). So, the idea that was input to the patient in his unconscious state of mind “grew active”, i.e. the object of the consciousness transformed into action as soon as it was recognized by it. What has been acquired from the analysis of “neurotic phenomena” is the “foreconscious”, which has been known as “preconscious” later in 1925. This classification defines latent ideas that become stronger with time with the possibility of coming to consciousness, where the unconscious defines latent ideas that do not come into consciousness. So, activity which is unconscious is designated to “not only latent ideas in general” but those latent ideas that despite of being very intense and active stay distinct from the consciousness (137). However, it is possible, with some exertion for unconscious ideas to come to the consciousness and that have created a feeling of “repulsion” and “resistance” within the patients to whom this was attempted to harvest. This validates the fact that unconscious ideas or “contents” are unknown to consciousness that resists the reception of them into it (139). According to Freud, it manifests itself specifically when the “conscious defence mechanisms are at their weakest”, in other words that Lacan calls a gap or rupture in to

consciousness (Homer 68). Symptoms of mental illnesses, slips of tongue, jokes and dreams are the “experiences of rupture” in the consciousness, caused unconsciously (67). According to Freud’s ideas, only dreams can lead us to the knowledge of what lies within the unconscious world of a person (“Unconscious” 140). He defines the process of dream-formation in the following manner:

A train of thoughts has been aroused by the working of the mind in the daytime, and retained some of its activity, escaping from the general inhibition of interests which introduces sleep and constitutes the psychical preparation for sleeping. During the night this train of thoughts succeeds in finding connections with one of the unconscious tendencies present ever since his childhood in the mind of the dreamer, but ordinarily repressed and excluded from his conscious life. (“Unconscious” 140)

It is said that three things happen when a dream has been formed, i. the thoughts have been “disguised” or “distorted” to support unconscious ideas, ii. They have been attached to consciousness when the time is fairly inappropriate i.e. during sleep and iii. Some parts of the unconscious have emerged into the consciousness. There are latent thoughts of dreams and those can be known as foreconscious or preconscious thoughts. This notion is important because it would help us justify the characters’ thoughts and classify them to consciousness, preconscious and unconscious. Whereas, “The Unconscious” is referred to the system which consists of unconscious thoughts and ideas in order to avoid any ambiguity in distinguishing the psychical activities and characters from the system to which they belong to (141).

In the essay “Modernity, the Occult, and Psychoanalysis” Carolyn Burdett suggests that occultism and psychoanalytic theories can be related with the obscure realm of the human mind,

the unconscious. It allows us to believe in the existence of the soul after death. Psychological reality and the occult are concerned with memory, time and distance and require the study of the unknown and unseen aspects of individuals and society. The occult interests Freud like Psychoanalysis does. However, he lingered in his point of view of the subject because he knew how occultism can “contaminate” psychoanalysis. According to the Hungarian analyst Sandor Ferenczi, the occult communications can help us understand how imaginings such as a fantasy develops in the mind of an individual as well as a society. Burdett reminds us of Carl Jung’s dedication to occultism through his notions of the archetypes and the collective unconscious (50).

The treatment of psychoanalysis works with the use of “words” and without the use of prescribed drugs or clinical equipment. The “magic act” of words may not be miraculous because it does not work with enough speed to look miraculous. Analysis takes time (Freud cited in Burdett 62). The occult is closely related to magic and the idea of it seems magical and miraculous. This belief is existent from the sixteenth century and it constitutes the idea of spiritualism as it sets up a department in which analysts, spiritualists can study the uncanny. The occult may not seem to be as magical when its connections are made to the psychological aspects of human beings. Now, occult is a phenomena because it may be a strange experience for some people and for some, this phenomena is closely associated with the unconscious and for which Freud was bound to consider it. And probably for this reason narratives that focus on the consciousness of the characters and reflect upon their deeper thoughts or memories may seem to be more relatable and less uncanny although they are in reality, as detached from the physical world as the occult is.

4. Textual Analysis

In this portion, I would justify how the author has created phenomena that opened doors for us to explore the conscious processes of the human mind in phenomenological and psychoanalytic terms. It will be a way not to reach to King's psychology but to depict what he represents through his characters and what makes them rational enough in their world to justify their choices before acting upon a phenomenon. It is thus a process of signification from the signs provided in the fictional reality of the characters to signify the reality of the human psychology to be well-perceived and understood.

