

‘Three types of terror.’ A critical study into how Stephen King elicits terror, horror and revulsion in the novel *IT*.

John Morris

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"The best way for horror writing to affect us is to get under the surface of a personality. When this is successful it can reach a depth of insight unmatched by any other type of writing." (Kenworthy 16)

As the above statement suggests, horror fiction has the potential to provoke an emotional response from the reader; a response so innate that it dates back to the origins of the human species. Fear. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of what enables a horror novel, with particular reference to Stephen King's *It*, to evoke this emotion in a reader and how writers can extrapolate the techniques used by King and apply them to their own writing.

When beginning my Creative Study, the choice of writing a novel with elements of horror was unequivocal. It is, after all, the genre to which I am drawn again and again. The decision to write a young adult (YA) novel was also a clear one, although the reason for this was somewhat more difficult to pinpoint. Maybe, the reason was because my career is spent working with young people on a daily basis. I like to think that I understand young people, perhaps even 'get' them. But then again, who really does? Did we ever understand *ourselves* as young adults? Maybe it was because I have particularly fond memories of reading YA fiction, and am still regularly drawn to YA fiction now. Or maybe, it is because, on some subconscious level I understand that childhood is introspectively linked with horror. Childhood, after all, is the factory of our adult fears. It is where fears are crafted, moulded then boxed away crudely deep inside us; lurking, waiting ready to spring back out, often at the least opportune moments.

Before I begin, it would be useful to clarify some of the terms I will refer to throughout the study. The term *horror genre* is used interchangeably, when, in fact, it is very difficult to elucidate due to the numerous classifications and sub-genres e.g. horror of the uncanny, marvellous horror, fantastic horror, rural horror, cosmic horror, apocalyptic horror, erotic horror etc etc. (Prohászková 2012). With this being the case, for the purposes of this study, I will aim to adhere to and refer to a rather standardised, perhaps even blunt definition of the genre. Ben Davis states:

"Horror is a genre of literature, film, and television that is meant to scare, startle, shock, and even repulse audiences. The key focus of a horror novel, horror film, or horror TV

show is to elicit a sense of dread in the reader through frightening images, themes, and situations.” (Davis 2021).

As superficial as this definition may seem, it certainly outlines the reasons why I am drawn to horror and why I wanted to include elements of it in my own novel. Then again, readers of this study should bear in mind that horror certainly works on a subtextual level also, drawing on societal fears and anxieties without explicitly mentioning them.

As well as defining horror, it is prudent to ascertain exactly what YA fiction is, although, the very definition of Young Adult is, at best, a vague term. At its simplest level, Young Adult is used to describe a novel with young, often teenage, protagonists, with the book itself aimed at readers from that very age bracket. This definition can be problematic though, as Stephen Roxburgh points out:

“Historically the designation “young adult” is based on audience... Audience is a moving target. We can’t even agree on what a young adult is, let alone what the literature is.” (Roxburgh 4).

Jonathan Stephens agrees with the difficulties of defining YA novels. He closely analyses twelve leading YA novels in order to debunk certain myths about the YA genre e.g. they are for young readers, are simplistic, less than literary etc. After thorough analysis of each novel, Stephens arrives at his own definition of YA:

“The label “Young Adult” refers to a story that tackles the difficult, and oftentimes, adult issues that arise during an adolescent’s journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice that holds the same potential for literary value as its “Grownup” peers.” (Stephens 1).

Chuck Wendig takes a completely different approach when defining Young Adult fiction. He takes exception to YA being described as a genre but instead ascertains that it is an age range. He states:

“Young adult is not a genre...Young Adult is a proposed age range for those who wish to read a particular book. It is a demographic rather than an agglomeration of people who like to read stories about, say, Swashbuckling Dinosaur Princesses.” (Wendig).

This very definition is a useful one. If Young Adult is taken as an age range, then that leaves room for it to encompass a spectrum of genres, specifically in the case of this study, horror.

As much as I agree with Wendig’s argument, I find myself drawn to Stephen’s definition as it seems to encapsulate the very reason I chose to write a YA novel. Not

because I am particularly aiming this novel at an audience of the age of my protagonists (although I sincerely hope they do read it), but because mine is a story of self-discovery, self-acceptance and the trials and tribulations of teenage life, with a monster thrown in for good measure. Jonathan Stephen's definition of YA is the same one I turn to when using Stephen King's *It* as a research point when writing a YA novel in the Horror genre. Stephen King's *It*, after all, is the story of seven young protagonists and their journey towards self-discovery and identity. *It* is a story of growing up and how our fears remain well and truly alive as we do so. At least half of the book is told through a distinctly teen voice, and even as the protagonists reach their adult years, they still revert to their childhood fears. Therefore, *It* seemed like a vital choice when learning the tools of the trade in this particular genre.

Despite its 1000 plus page length, grisly moments of horror and explicit sexual content, the novel is essentially an exploration of childhood; its evanescence and vulnerability. It is through these childhood memories and feelings that King can explore and elicit true horror. I will study King's techniques in using the dreamlike state of childhood, a state that always remains in the recesses of our adult minds, and how he manipulates this to foster moments of horror in the reader.

King is publicly known the 'Master of Horror,' and reading *It* seemed like the obvious choice due to its links with YA fiction. Chad A. Clarke makes this point in his definitive criticism of King novels;

"Anyone who has an interest in writing horror fiction should definitely read this book...All the elements of what makes horror great are here." (Clark 62)

The very monster at the heart of this novel is the encapsulation of fear, literally becoming whatever the beholder fears most. But how can a writer elicit the primal human emotion of fear through writing? After all, sticks and stones and so forth.

King, himself, recognises three facets to writing horror. He tentatively suggests a three-tiered hierarchy to writing horror. At the very top is 'terror.' At this level, it is not what is seen that elicits the terror in the reader, but what the mind suggests. The next level is horror, "that emotion of fear that underlies terror." King states that when we aim to horrify the audience, we don't play with their mind, we *show* them something that is physically wrong. Finally, at the bottom of this hierarchy lies 'revulsion.' This is where the author instigates the readers gag reflex and makes them cringe. (King, "*Danse*" 37-39).

Of the three methods of attack, King says:

"I recognize terror as the finest emotion...and so I will try to terrorize the reader. But if I find I cannot terrify him/her, I will try to horrify; and if I cannot horrify, I'll go for the gross-

out. I'm not proud." (King, "*Danse*" 40). It is clear from this statement that King sees writing horror as a hierarchy of techniques; each lending something different to the experience of the reader.

For the purposes of this critical study, I will analyse how King elicits these emotions in his novel *It*. I will study the techniques he uses and analyse their affects. I will then apply them to my own writing.

