

Gendering the Muse: Reinscriptions of Patriarchal Authority and the Delegitimization of Female
Authorship in Selected Stephen King Works

A thesis submitted to
the Department of English
Lakehead University
Thunder Bay, Ontario

In partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

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April 2009

Acknowledgements

I am very thankful to all of those who helped contribute to this project, either directly or indirectly. You know who you are, and I am indebted to you. There are too many names to list here; however, there are a few individuals who need to be recognized.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Rachel Warburton. Your guidance and support made it possible for me to complete this project. You gave me the faith I needed to believe that I could. I would also like to thank my readers, Dr. Scott Pound and Dr. Margaret Toye. Lastly, I thank Justin. Without you, I really couldn't have done this, and I wouldn't have tried. And yes, still.

Abstract

This thesis examines representations of masculinity and authority in selected Stephen King works: On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Bag of Bones, Misery, and The Tommyknockers. These texts reinscribe writing and authority as inherently male traits, while passivity and domesticity are associated with femininity. The thesis focuses on King's representations of women and male authors in three different areas.

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft and Bag of Bones present female characters who function as unrecognized muse figures to male author characters. The male author characters explicitly praise figurative male muse figures, while ignoring the influences of female characters. Harold Bloom's theories of the heterosexual relationship between a male author and female muse differ from King's representation of muse figures. King's male author-male muse relationship reflects a homosocial relationship, in which both male author and male muse are deliberately depicted as masculine.

Misery presents another uncredited female muse character and a male author character. In this novel, however, the female muse is a literal threat to the male author. The female muse is active and also a direct threat. Although she helps the male author character create his best novel, she must be destroyed because she threatens not only his life, but also his authority.

The Tommyknockers approaches authorship from a different perspective. In this novel, the main character is a woman who initially appears to be an author. At the novel's start, she has published several novels and appears to be moderately successful. However, shortly into the novel, her position as an author is proven to be false. Instead, she has been influenced by a buried alien spacecraft. This novel depicts women's representations of authority as inferior and deviant.

This thesis explores how male authority is reinscribed as legitimate, while female authority appears to be illegitimate in three King novels and one memoir. The thesis considers how several different female characters relate to male author characters, and how these female characters influence the male author characters. This thesis explores how these female characters inevitably fall into one of two roles: muse or monster.

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Introduction

As one of the world's best-selling fiction authors, Stephen King is not only well-known, but is also read by a substantial portion of the general public. Since publishing his first short story, "I Was A Teenage Grave Robber" in 1965, King has written more than forty novels, eight short story collections, six non-fiction books, as well as several screenplays, teleplays, audiobooks, and other miscellaneous publications (Collings). As one critic suggests, "the social and cultural implications of an author whose writings number in the tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of copies world-wide seem inescapable" (Collings 15).

As King notes, his work demonstrates a fascination with writing itself. In the prefatory note to the short story, "Secret Window, Secret Garden," King addresses his recurrent use of writing in his work: "This story is, I think, the last story about writers and writing and the strange no man's land which exists between what's real and what's make-believe. I believe a good many of my long-time readers, who have borne my fascination with this subject patiently, will be glad to hear that" (Four Past Midnight 237-8). King wrote these words in 1990, yet he has returned to the topic of writing in several books since then; for example, Bag of Bones (1998) and Lisey's Story (2006) each feature male author characters, though the two novels are written from different perspectives. Throughout his career, King has written more than a dozen different author characters in his novels alone. In one interview, King attributes his recurring use of characters who are writers to his need to understand his own position as an author: "what I have written about writers and writing in the last five years or so has been a real effort on my part to understand what I am doing" (Magistrale 4). Significantly, King's novels rarely situate women as writers; instead, women often act as aids to male writers, though they are never unambiguously

given credit for their assistance. The position of author is almost exclusively reserved for male characters. Although female characters sometimes make creative efforts, such as scrapbooking, these efforts are consistently devalued in the texts. In rare instances where King's female characters do assume the role of writer, they become physically and mentally unstable and are eventually rendered incomprehensible. King's work reinforces stereotypical gender roles and patriarchal authority, specifically anxieties related to women as writers. King's implicit reinforcement of male authority is of particular interest to this project.