4.1 *Misery*

If language is a representation of a person's unconscious self, *Misery* is rather a great source to understand the unconscious thoughts of the popular writer, Paul Sheldon, who is stranded far from home by his number one fan, aka the Dragon Lady. Like most of King's novels, he uses a limited omniscient narrative voice that tells us all of Paul's thoughts; with the ones that are unspoken in italics. Accordingly, Paul's consciousness has sensed a new truth as he lay injured and bedridden in the guest room of Annie Wilkes's home in Sidewinder, Colorado. Initially, his sensuous certainty pondered his "pain", "haze" and "relief" as truth (*Misery* 7). Later, by the turn of the calendar, these conscious experiences have transformed to reality which designed his understanding and perspective of the dangerous circumstances that he was subject to.

Paul started to know more and more about Annie Wilkes and with the growing perception of her, he could control the way in which he would behave in front of her. He was unraveling her ugly truths because Annie did not save him from her hostility. Eventually, Annie's tortures grew

stronger when she lost her temper. For example, when she fed him from the water bucket that contained water used after wiping the wall, to which soup was splattered out of Annie's anger. Paul experienced Annie and built a perception about her that helped him to strategize his escape and in order to successfully do so, he had to control his desire of expressing his pain. Therefore, he separates his passionate and desiring self or his id from his conscious self or ego. This idea is evident from the quote, "There within plain sight, was salvation: all he had to do was break the window and the dog-lock the bitch had put on his tongue and scream *Help me, help me, save me from Annie! Save me from the goddess!*" (*Misery* 283). It is well understood how Paul holds himself back from screaming out for help to be saved from Annie. But Stephen King allows us to see how he controls himself and lets his ego take the lead that is evident in the following quotation, "At the same time another voice was screaming: *I'll be good, Annie! I won't scream! I'll be good, I'll be good for goddess' sake! I promise not to scream, just don't chop off any more of me!*" (283). In other words, his consciousness, which is subject to the external world considers its objective reality and as we read through Paul's consciousness or ego, we can see how he has prevented himself from venting out in pain.

However, his ego has set a plan that is rather possible to execute and that would equip him to avenge the loss of himself to pain and torture. The understanding between one's consciousness and self-consciousness allows that person to justify whether that what the person desires is attainable and in what circumstances. Probably, then the ego makes a plan to fulfill his desire in an acceptable manner for those who might have caught him in action.

Annie takes the role of a mother-figure, who feeds him, cleans him and punishes him at the same time. In Paul's perspective, she is the Other, a mirror from which he could reflect a new image of himself as her hostage. Annie was the barrier that Paul had to overcome in order to

attain complete freedom. Moreover, he lived with an innocent faith and hope for that freedom which was broken many times either when Annie kept him off from his pain killers or when she chopped off his foot. Hence, Qader's suggestion about innocence to be a recurring theme in King's novels is evident in *Misery* as well. Paul walks back to his childhood many times and remembers what he used to fear back then. Those memories have formed images in itself in the way King has articulated them. They seem to be experiences that have had their own space in time and Paul seems to be just walking past them every now and then. It also seems like those images stroll in and out of his consciousness every now and then and he blatantly experiences his consciousness. While he enters his realm of imagination, "that crazy well of dreams," through the "hole in the paper," he gives words to his thoughts that seem to linger in his head quite unconsciously (*Misery* 175). Thus, thoughts that are preconscious have a way of coming to the consciousness from the unconscious. for instance, the following stanza is a memory that was surely in Paul's unconscious until he met Annie who has been symbolized to him by his childhood experience:

But you mustn't cry for that bird, Paulie, because after awhile it forgot about how the veldt smelled at noonday, and the sounds of the wildebeests at the waterhole, and the high acidic smell of the ieka-ieka trees in the great clearing north of the Big Road. After awhile it forgot the cerise color of the sun dying behind Kilimanjaro. After awhile it only knew the muddy, smogged-out sunsets of Boston, that was all it remembered and all it wanted to remember. After awhile it didn't want to go back anymore, and if someone took it back and set it free it would only crouch in one place, afraid and hurting and homesick in two unknown