Chapter 1

Terror at the top

The word terror alludes to extreme fear. And it is this stratum that King aims for when writing his horror novels. He states, "I recognize terror as the finest emotion." (King, "*Danse*" 40). The word terror has become synonymous with King's novels, especially, *It*. When scrutinising this emotion, King explains that terror is achieved when we are not explicitly shown the monster under the bed, but are left to imagine it, to linger on it. It stays with us. And what more powerful movie screen is there than one's imagination?

Regardless, King's hierarchy of horror writing can be challenged. Firstly, it could be argued that perhaps terror and horror are interchangeable in horror fiction. That the two emotions go hand in hand in eliciting fear rather than existing with their own idiosyncrasies. Dani Cavallaro disputes the differentiation between the two:

"Terror has conventionally been linked to fear triggered by indeterminate agents, and horror to fear occasioned by visible gore. Although feelings of disorientation and anxiety indubitably alter according to the degree of which the causes may be related to material or incorporeal occurrences, these do not constitute fixed and self-contained categories for they incessantly collude and metamorphose into each other as fear's interdependent effects." (Cavallaro vii).

This rendering would suggest that it is far more difficult to separate the two emotions when writing Horror fiction than perhaps King suggests. It is undeniable that it is troublesome to find an example of 'terror' in the novel *It* without an example of 'horror' dovetailing it. However, as will be discussed in the following sections, there are clear and distinct differences between the two. Cavallaro goes on to explain:

"The difference between terror and horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realisation: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse... Terror thus creates an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread... horror resorts to a cruder presentation of the macabre." (Cavallaro 3)

So, If we can agree that terror and horror are separate emotions with their own affects. The next problem is that fear is subjective. Fear, like love, is in the eye of the beholder. When first reading *It* in my teens, I certainly found the sewer scene described in this essay as the most terrifying, but revisiting *It* as an adult and father, I have to say the most terrifying scene for me was when Patrick Hockstetter crept into his baby brother's room with a pillow, intent on suffocating his sleeping sibling. But this is the point of horror, as Stephen King explains, to "tap into our phobic pressure points." (King, "*Danse*" 18)

Marv Wolfman ponders the question, “how do you create horror for a universal audience when everyone is scared of different things.?” (Wolfman 175)

A difficult question to answer. Wolfman sees the answer in writing ‘what makes you sweat.’ If the author focusses on their own fears and what makes them uncomfortable then this will “allow terror to seep in.” (Wolfman 175). Wolfman also discusses the importance of tapping into what affects the audience in real life. In other words, taking everyday situations and turning them on their heads.

“Because we react best to what we know best, creating scenes that make every day moments terrify an audience is one of the ways you build horror.” (Wolfman 178).

If a reader can imagine themselves in the setting that you describe in your prose, then the ability to create an atmosphere of dread and fear is amplified. Stephen King agrees with this point in his study of the Horror genre, *Danse Macabre*. When talking about horror movies, he states:

“If horror movies have redeeming social merit, it is because of that ability to form liaisons between the real and unreal – to provide subtexts.” (King, “*Danse*” 156).

However, some fears are so primal that they are built into our psyche. King argues that “the horror genre has often been able to find national phobic pressure points” (King, “*Danse*” 18).

Russel suggests a different reason why horror novels are able to incite terror in a reader as opposed to suspense novels. Arguing it is the knowledge of the genre itself that creates this extreme fear in the reader.

“Horror Stories share with many other kinds of literature the use of suspense as a tactic...But that suspense is intensified through knowledge of the genre. Previous experience tells the reader the characters involved in the world of horror always meet something awful when they go where they shouldn't.” (Russel 21)

However, this explanation is somewhat simplistic, and there are plenty of novels that fall neatly into the horror genre that do not terrify.

It is stockpiled with scenes of terror. The bleak creeping imagery, often symbolising or referring to death, leads to a sense of dread within the reader that cannot be refuted. Interestingly, it can be argued that the half of the novel that takes place during the protagonists' childhood is more terrifying and the adult section is more horrifying. Maybe this is because real terror lives in our psyche from childhood events and reading of these terrors dredges these feelings from the pit of our fears. Maybe, on a more simplistic level, the

reader is only getting to know *It* in the childhood section of the novel and once they have become acquainted with the monster, then true terror cannot exist and thus they are left with horror.

Arguably one of the most infamous scenes in the novel, and of the subsequent screen adaptations, is when we are first introduced to *It* through little George Denbrough, the main protagonist's younger brother. We follow George as he battles with himself to go the basement in search of paraffin for his paper boat that he is making with his brother, Bill. In this chapter we get to know George, we get to understand his fears, we sympathise with him and this is crucial in provoking terror in the reader. If we didn't know the character, then the terror would become just entertainment. Christopher Golden explains:

"The situation might be terrifying, but the reader isn't going to feel it unless the characters feel it, and unless you can make the reader afraid *FOR* the characters." (Golden 146).

G.W. Thomas also alludes to this in his 'tips for horror writers:

"A good horror writer is a good character writer...Stephen King, the master of the fat horror novel, has described his formula for writing as creating characters you care about, then letting the monster loose. I call this, "put the care in the scare!" (Thomas 15).

Joe Hill, perhaps influenced by his father, also agrees with this point, stating:

"I think horror is a deeply misunderstood genre that a lot of people think is fundamentally about sadism. That if you throw enough entrails at the camera, you have horror. Real horror is about falling in love with characters and then seeing them endure the worst, and then rooting for them to overcome the darkness." (Mancuso)

Therefore, it is crucial to build characters that the reader can sympathise with and care about if the intention is to terrify the reader.

George's journey through the house is accompanied by metaphor and foreshadowing which has the effect of making us feel uneasy. As he grapples with his inner fears to force himself to go down into the dark basement, he can hear his mother ominously playing piano in the background. She is playing Beethoven's Fur Elise, a song that Beethoven constructed for a lost love and itself only discovered after his death. This was an intentional nod by King to a loss to come within the novel. This is described as "music from another world...the way...laughter on a summer-crowded beach must sound to an exhausted swimmer who struggles with the undertow" (King, "It" 7). This renders feelings of isolation, and helplessness; of hopelessly drowning while the rest of the world carries on

around you as take your last breaths. Perhaps this is the most terrifying feeling of all; knowing that help is so near but will not come. From that moment we know that George is alone, and no-one will save him from whatever is about to happen to him.

George grapples with his inner fears to go down the basement and we sympathise with him. We sympathise with him because we have all experienced this at some point in our lives; fear of the dark, of being alone, of some unseen evil stretching its withered hand out from under the bed and clutching our ankle when we least expect it. We sympathise with George because this scene reminds us of our own childhood and how scary the world seemed to us back then.

As George gropes for the light switch, he realises that the power is out, heightening the tension in this scene. In the basement he sees eyes watching him from the darkness, which are just in his imagination of course, but, all the same, that feeling of dread and foreboding is there, we know something is going to happen to poor little George.