This thesis examines the problematic representation of women in relation to writing and to authorship in several of Stephen King's works. On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Bag of Bones, Misery, and The Tommyknockers all feature male authors and female characters who affect the male authors' writing processes. These four texts present examples of two common positions women occupy in King's work: muse or monster. The latter position develops when the muse attempts to assert authority. King's writing frequently returns to the topic of authority and consistently reasserts authority as a male characteristic. Using theories of authorship from Foucault, Bloom, Barthes, Irigaray, and Cixous, as well as Gilbert and Gubar, I examine how these King texts limit female characters to roles of muses, facilitators, or monsters, depending on the female characters' relationships to male author characters. The texts also delegitimize female authorship by depicting it as deviant and inferior. In each of the King novels I examine, there is at least one author character. Of the publishing author characters within the texts, only two are female. One female author character is Roberta Anderson, who is proven to merely be an instrument of aliens rather than an independent creator. The other female author is King's wife, Tabitha, whom he praises as a writer, but he also carefully distinguishes her from other women.

For the many male author characters in King's novels, however, there are women who act as muses but who are never overtly recognized as influential to, though they are feared by, the male authors. Throughout his career, King has written more than a dozen different author characters in his novels alone. Time and space constraints limit the number of novels this thesis can examine, so the texts chosen are those which most obviously essentialize writing ability as an inherently masculine trait.

In addition to the texts' fearful and sometimes hostile attitudes toward women, the texts also convey a somewhat ambiguous, and often contradictory, attitude toward genre. King is known for his horror fiction. He writes novels and short stories, as well as the occasional screenplay. While he explicitly addresses what he portrays as the nobility in writing in a genre which is sometimes dismissed by academics, he also makes barely veiled references to classic literature, such as Shakespeare. While King asserts that people need to "write what they know," he still deems it is necessary to prove his own well-rounded knowledge of the classics. This pattern recurs throughout the novels I examine and reflects King's own unease with genre, particularly in terms of gender-specific associations, such as the feminization of the horror genre.

Writing on King

As might be expected for an author such as King, there is a large body of work based on his writings. King scholarship began to develop in the early 1980s and continues to grow as a genre of its own. Early critics such as Michael Collings, Douglas Winter, Tony Magistrale, Tim Underwood, and Chuck Miller dominated the field of early King criticism. The majority of King scholarship published prior to 1990 emphasizes what it regards as the need for academics to recognize King's work, which is a worthwhile effort; however, early scholarship fails to employ

critical reading methods to justify claims of King's "worthiness." Early King criticism concerns itself with praise for King's ability to terrify the reader without considering the implications of this terror: "Stephen King's way ... works! It keeps the surprises streaming from his pen far beyond the point at which I thought he'd exhausted them ... [The Dead Zone] in no way depends on traditional and often movie-clichéd sources of terror" (Leiber Fear Itself 108). Leiber identifies King's innovative use of fear, but stops the analysis at a celebration of King's ability to create fear. Leiber, like many early King critics, avoids exploring critical issues presented by King's work. King's work has also been the subject of several readers' guides, such as Stephen King: A Critical Companion, a book which merely provides plot synopses, character sketches, and identification of prominent themes within several of King's more popular novels. On the whole, much of King scholarship fails to explore King's work critically. Instead, there are an alarming number of books, such as those written by Joseph Reino and Jonathan P. Davis, dedicated to identifying and praising King's use of imagery and diction.

This is not to say, however, that there is not relevant, insightful King scholarship in circulation. Both Collings and Winter's later work on King is considerably more developed. More recent publications, such as Kate Sullivan's article, "Meeting Monsters, Loving Men: Abjection and Community in Peter Straub's Ghost Story and Stephen King's 'The Breathing Method,'" utilizes theory from both Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler to study the implications of King's uses of male community and masculinity. Michael J. Meyer Kathleen Margaret Lant and Theresa Thompson's collection of essays, Imagining the Worst: Stephen King and the Representation of Women, also provides critical insight into King's use and abuse of female characters. Specifically, Lant's essay, "The Rape of Constant Reader: Stephen King's

Construction of the Female Reader and Violation of the Female Body in Misery,” addresses the violently sexual relationship King alludes to between reader and writer. The rest of the collection also consists of relevant criticism, though most chapters focus on mother-figures and their associations.