*and terribly ineluctable directions, until something came along and killed it.*¹
 (Misery 174-175)

The preconscious fear of the African bird he saw in the Boston zoo as a child have been stringing in his mind during his imprisonment by the black lady. However, it is not definite that these thoughts have always pushed itself to his consciousness. His consciousness motivates him from a higher position that used to be the position of his mother when he was a child and that guides the way his consciousness allows him to remain strong and believe that the African bird needs to be killed at some point. While writing *Misery's Return*, these latent thoughts or memories seem to have been pushed to his conscious imagination through his own narrative that he was going to write for Annie. In like manner, Paul symbolized Annie through the image of the African goddess that was going to kill Misery in Paul's written work. Clearly, the idea of the African bird to become the African goddess reflects Paul's growth from a child to a man, and his closeness to Annie because this time, the African bird was not high up in the tree but Paul himself was inside her house where she was homesick and where someone needed to come to kill her. Through the imaginary "hole" in his paper, Paul could transmit the materials in his unconscious to his consciousness as fiction and for which the African goddess dies in the end just like Annie did. Therefore, it is possible to consider that Paul's childhood experience of visiting the zoo and watching the African bird is a symbol or image that is capable of adding to the previously constructed order of thoughts that are unconscious, for example as Freud's "thing presentation" or Lacan's "signifying material". These images form "a process of signification" that is beyond control and that seems to be existent as "a realm without temporality or contradiction," that Freud believes, to which ones consciousness is subject. They are

¹ This portion is originally written in italics by the author to refer to the protagonist's unspoken thoughts.

preconscious when they return more often to the consciousness through writing and undergo Freud's secondary process of "word-presentation" and Lacan's "discourse of the other." As Misery safely returns from the condemnation of the goddess, Paul's desire to live beyond the day of the novel's completion is symbolized to fulfill. "According to Lacan, just as there is no such thing as the unconscious without language, it is through language that desire comes into being" that Paul writes his own ending by interconnecting his unconscious imaginations to his desire of freedom and murder of Annie Wilkes and at the same time, he saves his masterpiece from her who was by then taking over him like the goddess in his own novel (Homer 44, 68, 70).

4.2 *Pet Sematary*

When Louis first heard about the pet cemetery that is located behind his house he was only "bemused" (King 20) and certainly did not have any perception about the new place until he visited it. The object is only capable of stirring a sense of itself to the subject when it is introduced to the subject and perceptions tend to change with the accumulation of ideas or experience by the subject. Correspondingly, Louis starts to have an image of the pet cemetery and the Micmac burying ground in his mind with the stories about the place that Jud had shared with him. Likewise, Louis realized the significance of the powers that were beyond physicality after he buried his daughter's cat, Church, in the Micmac ground. Watching Church return the next day astonished him and frightened him in a way that developed his perception about the world of spirituality and its existence. The grim and grotesque features of the dead cat was bearable when he realized that this prevented him to disclose the news of Church's death to his daughter that she had feared the most after their visit to the pet cemetery. For him as well as Jud, nothing mattered more than giving Ellie her fair share of happiness.

The consciousness is able to perceive objects that change and accumulates to itself certain properties. As it does in the process of time, they evolve to be “the Thing with its Properties” that even “perish through the change of those properties, and become an alteration of birth and decay” (“Outlines” 169). Thus, *Pet Sematary* symbolizes the idea that everything is subject to “birth and decay” and that death is a natural process that cannot be disrupted in an acceptable way (169). With this conscious perception and understanding of death, Louis acts upon his objective reality. However, Louis does not act upon his ego that considers his reality, for which he becomes restless to rebury his dead son in the Micmac burying ground with the hope to find him alive the next day. When he desires to carry out this plan of action, there are two parts of him that contradicts each other: one that desires unconditionally and the other that is “theoretical” to consider the properties of the external world and rationalizes to control himself to violate the rules of nature (171). His self-consciousness unites two of his own identities, one that is attracted to “other things” and another that validates himself to the external world (“Outlines” 170, 171). According to Hegel, one of these identities, mostly the theoretical-self acts as the master over the other. In this way, the passionate and lustful self, the dark “double,” also recognizes itself as the slave or inferior to the governing ego because he is conscious that his demand emerges from innocence that is completely unconscious of the external world, and thus requires guidance (Hitchcock 8). Notably, this demonstrates how Qader’s idea about innocence lost is true even in *Pet Sematary*. For example, when Louis plans to rebury Gage, he sends his wife and daughter to her parents’ house outside Bangor so that he can fulfill his desire without making it look inappropriate to his family. Similarly, he stops at a motel for the night of reburial instead of his own house which would have been more convenient, in order to hide from his neighbor, Jud, who had interpreted Louis’s motives.