When the boat is made and painted with paraffin (which dries a milky colour – perhaps a reference to the colour of dead eyes), Billy gives George a kiss goodbye and George takes to the street to test it. The scene is grey and menacing, rain drives down in torrents, a foreshadowing of disaster to come. George runs through the street in his 'yellow slicker,' a signal beacon, warning us of the oncoming danger. And when George falls he spots something in the storm drain. The paper boat itself grapples with the torrents of water. King uses strong imagery here and the paper boat itself is symbolic of the very delicate nature of life and how it can be swept away in an instant, again, alluding to the earlier 'drowning' metaphor. We are pulled away from the imagery of the water swept suburban street by something completely unusual, as Wolfman puts it, the world is real world is 'turned on its head,' and this is where the real terror begins. We are told:

"There was a clown in the storm drain. The light there was far from good, but it was good enough so that George Denbrough was sure of what he was seeing. It was a clown like in the circus or on TV ..." (King, "It" 13).

This section taps into several of our 'phobic pressure points.' Fear of the unknown, a clown in a storm drain? Fear of being alone...even if poor George Denbrough believes he is not alone. And perhaps the nexus of child and adult fears combined; fear of the stranger. The clown entices George, and all the while the reader's terror receptors are ramped up as they subconsciously plead with George to run. Instead, George accepts the clown's offer.

"Well... sure!" he reached forward and then drew his hand reluctantly back. "I'm not supposed to take stuff from strangers. My dad said so." (King, "It" 14)

As George gets within striking range of the clown, it could be argued that we are moving into horror territory, that King is going to show his hand, the reader screams and then get the sigh of relief they need. The clown asks George whether he would like a balloon. George agrees and asks if they float, thus instigating the words that move through the book like a demonic punchline, "They *all* float." But King doesn't reveal his monster yet. The reader is simply told that "The clown's face changed" and it is left to our imagination to fill in the pieces. And as the reader imagines what grotesque, evil form the clown has become, they are left with George's arm being torn off at the socket whilst the clown tells him how he will float too.

If maintaining the definitions and research previously mentioned, this scene uses terror in abundance. We are never really shown what has been following George, aside from the form of Pennywise the Clown, instead it is left to our imagination to fill in the pieces. We are told simply that, "The clown's face changed." If we were told every detail of how this happened, we would have moved into the realms of horror, which would have been effective, but not as effective in leaving our minds with an unknown picture. Cavallaro explains:

"Terror, conversely, disturbs because of its indeterminateness: it cannot be connected with an identifiable physical object and the factors that determinate it accordingly elude classification and naming. Thus, if horror makes people shiver, terror undermines the foundations of their worlds." (Cavallaro 3)

Another moment of terror comes in chapter nine when Beverley Marsh is cleaning the bathroom in her home. Beverley is a character we care deeply about by this stage in the novel. She is polite, pleasant, brave and loyal. Her abuse she suffered at the hands of her father makes us sympathise with her further. Because of the aforementioned abuse, Beverley seems to find the bathroom a place of refuge and this is interesting to the reader, for our most private moments are in bedrooms and bathrooms. These can often be considered places of safety, places where we can go and know we will not be disturbed. As she cleans, there is a voice from the sink. Again, the trick of using the unknown is utilised here. Like with chapter one where little George Denbrough is all alone in the basement, here we see it too with Beverley. "The bathroom door was firmly closed. She could hear the TV faintly..." (King, "It" 405). It is this rendering of loneliness that hits hard. The world moving in its usual fashion whilst Beverley is left alone with the voices in the sink. It's the fear of being alone with the unknown, when help is not too far away but still out of reach.

The fact that *It* has targeted her in this place is a violation of her freedom and privacy and we feel it as a reader. The voices grow to a cacophony, telling Bevie how she will float down there too. Finally, there is a spurt of blood from the sink, which explodes over the

porcelain and wallpaper. Bevie's fear of the blood is perhaps a metaphor for her fear of puberty and the inevitable changes it will bring to her body. About the adult world this will thrust her into and the fear of her father, who is already noticing the changes in her body. There is also an underlying fear of the attention these changes will bring for Bevie. Beverly thinks about the 'shapes of men' throughout this chapter, a reference to her fear of being a girl in a man's world. Bevie runs out of the bathroom. The voices in the drain remain unknown and as we imagine the decomposing wet faces of the voices in the drain, that really is the most terrifying thing of all. And that terror, is not only felt because of the situation, it is felt because we care for Beverley, King has well and truly "put the care in the scare." We are not terrified by the scene, we are terrified *for* Beverley. We want her to get away, to be okay. And that is the difference between a run of the mill slasher to a masterpiece of horror.

On the subject of terror, it is perhaps useful to look at an example that does not quite hit the mark the way that King does. Davina Cardinal opens with a scene that is reminiscent of King's opening in *It* in her YA novel *Five Midnights*, however, instead of following young George Denbrough, we follow Vico on his eighteenth birthday. Vico, unlike George, is not an innocent. He is an established gang member on his way to secure a drug deal in Old San Juan. As he moves through the streets in the dead of night it becomes clear that he is being followed. Here is how Cardinal describes the scene:

"Just then he heard a rumbling sound and a stone flew past his foot as if kicked. His chest filled with heat, his hands automatically reached in his pocket, the yellow skulls on his switchblade glowing even in the dark.

'¿Quièn está ahí? Show yourself, pendejo, and maybe I won't cut your heart from your chest!' Vico's voice sounded more secure than he felt...He squinted into the dark and saw the glow of two yellow eyes. Vico stumbled backward, his pulse pounding behind his face. But just as quick they were gone." (Cardinal 11).

This scene clearly has similarities with King's opening with George Denbrough, but somehow, it just doesn't reach the same pinnacle of terror that is felt when reading *It*. Cardinal evokes the same feeling of isolation and a threat from some unknown entity, but something is lacking when compared to King's opening. It is clear here that we don't care about Vico, who is presented as a tough gang member who can clearly look after himself. He is portrayed as selfish, rash and somewhat arrogant. Most empathise with Vico's situation, and as a result, don't entirely care about what happens to him. Where the reader routes for little George and wants desperately for him to be okay, they are indifferent to the fate of Vico. Although his death in the opening scene is entertaining and makes for effective horror, it does not terrify the reader.

Through my research of horror literature and analysis of *It*, I attempt to convey a sense of terror in my own novel, although, perhaps not as successfully as King. Firstly, I use several strategies to evoke sympathy and adoration for the main character Megan, as well as for the other characters. Megan has a tragic past due to her father's disappearance and this incident has also led to a somewhat strained relationship with her mother. Megan also struggles with her Sixth Form studies and the demands and expectations of her peers. Nonetheless, Megan is a caring and often selfless individual who sacrifices her own wants and needs at the expense of others e.g. looking after her Grandpa Ray's welfare.