Although King scholarship has been developing for more than twenty years, not all of his works have received equal critical attention. My first chapter, which examines On Writing and Bag of Bones, reflects the lack of scholarship available on these two texts. King’s novel, Misery, has prompted several scholarly articles, including Clare Hanson’s “Stephen King: Powers of Horror,” and Natalie Schroeder’s “Stephen King’s Misery: Freudian Sexual Symbolism and the Battle of the Sexes.” Because of the greater availability of scholarship related to Misery, the second chapter of this thesis engages in dialogue with the work of several King scholars. Like the first chapter, the third chapter focuses on a novel, The Tommyknockers, which has received little scholarly review. For this reason, the first and third chapters focus primarily on close reading and applications of literary theory.

Theorizing Authority

King’s works demonstrate an interest in authority, which is reflected by his recurrent use of author characters. His novels attempt to define the author as a single form: the (male) voice of authority. In “What is an Author,” Michel Foucault considers some of the complexities of the term “author.” The term is a cultural construction which is applied to certain particular “works,” while it also suggests a certain stability in meaning. Foucault finds the term problematic because the very understanding of a “work” is unstable. While there are obvious works such as published novels and plays, there is no clear definition of what is not a work. In recent years, unpublished

materials as well as previously unrecognized genres, such as diaries and letters, have all come to be regarded as works. Foucault's theory also considers that there is no clear rule about who is qualified to evaluate a work. Foucault suggests that "author" is as an unstable a signifier as "work":

the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. (913)

The author is a figure associated with specific works by convention. These works are then classified hierarchically. As he himself admits, Stephen King is both a man and a "brand name" (Fear Itself 42). Foucault's ideas about authorship set up any author as a brand name that encourages readers to expect consistency in style and quality from an author. While King's horror fiction ranks low on the literary hierarchy, it is mass consumed by the public. In interviews, King dismisses literary criticism, but his exploration of academics and popular genres in his novels is difficult to ignore. King's novels attempt to depict authority as a male position, which in turn depicts female characters as inherently inferior.

In King's novels, many of the author-characters exhibit anxiety about genre, especially popular fiction. In Misery, novelist Paul Sheldon is known for his romance novels, but he still regards the genre as cheap and less respectable than his "real" work. Paul claims that he really desires to write "serious" novels, while at the same time he experiences uncomfortable pleasure in producing "less literary" works. Paul is reluctant to publish popular fiction under his own name because he feels the effects of the "author-function"; that is, he feels limited to write in the

style for which he is best known. Paul feels pressure to reproduce the same types of novels if he wants to maintain public interest and a sense of authorial integrity. This “pigeon-holing” forces an author to adopt a particular genre or style of writing as a coherent authorial identity, which is characteristic of Foucault’s “author-function.”

In “The Death of the Author,” Roland Barthes argues against the belief that an author can function as the final authority on a work’s “meaning.” Barthes suggests that rather than the author’s direct message, writing is actually a point of departure of the author from the text and that the reader is responsible for bringing meaning to the text: “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” (875). This idea removes the author from the position of central voice of authority in a text and relies on the reader’s assumptions and biases. For many authors, this causes anxiety about powerlessness because he or she is no longer able to act as the sole source of meaning. King addresses his own anxiety about authority when he asserts that his texts are meant to be read as they are written, and that there is no need to read “between the lines” (On Writing 4). Of course, no text can be read exactly as the author intended because each reader brings their own knowledge and biases to the text. The text is not, as much as any author might hope, an isolated, single, unified message. In explicitly stating that a text has only one meaning, King attempts to delegitimize any voice other than that of the author, who in this case is himself. In addition to invalidating the readings of fans, this idea dismisses critical readings which address potentially controversial subtexts within King’s work.

Barthes argues that no text has a single, unified meaning because every text’s meaning relates to and depends on the meanings of various other texts. The unstable nature of language itself supports this argument. By associating an author with a text, readers attempt to uncover

meaning, which Barthes suggests is a futile exercise. Readers often take the author's biographical details into account to "decipher" texts, which ignores readings which do not relate directly to the suggested author. Barthes's theory would view King's work as a part of a literary tradition within a larger textual culture, in this case horror fiction; in contrast, King's work often encourages semi-biographical readings. Many aspects of King's novels, such as geographical locations and character occupations, seem to invite the reader to recognize details from King's own life. King has never been imprisoned by a crazed fan, but the notion that King may have felt trapped by fan adoration is plausible given his enormous fan base as a popular novelist. Following the publication of Misery and the exposure of his pseudonym, Richard Bachman, King released The Dark Half, which explores the experiences of a writer whose pseudonym is unexpectedly exposed. In this way, King further encourages readers to recognize his own life in his writing. In Misery, King "inverts" Barthes's theory when he creates a stand-in for the reader who must be killed in order to preserve the author and his status as an authority (Lant 243). While King's texts often present similarities to his personal life, the texts cannot be read as explicitly autobiographical.