Clearly, he is self-conscious of his desires that are invalid to the laws of nature. His sly way of behavior shows that he is aware of himself and his ideas to rebury his son and at the same time he knows what he is planning to do is completely absurd, thus, he validates Hegel's point of "the universality of self-consciousness" ("Outlines" 174). Louis is conscious of the distinct self that he possesses and he experiences them as an "echo" or "reflection" to each other and that makes the ego or the consciousness aware about its social reality and existence that is tied to human bond of "family" or "land" for example (174). Despite of being in conflict within himself, between his understanding of the self as well as the objective reality, "reason" brings the two aspects to meet and take valid decisions. As a result, Louis Creed plans the reburial of his son, the night after he had sent his wife and daughter to spend a few days with Rachel's parents, certainly because they would not let Louis carry Gage's corpse from one cemetery to another to wait for him to come back to life the next day. In order to maintain his image as a rational person to people, he ensures that no one sees him carry out his plan of action.

The emotional pain have been suppressed by the two protagonists and these emotional energy was surpassed by one to physically devastate himself to carry a corpse around his neighborhood and the other to commit a well-planned murder that would look like a simple trip-and-fall accident causing death. These feelings of loss have only remained in the unconscious of these characters which they have represented in action. This is where the unconscious plays a crucial role in the conscious life of a being. King have always used italics to present unspoken thoughts of the characters that are preconscious because they have a way of coming back to their consciousness as they pass through their minds. Whereas, unconscious thoughts are never expressed by the author, instead they are interpreted in the main character by a supporting character. For example, Jud Crandall notices whether Louis ordered a concrete sealing vault, but

he had only ordered grave liners for Gage's coffin, which "was no more than a humble concrete box, open at the top" (*Pet Sematary* 223). So, the grave liner would be easy to reopen and Jud being a good friend to Louis and introducing him to the powers of the Micmac burying ground, realized that then quiet Louis may have thoughts of reburying his son. When he was asked of his intentions, he said, "Maybe it was on my mind. If it was, it was on the downside of it" (222). Even the author himself does not fictionalize the unconscious and expresses it directly. He secures it to be recognized by the external world to which the protagonists are object, for example, Jud in *Pet Sematary* and Annie in *Misery* or us, the readers for both of them.

When Victor Pascow dies in front of Louis, he cannot do anything except to see him suffer in pain. This event is undergone by Louis's consciousness firstly as a sense of grief for not being able to save his life, then his ego forms a perception of the event and lastly an understanding of it as he knows the truth about death that it is unavoidable. When he sees Pascow in his dreams, we get to understand how strongly this event has struck Louis's unconscious stream of thought because Pascow had started to emerge in his dreams. Later on, when Louis realizes he had brought dirt to his bedroom from the walk with Pascow to the pet cemetery, we understand that the event is existent not only as a conscious memory or a preconscious thought that caused his dreams but also as an occult phenomena. Louis denied actual traits of him sleep walking to the pet cemetery with Pascow's spirit and so he ignores any evidence or memory about the stranger, Victor Pascow. In the narrative, this is evident because Louis is never seen to consciously think about Victor Pascow or his death other than a doctor would to grieve about a patient whom he could not save because he met with a brutal accident and died before any treatment could be applied. But the event when he found dirt on his bed was never thought about intentionally. Clearly, there was a feeling of "repulsion" and "resistance" to

accept the dream-like phenomena, so it was repressed. Like the patient in Bernheim's experiment, Louis was completely unaware of the event of the previous night and for that reason, when he saw dirt in his feet, it caused him to resist the memory of the event that actually took place ("Unconscious", 136).