I purposely don't show the antagonist until chapter eighteen. This was something I struggled with during the process and often felt I was leaving it too long to show my hand. King, in *It* after all, shows us Pennywise in chapter one, and interestingly enough, on page 13. Unlucky for poor George Denbrough. However, even though I don't show Pol Pepllar until chapter eighteen, I have given the reader a number of sightings that are intertwined with stories of Pol Pepllar and allude to his background. I give snippets of child abductions and trinkets of truth. I want the reader to imagine Pepllar as a dark shadow, something that could be hiding behind any house on any street. Pepllar is always there, unseen but felt. And that's where I want him to be. The hope is that this helps to build the feeling of terror in the reader. To let the reader build an image of Pol Pepllar in their own heads and feel terror through *not* seeing it. This is a risky strategy, as the reader can ultimately feel disappointed at the eventual revelation. King states, "What's behind the door...is never as frightening as the door...itself. And because of this, comes the paradox: the artistic work of horror is almost always a disappointment." (King, "Danse" 133)

One example of where I attempt to evoke terror as an emotion is when Megan and Charlie have taken the shortcut through Beech Hill to get to school on time in chapter 3. Megan spots a movement in the old Pepllar place, a building that has already been alluded to a number of times to build tension and suspense. The idea behind this is that we have grown to like Megan and do not want her to go anywhere near the building to inspect it. In keeping with King's 'drowning' analogy, I keep help for Megan just beyond her grasp, she can hear Charlie in the distance, but there is a separation. Just like George's mother's piano, and Bev's father's TV, help for the victim is just out of reach. Just.

I use this technique again in Charlie's bedroom, much later in the novel. Just as George Denbrough could hear his mother playing Fur Elise, and Beverley could hear the TV in the living room, so can Charlie hear the murmurs of his father and his friends in the living room and the crooning of David Gilmore in amongst it all. The song choice is a purposeful one. The song is *Wish You Were Here*, a direct reference to Charlie's feelings about Megan.

I don't use the lyrics in the writing itself but they do play directly into Charlie's confusion and isolation of the situation he is in. "Do you think you can tell, heaven from hell?" A direct reference to Charlie's refusal to accept the paranormal. The line, "Did you exchange, a walk on part in the war for a lead role in the cage?" A reference to his feelings of cowardice and inability to take risks. The voices are close, but oh so far away. Charlie is all alone, he feels it, and hopefully this is conveyed to the reader.

As Charlie lies in bed, listening to the music, he finds himself in a situation where he is desperate to use the toilet but is too frightened to leave the safety of his bed. We follow him as he makes his way to the bathroom:

"He rushed across his bedroom, stretched his hand around his door frame and groped for the smooth coldness of the light switch. He flicked it on. The light from the naked bulb was a dim orange that struggled to reach the corners of the landing, but it was a vast improvement over the blackness it replaced.

He crept to the bathroom...Unable to see properly, he sat down to relieve himself and gave a heavy sigh as it jettied against the porcelain.

A movement caught the corner of his eye, something to the side of him, behind the shower curtain. He kept his eyes front, unable to turn his head and look. He imagined Pol Pepllar behind the flowery curtain. Its long, dagger clad fingers slowly peeling it back, and poking its head from behind it. Those horrible yellow eyes watching him from the dark. And couldn't he smell it too? That sickly, rotting smell from the Pepllar place?"

Throughout this scene, Charlie is terrified about what could be waiting for him, and I aim to give this whole scene a sense of false isolation in order to give it its full effect. It has all the ingredients recognised from Stephen King's *It* and my research. It has the care in the scare as we have already built a relationship with Charlie. It has that feeling of isolation but being close enough to other people. But mostly, it is the sense of dread. The what could be behind the shower curtain instead of what is actually there. Hopefully, the result is that of terror in the reader.

Chapter 2

Underlying Horror

As discussed earlier, although discussed interchangeably, and although bedfellows, terror and horror are undeniably different entities that evoke different emotions in the reader. The aforementioned point made on this subject by Cavellero is also made by Lincoln Michel:

“Terror is the feeling of dread and apprehension at the possibility of something frightening, while horror is the shock and repulsion of seeing the frightening thing... Terror is the feeling a stranger may be hiding behind the door; horror is the squirt of blood as the stranger’s knife sinks in.” (Michel)

The issue with horror, as touched upon earlier, is that when we decide to show the monster lurking behind the door, it can so often disappoint when compared to the boundless stretches of the imagination that illicit terror. Or, if the image presented by the author does manage to please, then people have an unwavering capacity to cope with whatever *is* behind the door. Nevertheless, there comes a time when you eventually have to open the door, lest the audience undoubtedly succumb to boredom or frustration. Stephen King explains the issue with opening the metaphorical door:

“And if what happens to be behind it is a bug, not ten but a hundred feet tall, the audience heaves a sigh of relief (or utters a scream of relief) and thinks, ‘A bug a hundred feet tall is pretty horrible, but I can deal with that. I was afraid it might be a thousand feet tall.’” (King, “Danse” 133).

So, disappointing or not, there comes a time when it is inevitable that the author moves from the pinnacle of terror to the lesser, but nonetheless crucial shelf of horror beneath. *It* is strewn with moments of horror, where the monster is shown in all its glory, and King does this effectively. His reputation as the ‘master of horror’ alone is proof of this. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, how does King execute horror so effectively? One difficulty when writing horror is creating a monster that the audience hasn’t witnessed before. Horror, like any other genre, is no stranger to cliché, so it is crucial for the horror writer to present a new monster or at least dress it in a new skin if it is going to stand any chance of having the desired effect on the reader. Tim Waggoner states:

“Horror tropes like vampires, witches, ghosts, zombies and all the rest have been used so many times in literature and film that the very concepts have become cliché. Once a specific type of character, threat, or story structure becomes too familiar, it loses its power to engage and affect readers – especially in horror.” (Waggoner 64).

This is a trap that King avoids with great success when writing *It*. To begin with, *It* is an alien apparition that has the ability to mimic its victims greatest fears. An original horror concept if ever there was one at the time of writing, and *It's* favoured form, Pennywise the clown, has become a horror icon. There are times in the novel when Pennywise morphs into one of the aforementioned tropes from the monster movies of the 1950s. Even here, King is able to breathe new life into an old monster and give the reader something new and unexpected. If we take the example of the vampire given by Waggoner. The traditional depiction of a vampire is a humanoid figure, baring two long fangs that are used to drain the blood of its victims after dark. The image of this creature has been immortalized by Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee in their portrayal of Dracula. Both interpretations share similarities, like the slicked back hair and cloak for example. However, King's take on Dracula is worlds apart. This is how Dracula is described in *It*:

"An ancient man-thing with a face like a twisted root stood there. Its face was deadly pale, its eyes purplish-red, the color of blood clots. Its mouth dropped open, revealing a mouth full of Gillette Blue-Blades that had been set in the gums at angles... 'keee-runch!' it screamed, and its jaws snapped closed. Blood gouted from its mouth in a black-red *flood*." (King, "It" 557).