Theorizing The Muse

In addition to raising questions on the status of the author, King's works also explore the muse figures as well as their relationship to the author. The concept of the influential muse is prominent throughout King's works, though the muse also dates back as far as the classical period. Traditionally, muses are depicted as female, while artists are male. By assigning the muse a specific gender, in this case female, women are denied the possibility of being artists; the muse is responsible for inspiring the male artist, but she cannot create independently. In Anxiety of

Influence, Harold Bloom investigates the relationship between the writer, whom Bloom perceives as exclusively male, and the figurative muse, who is exclusively female. Bloom presents the two figures as distinctly separate, necessarily so. The muse's very existence threatens the male author's understanding of himself as autonomous and independent. For the most part, Bloom's study considers authorial anxiety towards literary predecessors, but for my purpose, Bloom's ideas about the imminent threat of the female muse are most relevant.

Bloom's study focuses on an assumed paternal relationship between writers, where male predecessors are assumed to be father-figures for emerging male writers. While the father-figure provides a model for the new writer, he is also a figure who needs to be overcome to assert the new writer's autonomy. When the new writer recognizes the influence of his precursor, Bloom suggests that he may become concerned about his own ability to write independently. In recognizing a predecessor, the new author must also accept that "he" is not the first author and just as he has become an author, he may also cease to be an author: "the anxiety of influence is so terrible because it is both a kind of separation anxiety and the beginning of a compulsion neurosis, or a fear of a death that is a personified superego" (Bloom 58). Because the predecessor influences the new writer's work, there is also the possible threat that the predecessor might overshadow the new writer. In his study, Bloom completely ignores the possibility of any female writers in this tradition. Instead, Bloom focuses on the role of the muse who is, in his study, female. The absence of female writers and the gendered muse figure reflects cultural anxiety about the possibility of a female voice of authority.

Bloom suggests that the figure of the muse functions in a similar manner to the literary predecessor. An author may experience anxiety toward the muse as the muse provides him with

the inspiration to write. If the muse is powerful enough to influence the writer, then there is also the threat that the muse may also be capable of diminishing the writer's abilities by denying him. The muse is also a figure who may have served many writers, including the author's literary predecessors, which means that there is the possibility that she is a "whore": "[the writer's] word is not his own word only and his Muse has whored with many before him. He has come late in the story, but she has always been central in it, and he rightly fears that his impending catastrophe is only another in her litany of sorrows" (61). The muse is not solely devoted to one writer, but rather to many over time. According to Bloom, the muse's infidelity indicates that any one writer is not the first author, but part of a group to which all predecessors already belong. Bloom suggests that writers may fear losing individuality amidst other writers because of the lack of recognition received from the muse.

In The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, Gilbert and Gubar focus primarily on the position of female authors in a society built on patriarchal values. They trace back literary traditions and devices used by female authors to write against patriarchal ideology. Gilbert and Gubar consider an anxiety they perceive as exclusive to female writers, namely, "the anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45). This term is based on Bloom's theory of "the anxiety of influence," which refers strictly to male poets and male predecessors. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that unlike their male counterparts, who are eager to overcome predecessors, female authors require female precursors as mentors to combat the fear that women cannot write: "Rather than seeking a precursor who will need to be denied, she seeks a precursor as evidence that escape is possible" (49). Because the female writer is anxious about attempting to write, she must seek examples of other women who have succeeded.

Gilbert and Gubar attribute some of the female writer's anxiety to the fact that she has constantly been a subject of art, rather than a creator. Women have literally been sculpted, painted, and written by men which metaphorically reduces women to art, or objects. The position of author is neither extreme stereotype of the angel nor the monster, and thus must be created. Art, which has forced women into the role of angel or monster, becomes the tool for female writers, and they "must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art" (17). As a writer, the female "cannot 'beget' art upon the (female) body of the muse" (49). While Bloom suggests the relationship between writer and muse is sexual, Gilbert and Gubar question the relationship of the female author to the muse. Similar to Gilbert and Gubar's observations about the angel/monster binary, King's female characters who fail to act as passive muse to a male author become monsters. While Gilbert and Gubar's theories of authorship are somewhat dated, they are useful in the context of this project because they consider the position of the female muse as well as her relationship to the male artist. However, this thesis explores beyond what Gilbert and Gubar describe as a deficiency in positive female images to address the ways in which several of King's works reinscribe patriarchal authority through consistently rendering women's writing deviant and illegitimate.