However, with the desire to bring Gage back to life, his faith on the powers of the burying ground were deepening and he was separating himself from Victor Pascow's warning that is to avoid going there. As a result, Louis ignored "the signifying chain" of preconscious thoughts or symbols that appeared to him and he was invested to know beyond his limit that was signified by the Micmac burying ground where unimaginable creatures existed. He expected to achieve what he lacked, from a place that he hardly knows. In other words, it is the Other that lacks what the subject desires from it because even Louis knew that if Gage ever comes back to life, he would not be as lively as he used to be or never even be like Gage at all. "Separation involves the coincidence, or overlapping, of two lacks: the lack in the subject and the Other". Thus, it occurs when the subject's desire remains unfulfilled by the Other because it cannot reflect itself as the Other's fulfillment and thus remains as a "desiring subject" that is known as "the objet petit a, the object-cause of desire" (Homer 73).

5. Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the notions of consciousness and the unconscious to justify the process in which Stephen King's protagonists in *Misery* and *Pet Sematary* carry out thoughts that end up taking decisions that lead to the climactic endings of the stories. To that process, I have intertwined Freud and Lacan's ideas of the unconscious with Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness. Thus, I suppose that my journey of exploring Paul and Louis's thoughts have proved the reliability and timelessness of psychoanalysis as a tool to interpret the unknown realm of the unconscious that in reality, designs conscious thoughts of the human psychology. Furthermore, it is likely that in the process of choosing within oneself which thoughts are worthy of making conscious, human beings experience a great "lacking", also known as separation (Homer 72). This is because, nothing seems worthy enough; there is always an opportunity cost that seems to be greater than we think it would. By reflecting upon this human behavior, Stephen King composes personalities, relationships and demonstrates the power of writing. This fascinates me to study and contemplate the most fundamental concept of humanity, the driving force of human beings called desire. In this thesis I have analyzed two ways in which this matter operates in the human psychology, of the consciousness and the unconscious. Thus, how for the same driving force of desire that human beings act upon can lead to separation from the object of desire, other people or the subject himself.

Paul and Louis both possess two sides of a person, one that Qader refers to in his thesis as the innocent and child-like persona and the other is what Hitchcock focuses on in his thesis, the dark dual or doppelgänger. In light of Hegel's notion of consciousness, both these images of the characters are distinct parts of the self-consciousness. The passionate self-consciousness come to itself "in another ego", then it "unselfs itself, becomes dependent, subject to another self, and

degrades itself to the service of a lord”, that is the other self and this causes a “conflict for recognition” (Rosenkranz and Hall 59). In other words, the conflict is between “psychical id” that is closely related to the unconscious and operates in the unconscious manner, and ego that controls the “discharge of excitations into the external world” (“Psychic Reality” 443, 449). Freud describes the ego as “that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (449). “Moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id” (450). In these texts, Stephen King highlights this conflict between the id and ego or the innocent self against the dark dual through his protagonists. This reflects the manifestation of reality and human nature beyond fiction.

Paul and Louis desired to return to their past. Paul wished he had been freed from the imprisonment of his number one fan, whereas Louis wished to get his dead son back to life to live as happily as he used to. But their desire from the realm of the Other, of what they lack is lacking from the Other itself, because the future events would not bring to them anything that has been left behind or in the form they have been left behind. Paul was haunted in his mind by Annie Wilkes and could only limp, yet, he was going to publish his masterpiece that emerged from the popular romantic drama that did not have much hope. Although he achieved great success after publishing *Misery's Return*, he could not return to his luxurious life that he lived before. Louis's possessed son killed his wife. Once again, he reburies his wife, in the hope to get back what is lost; and so he does, but probably Rachel is only a walking-talking corpse. Therefore, both of the protagonists have experienced “separation” because in the process of achieving what was lost, they took actions knowing how indefinite the future may be and how unpredictably the events may fall in their places in the course of time that lay ahead of them

(Homer 72-73). In order to fulfill their desire or cause self-fulfillment, Paul and Louis separate themselves from the “signifying chain” or rows of phenomena that cause life as it is (72).

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