This scene is certainly horrifying and avoids any of the tropes or cliches Waggoner refers to. But there is more at play here. It is not just the new edge that King gives this overused monster that makes this an effective scene of horror. When discussing how to write horror, Richard Thomas considers size and scope. He discusses the larger concepts, as in the horrors themselves. However, to make horror really effective, the author must also delve into specific detail. Thomas says:

"When you pair that with the specific, it adds depth, nuance and personality. It's not just the creature – furry, scaly, or covered in tentacles – that scares us, it's the myriad of horrible details we see as the camera closes in... These are usually the last things your protagonist, or secondary characters will see, before meeting their untimely death. Make them worth showing." (Thomas 63)

As seen in the above vampire extract, it is the illicit detail in which King describes the vampire that makes it truly horrifying. The eyes the colour of blood clots is symbolic of death, and the reader makes this association when reading the description. Furthermore, the gums are described as being strewn with razors which slice into the vampire's gums as it speaks. The razors could be associated with suicide, yet another link to death, and one of the novel's protagonists, Stan, had killed himself with a razor earlier in the novel. It is this illicit detail that captures the imagination and creates a moment of true horror.

Another scene where King utilizes this technique to illicit horror comes with the death of Eddie Corcoran, one of the many 'missing' in Derry. Eddie's death is so horrifying *because* of the amount of detail with which King describes it. In typical King fashion, we have already grown sympathetic towards Eddie, putting the care in the scare, due to his relationship with his abusive stepfather. The stepfather had been responsible for Eddie's younger brother's death by bludgeoning him with a recoilless hammer and Eddie had run away to escape the abuse. It is during his escape that he stops by the canal and sits on the edge to watch the water. We are deep in Eddie's thoughts and feelings when King breaks the quiet with a single line."

"A hand closed around Eddie's foot." (King, "It" 267).

When this line is delivered, we are fully in Eddie's point of view. We are living his thoughts and dreams and rooting for him. This single line is unexpected and immediately puts the reader on edge. King continues:

"The soft yet strong grip startled him so much that he almost lost his balance and fell into the canal...and then he looked down. His mouth dropped open. Urine spilled hotly down his legs and stained his jeans black in the moonlight..."

It was Dorsey.

It was Dorsey as he had been buried...Dorsey's pants clung wetly to legs as thin as broomsticks. And Dorsey's head was horribly slumped, as if it had been caved in at the back and consequently pushed up at the front.

Dorsey was grinning.

'Eddieeeee,' his dead brother croaked...Dorsey's grin widened. Yellow teeth gleamed, and somewhere way back in the darkness things seemed to be squirming." (King, "It" 267-268).

It is the fine detail here that makes us feel true horror. The soft yet firm grip, the caved in head, the yellow teeth. Again, using such detail builds a solid picture in the mind's eye, one that horrifies. Coupled with this is King's ability to take an ordinary situation, a boy stood by a canal, and turns it on its head. We have all been alone deep in our own thoughts, and we can imagine ourselves in Eddie's situation. This is, as Wolfman put it, taking an everyday moment, or at least a very human moment, to build horror. (Wolfman 178).

There came a point in my own novel when I eventually had to show my monster, Pol Pepplar in the flesh, something that, I must say, I found disconcerting. With King's image of the 1000 foot bug in mind, I couldn't help but feel that I would disappoint. I was eager not to

reveal my monster too quickly, instead letting myths and fragment of stories illicit a sense of dread in the reader. Throughout the first twenty chapters I attempted to play a psychological game with the reader, hoping that they would believe my 'man in black' was Pol Pepllar. How successfully I managed this is another matter.

This is something that Kat Ellis does in her YA Horror novel, Harrow Lake. We have to wait until page 125 until the novel's demon, Mr Jitters, shows its face. This is how it is described:

"A thin shadow crawls from between the sheets of wallpaper. Stretches, thin as a blade, until it's as long as my forearm. Then it bends and starts tapping the wall around it...I try to scream. It comes out like a moan, low in my throat..."

A hand slides free of the wallpaper, dragging an arm behind it. Its long fingers still tap-tap-tap away. The wall bulges around what must be a shoulder, then a head. It swivels under the paper, and I see the outline of pinprick eye sockets, a mouth gaping as though it's about to speak." (Ellis 125-126)

Ellis successfully encroaches a sense of fear here, the blade like fingers tapping away, the slow purposeful movement of Mr Jitters. It really is a rewarding scene. And what's more, Ellis doesn't fully open the door, she instead yanks it open then slams it shut again. We get but a glance of what's behind the door and the effect is uncertainty and discomfort. We're still unsure. This is something I tried to utilize in my own novel.

Megan is on the cusp of believing that there could be something else behind the disappearances in Elmdale, something...not human. However, there have been sightings of a man in black, who the group believe to be Pol Pepllar. At this point, I want the reader to believe that the man in black is out to get Megan. That *he* is the child abductor responsible for the disappearances. When Megan and Charlie finally draw the strength and courage to search the Pepllar place for their missing friend Rud, they finally encounter the man in black. The twist being that the man in black is actually there to protect them from what actually lurks in the house. Writing the scene where Pol Pepllar makes its appearance came with challenges. Not so much because of the strong horror element involved, but because I was very much afraid it would disappoint. I could certainly relate to King's 'bug' scenario.

I aimed to let Pepllar's appearance happen suddenly, unexpectedly. To jar against a situation that had already gone bad for Megan and Charlie. At the Pepllar place, and, still believing the possibility that the man in black is responsible for the disappearances at Elmdale, they are faced with the man in black as he blocks the doorway. The following describes what happens as Megan watches him.

“He raised his one hand in front of him. Stop, it seemed to say. The index finger of his other hand went to his lips in a quiet gesture and then pointed to the ceiling.

A deep sniff, strangled and mucussy, cut the silence. Megan’s heart lurched as if trying to jump for the door, something was above their heads and this man wanted them to see it. Megan held her breath and lifted the torch beam upwards. Through the trembling torch beam and dust motes she saw something crawling down from the staircase opening and across the ceiling. Something human-like but not human at all.”

What I tried to do here was to take a ‘normal’ situation, or at least a human situation, and turn it on its head, with the hope that the reader would be surprised and horrified by the turn of events. I attempted to use a place within a house that is traditionally unused, unthought of and therefore usually rendered safe by the audience. The opening of a stairwell is a place that separates the upstairs from the downstairs; the two worlds within a home where ‘things happen.’ By using this space, where nothing usually happens, to reveal my monster I aim to bring some disorientation to the proceedings, perhaps even catch the reader off guard, much like the infamous spider walk scene from the Exorcist. As the scene continues, I try to add the specific details of Pol Pepllar, just as Thomas suggests and King does:

“Two bulging yellow eyes, pupilless and lifeless reflected the torch light. Dead eyes that fixed on her as the thing dragged itself long the ceiling with long, gangly arms. The arms made Megan think of spider legs, except there were only two and they ended in clawed hands that purchased the splintered wooden slats. The claw of its middle finger was like a steak knife and it made a klick and scratch sound as the creature crept along the ceiling. It’s skin was that of a pale slug. It opened its mouth showing teeth too big for the thing’s small leather head, curved and twisted like an angler fish. This time Megan and Charlie both screamed, and a grin stretched across the thing’s face seeming to split its ghastly head in half.”

I attempt to go into enough detail here to convey horror whilst still giving the audiences imagination room for manoeuvre. The yellow, pupilless eyes, the curved and twisted teeth, the long gangly arms. As this book is YA, I also attempt to give the reader focal points for comparison e.g. the angler fish and the steak knife. I hope they are not disappointed as Pepllar is let out from ‘behind the door.’

Before we move onto the next chapter, it is pertinent, and perhaps even crucial to point out that horror is also portrayed on a subtextual level throughout the novel *It*. The Horrors of human society are on full display throughout the novel and plain for us to see. The

horrific homophobic attack, the arson attack fueled by racism, the abuse of Bevie at the hands of her father, the emotional abuse of Eddie at the hands of his mother. These horrors reveal themselves to the children in *It* and present themselves for the rest of their lives. It is these very human horrors that draw the reader closer to the characters, making us care for them and root for them. It is these very real horrors that elevate the supernatural horror elements. Given the importance of 'putting the care in the scare' conveyed in the previous chapter, it is crucial that the horror writer looks beyond the horror caused by their antagonist and puts their characters in true to life horrific incidents. By doing so, they will create a bond between character and reader thus amplifying the effect of the supernatural horror in the novel.

Chapter 3

Revulsion of the lowest order

Stephen King recognises that revulsion is the lowest form of emotion stimulated by horror fiction. In saying that, he is not afraid to use it, and this is clear when reading, *It*. King's recognition of repulsion being the lowest form of horror is shared. Guy N Smith warns of the possible implications of relying on this tool when writing horror fiction.

"If it is used gratuitously, it will stand out plainly as contrived." (Smith 35)

If used too liberally, then it detracts from the story, rather than adds. Smith goes on to say:

"Violence is different from horror. The former sickens, the latter frightens. The icy touch on the back of the neck on a dark night is terrifying, the bloodied mutilated body is revolting." (Smith 36)

Christopher Kenworthy agrees with this point, stating that:

"Horror fiction is all about getting below the surface of things. The easy way is to split the skin and let loose a stream of blood and gristle. Although this may be dubiously entertaining, it is shallow and brief." (Kenworthy 16)

However, even though these arguments hint that writing repulsion is somewhat crude and easier than the aforementioned forms, there is a certain artistry in making a reader feel revolted. It is not as simple as describing arterial sprays of blood and dismembered body parts. The scene has to be set properly in order to tap into our phobic pressure points to have any effect at all. Tim Waggoner gives an example of how 'Disgust' should be approached in his book, *Writing in the Dark*, and goes into gory detail of 'Bob's' demise from his attacker's sledgehammer. Of writing this example, Waggoner says,

"The prose focusses on Bob experiencing the damage to his body and describes the nasty physical details of his injuries – details I purposefully chose to evoke a queasy reaction. There's an art to writing Disgust, of course, just as there's an art to writing anything. The plainer and more focused the prose – and the more you stay in the moment – the more effective it will be." (Waggoner 90).

There are numerous instances where King reverts to using revulsion in *It*. There are scenes of such gratuitous horror they make our stomachs wrench. One of the finest examples of this is with the demise of Patrick Hockstetter, a revolting character in his own right. Patrick is a sociopath, who is designed to make our skin crawl. He keeps a pencil case

full of fly corpses which he proudly displays to his classmates. He 'gobs' in people's faces. He molests girls and boys. He truly is a repulsive character. It is perhaps fitting then that King uses revulsion to dispose of this character. In the novel, Patrick has been killing local pets by trapping them in an abandoned refrigerator at the local junk yard. We are told in grizzly detail of how he did this to a puppy, checking on it every day to study its slow starvation and suffocation. During the aforementioned death scene, Patrick has returned to the fridge to check on his latest victim, an injured pigeon, but when he opens the door, he is greeted by a swarming mass of flesh coloured flying leeches. This image alone is enough to stimulate our gag reflexes. Leeches are perhaps one of the planet's most repulsive creatures; blood sucking, gelatinous worms constantly searching for their next liquid meal. This image is magnified in *It*, with the leeches described as being a 'fleshy' colour – making them much more like us, and perhaps symbolic of Patrick himself, sucking the life out of his victims. It is when the leech creatures attack Patrick that the true revulsion takes place though:

“another settled on his right eye. Patrick closed it, but that did no good; he felt a brief hot flare as the thing's sucker poked through his eyelid and began to suck the fluid out of his eyeball. Patrick felt his eye collapse in its socket and he screamed again. A leech flew into his mouth when he did and roosted on his tongue...He could feel the leech inside his mouth swelling up and he opened his jaws because the only coherent thought he had left was that it must not burst in there...But it did. Patrick ejected a huge spray of blood and parasite flesh like vomit.” (King, “It” 854).

King indeed stays in the moment here, keeping us close to Patrick's demise for almost three pages; we feel every proboscis that pierces his skin, feel the leeches swell to balloon like proportions and sag heavy on his pallid skin until they burst in torrents of blood, leaving pus infested wounds behind. We see what Patrick sees, like the leeches trembling as they drain his blood. King also makes use of some of our most sensitive body parts to really make us cringe during this scene. The piercing of Patrick's eye and the bulging parasite inside his mouth strike an immediate chord with the reader, one that makes them cringe, one to illicit revulsion. King, certainly applies his artistry here. Although King uses blood and gore throughout the book, this is the most prominent examples. Elsewhere, it is used sparingly, bar a few chapters, and perhaps this is why it is so effective. When discussing the use of gore, Waggoner explains:

“It's really easy to do poorly...and page after page of disgust-focused scenes can quickly turn off readers or, if they keep reading, make them numb to what happens next. If

you want readers to feel the full force of disgust, you need to give them a break once in a while.” (Waggoner 90).

I approached the technique of repulsion with some care in my own novel. Bearing in mind that this was for a younger audience, although certainly towards the older scale of the young adult reader, I was aware that I would have to hold back on the gore to an extent. When discussing the writing of YA Horror fiction, Tim Waggoner suggests that, “Extreme and erotic content most likely will be toned down to some degree – maybe to a great degree.” (Waggoner 52).

There are two main parts of my novel in which I aim for revulsion. And although I would have liked to have used the technique that Waggoner suggests, and that King utilised, nothing *that* repulsive happens directly to any of my main characters, certainly not the ones that I use as a point of view focus. Therefore, I relied upon keeping close to my main characters reactions and giving every detail of what they saw. The first instance where I aim for revulsion comes when Megan and the Warders discover a dead body whilst on a Stalking. This is what they see:

“Megan peered behind the door and froze. What she saw tightened the muscles in her legs. They were like two compressed springs, ready to explode, leading her away from this hell. Somehow, she stood her ground.

A body stood upright, not of its own accord, but impaled on a rusty pipe that jutted out of the floorboards. The body was red and raw, with every scrap of skin removed revealing muscle, sinew and cartilage. It was as if the corpse had been unzipped. Thick spats of congealed blood clung on in places like huge slugs which glistened wet in the torchlight. The face of the flayed figure was contorted in horror, or agony, or both, with milky eyes wide and bulging.”

My aim here was to keep the prose clipped and simple. I go into detail about the corpse itself but aim to keep my prose as succinct as possible. I want to plant the image neatly in the head of the reader and then leave it there to fester.

I then aimed to crank the repulsion up a notch when it is eventually revealed what happened to the flayed figure’s skin towards the end of the novel:

“Hollie reached out and placed a hand on Rud’s shoulder then recoiled as though she’d been bitten. “Rud, you’re freezing,” she said.

“Rud’s head spun around like an owl fixing on prey. The skin on his face was stretched and distorted, the eyes were missing so that his face resembled a rubber

Halloween mask. Glaring through the jagged eye holes where were bulging yellow eyes. Pol Pepllar's eyes.

Hollie let out a muffled shriek and stumbled backwards, tripping over Charlie's foot and crashing onto her bum so hard the shriek cut off abruptly.

Pol Pepllar stood, and as it did, Rud's skin stretched and tore open across the thing's limbs. Megan swallowed a belch and hot acid stung her throat. Any confidence she had seemed to wash away with the puke she swallowed back down. Whatever she had expected, it wasn't this. One of her best friends being worn as a skin suit. The gun grew heavy in her trembling hand and her body felt baggy. Panic tried to grab hold and as much as she knocked it away, it came back like a wasp on a summer's day.

It tore Rud's skin from its own face like a demonic version of peekaboo, its leather head split by that evil toothy grin. It stuffed Rud's face into its mouth, chewed a few times then swallowed it. And then it spoke. The bloody thing spoke. Its voice was a cacophony of hisses and snarls.

I was certainly worried about the level of gore for a YA audience but have certainly seen it used to this extent in other novels. Most notably was Rick Yancey's *The Monstrumologist*, a regular contender in reviews and top ten lists of YA horror fiction. This novel certainly does not shy away from using gore for effect. When describing one of the Wendigo's victims, Yancey describes the following:

"Lying on his back in a pool of coagulating blood was Augustin Skala – or what was left of him...for Augustin Skala had no face and no eyes. The empty sockets sought out the blank canvas of the off-white ceiling tiles.

His shirt had been torn open, exposing his hairy torso, in the middle of which yawned a hole the size of a pie plate. Protruding from the hole's jagged lip was a portion of his dislodged heart, partially ripped from its moorings and missing large bite-sized chunks." (Yancey 277).

Again, the reader is shown this scene through exact, clipped prose here, but also the intricate details that enable their minds to project a gruesome and repulsive image. They don't just see a hole in the victim's chest, but a jagged hole. It's not just a pool of blood, but congealed blood. It is this extra detail that makes the gore more effective and succeeds in provoking revulsion in the reader.

There are other authors who rarely delve into the realms of the 'gross out.' Take Kathe Kujo's Bram Stoker Award winning novel, *the Cipher* for example. Kujo's beautiful

prose certainly evoke feelings of horror, but rarely does she go for the gross out, instead opting for a more psychological and emotional experience to evoke terror in the reader. Even when Kujo does use gore, it is done more lightly, not keeping close to the action as exemplified by King and Waggoner, but instead subtly planting suggestions into the head of the reader. A different approach, but still effective. To put the book into context, the reader follows Nakota and her lover Nicholas as they dabble with a black hole they have dubbed 'the funhole.' They begin experimenting, first making love near it, then throwing insects into it before moving onto a mouse. The following extract describes what happens:

“and a blast of fur and fluid hit her right in the face...she reached fingers like feelers into her hair, gave her head a gentle shake which dislodged something, some piece, and 'Fucking A,' she said, and incredibly she laughed, holding up a tail, part of a tail.” (Koja 16).

As the scene progresses, Nicholas and Nakota make love, using the mouse skull as a sex toy, “the mouse head at Nakota’s tiny nipple, strange nursling.” (Koja 18).

This is as far as we get into the realms of depravity, and although the mouse skull sex scene is certainly worthy as being categorised as a 'gross out,' Koja’s prose do not give us every gory detail but instead lets the reader fill in the blanks.

It is clear that a novelist does not need to lower themselves to the use of revulsion to write a horror novel that will connect with the reader. They do not need to write scenes that will turn the stomach of the reader, maybe even put them off their food; but just as surely as a gourmet main course does not always need a dessert, in fact, said dessert can so often disappoint, there are other times when a good dessert is just what is called for. If crafted well, it can add an extra note to something that was already satisfying. This is exactly what revulsion does in a horror novel. It adds a layer that can heighten the experience of the reader, rather than lower the tone of the writer.

If studied closely, it is clear that revulsion isn't just reserved to gory endings and monsters though in Stephen King's *It*. It is also interwoven in the characters themselves and how they feel about themselves. It is found in their self-loathing, loathing of others and the actions of others. Revulsion too, plays an important part in the fears of the young protagonists. It is therefore important to note that revulsion on an emotional level, rather than a physical level, can be an important tool in shaping horror in a novel. A discussion of this factor could have taken the bulk of this study alone, but I believe it essential to at least take a glance at how emotional revulsion can add to the horror element of a novel. We see inner revulsion through Bill's self-distain over his stutter and how it limits him on a daily basis. We see it through Ben's disgust at his weight, the problems it causes him and his inability to deal with it. At this level, emotional revulsion is used to resonate with the reader, giving them a

deeper understanding and connectivity with the characters thus reinforcing the horror they experience.

Self-revulsion is also addressed on a societal level throughout the novel. The reader is filled with self-disgust and loathing of the human race through accounts of homophobia, racism, sexism, child abuse and domestic abuse. These instances repulse us on a deeper level and make us question the value of the human species. They remind us that to simply be is horrifying. King delves into distinctively human depravities, making us sick to our stomach with the actions of other humans, and perhaps the fact that some people behave this way is the most horrifying thing of all.

Perhaps the most striking examples of emotional revulsion come through the Eddie, who carries his childhood trauma's through to adulthood because it is all he knows. Perhaps echoing a feeling of self-revulsion so common in us all, the want for change and fear of striving for such change.

Eddie is haunted by his mother throughout the novel. She is overbearing, overprotective and quite clearly suffering from Munchausen by proxy. Eddie is constantly told that he is ill and if he steps out of his comfort zone, then bad things will happen. Eddie grapples with feelings of revulsion toward his mother, often referring to her enormous weight and overbearing nature. And this is something he still grapples with when we see him as an adult. Still a chronic asthma sufferer and now a fully - fledged hypochondriac, he marries Myra, a woman so much like his mother they could be sisters, thus continuing his subservient existence.

“But in the end he had married Myra anyway. In the end the old ways and the old habits had simply been too strong. Home was the place where, when you have to go there, they have to chain you up...It was Myra herself who had ended up tipping the scales away from independence.” (King, “It” 93).

It is Eddie's self-loathing that resonates with the reader here. The fact that Eddie has stuck with what is familiar, hardly able to live at all. A feeling of self-revulsion that is terrifying to the reader because it is something that so many are guilty of, being afraid to live.

It is clear from the research that revulsion in the physical sense should be used sparingly. Emotional revulsion can also be used to great effect to help the reader connect with a character. Revulsion is synonymous with the Horror novel and is more often used than not. There are certainly opportune moments to use such moments of gore in a Horror novel and these moments should only come when appropriate and adding to the story, if overdone, the effect is somewhat lessened anyway. Furthermore, being given the

opportunity to witness such violent deaths allows us to deal with our own mortality, it allows the reader to contemplate societies collective unspoken terror and perhaps give them hope that their own demise will be somewhat less prompt and certainly less painful.

Suturing the parts

It is without doubt that King is the master of Horror. He has developed a formula to creep inside the mind of the reader and press on those aforementioned phobic pressure points.

If one is going to write a horror novel, then one must realise that there are layers to writing it, and understanding each layer and where and how to best use them is crucial in inciting the required emotional response from the reader. Terror is certainly the stratosphere that all horror writers strive for. It is this feeling of extreme fear that is so difficult to achieve, given that phobic pressure points are largely idiosyncratic to the individual. However, the research shows that terror is best achieved, as Cavallaro puts it, by creating an awful apprehension, creating an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread. It is in this element that the imagination is allowed to run wild, and in the cavernous pits of the human imagination our own worst fears are brought to life and allowed to run amok. It is crucial to ground these terrors in the real world, to take situations that are familiar to all readers and turning them on their heads. However, arguably the most crucial step in evoking terror from the reader, is 'putting the care in the scare.' This is something that in which King excels in *It*.

When it eventually comes time to open the door, we move into the realms of horror rather than terror. The human brain has a spectacular capacity for coping with stressful situations and adapting. However, there are key strategies that can be adopted in making what is behind the door effective. Firstly, the writer needs to make whatever is behind the door original, avoiding old horror tropes. Secondly, the author must describe their monster in explicit detail in order to paint an accurate picture in the mind's eye. However, the prose should be accurate and succinct if boredom is to be avoided. King is able to convey horror successfully throughout *It*. Pennywise the clown is arguably one of the most iconic horror villains of the modern horror era, admittedly helped by Tim Curry's portrayal in the 1990's TV adaption of the novel. There are scenes throughout *It* that horrify, and there are scenes that fall short and disappoint and this is something that King admittedly grapples with, as expressed in his 100-foot bug analogy.

At the bottom of the list is revulsion. Although the bluntest and most cumbersome tool in the horror writer's toolkit, it can still be utilised on occasions, and when used properly can be incredibly effective. Again, this is an art form in itself and if is going to be achieved successfully then it must not be overused but saved for rare occasions to be effective. Again, King uses revulsion at several points throughout *It*, but what makes King's use of revulsion so successful is that it is saved for special occasions. When it is used it comes as a shock to the reader, thus making it all the more effective. Point of view is crucial here, and gore cannot be successful if it is described passively or from a distance. We need to feel the skin

splitting, or at least watch as splits apart revealing the sinew and muscle beneath. In other words, the author needs to keep the camera focussed and zoom in to achieve the desired effect. And this isn't all. Emotional revulsion is something that resonates with most readers, and displaying self-revulsion through character and eliciting it by showing some of humanities' vilest acts, is a sure way to expand horror in a novel.

It is clear from these findings that writing horror fiction, as with writing any fiction, is a multi-faceted complex task. Above anything else, as Stephen King states, is to put the 'care in the scare.' It is clear from the research that this step is crucial. A horror writer is far more likely to illicit terror in the reader if the reader is terrified for the character. Once a reader cares about a character, they will worry about what is to become of them. They will find scenes in which an unknown entity awaits the protagonist all the more terrifying, they will find scenes when the hero stumbles across the monster even more horrifying and they will find scenes of gore all the more revulsive for fear that their protagonist could meet the same fate.

Once the author has established empathy between character and reader, King suggests that there are a hierarchy of emotions that the horror writer aims for; terror being the finest, revulsion being the lowest. However, it could be argued that each strategy lends something different to the horror novel that is equally important. Horror writing should aim to illicit a synergy of emotions, existing together to evoke maximum affect in the reader, and should all be utilised to give the reader the best experience. Yes, it can be argued that one form serves a higher purpose than the others, but I would argue that they are separate entities that add to the same whole; much like blood vessels within the body; arteries, veins and capillaries are all crucial to survive; each serves a completely different yet essential purpose. If the horror author is going to succeed in the genre, then they must learn to suture the parts of terror, horror and revulsion in order to illicit the desired emotions in the reader. In all, horror, with all its subgenres, appeals to a broad spectrum of readers, and by suturing the parts of horror technique, an author can hope to find something that pleases a larger audience. But there is more to it than that. Life offers a broad spectrum of experiences, and although we hope these experiences will be positive, there are those that terrify, horrify and repulse us. By taking these elements of fear, the horror author offers a kind of catharsis to the reader; a chance to reflect, or even just experience what *could* go wrong. Of course, the goal is to terrify the reader, but I would argue with King's point that terror, horror and revulsion are set in a hierarchical system. I believe that they can be used synchronously and are all just as useful when called upon at the appropriate point. The creeping terror becomes frustrating if never revealed, the horror becomes unthreatening if we are not shown the violence and brutality it can inflict. So, when writing Horror fiction, creep up on the reader,

hide out of sight, remain silent when they call 'Who's there?' Then, when the reader is terrified just enough, jump out from the shadows, give them a good scare, and, when the story calls for it, smear their face with blood.

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