In his novels, King refers in passing to literary precursors, such as W. Somerset Maugham and Daphne du Maurier, as well as contemporaries, such as Peter Straub (co-author of two of King's novels). While King attempts to position his work in an established tradition, he also implies that he is fluent in literary tradition and thus worthy of the position he seeks. The repetitive use of references also supports Bloom's suggestion that authors seek to recognize and overcome their predecessors. Although King does sometimes mention other writers, he

frequently references his own works. King's seamless blending of fictional and non-fictional references blurs the distinction between fiction and reality, which makes later details in the novels even more terrifying. Most of King's novels refer to at least one character or location from a previous novel, despite their irrelevance in the current story. Some novels, such as The Tommyknockers, contain references to all of his previous novels through setting and secondary characters. This self-referencing rarely affects the plot, but allows what King calls "constant readers" to recognize details, which creates a feeling of inclusion. King interpellates the reader into the position of "constant reader" when he addresses an implied audience who is already familiar with his works. By leaving clues for "constant reader" to recognize, King attempts to direct the reader's understanding of the novel. King encourages the reader to ignore conflicts and tensions in the novels in favour of more dominant, author-directed unified readings.

King and the Horror Genre

King's novels focus on authorial anxiety, but as "horror books," they also employ more general elements of culturally constructed fears. In Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, Julia Kristeva examines how fear is managed through systems of language. Nameable phobias become metaphors for unnameable fears. Expanding on Freud, Kristeva suggests that phobias of objects act as "hieroglyphs," or coded representation, for more complicated fears. For example, while an individual may fear an intangible object such as the smell of a barn, the phobia may transfer to a fear of horses which is a tangible, avoidable, and most importantly, nameable. If the fear can be given a name, or be put into language, it becomes manageable:

Yet, the fear of which one can speak, the one therefore that has a signifiable object, is a more belated and more logical product that assumes all earlier alarms of archaic,

non-representable fear. Spoken fear, hence subsequent to language and necessarily caught in the Oedipus structure, is disclosed as the fear of an unlikely object that turns out to be the substitute for another. (Kristeva 34)

Kristeva suggests that the most terrifying things are those which cannot be explained through language. When a subject can speak of a fear using symbolic language, the language incorporates the unrepresentable fear. Kristeva suggests that when a fear is expressed through language, the symbol used to represent the fear is a substitution for the actual object that disrupts the subject. All that cannot be resolved through naming and thus remains at the border of established culture is abject. The abject encompasses all that cannot be named and thus must be removed, as it disrupts social order. Kristeva suggests that the abject is that which society casts out only to draw it in again. The abject is necessary to preserve order as it represents the “other,” an opposition which reaffirms cultural norms. Abjection is based on disruption of order and cultural rules and is all at once repulsive, terrifying, and fascinating. Kristeva describes abjection as the position “at crossroads of phobia, obsession, and perversion” (45). King explores this intersection in his works through his use of elements that are both disturbing and fascinating, such as the alien power that inspires and transforms Roberta Anderson in The Tommyknockers, as is discussed in Chapter Three.

King’s novels employ aspects of the abject, which gives his books the power to simultaneously terrify and intrigue readers. Kristeva also suggests that writers are masters of their own terror because they are able to project unnameable fear onto language. By working within the symbolic, writers attempt to control fear and also recirculate these unnameable fears through the use of signs: “Contrary to hysteria, which brings about, ignores or seduces the symbolic but

does not produce it, the subject of abjection is eminently productive of culture. Its symptom is the rejection and reconstruction of languages” (45). Kristeva suggests that language is society’s attempt to demystify and thus defuse the power of the abject. The abject encourages the creation of language to incorporate the abject into the symbols of language.

An example of King’s use of cultural fear is found in Misery where the love of fans is presented in an extreme form through Annie Wilkes’s devotion/obsession with Paul Sheldon. Annie appreciates Paul’s ability to create characters and stories, yet she threatens to consume him with her love when she imprisons him and forces him to write under the constant threats of torture and death. King’s choice of a female fan confirms the persistence of cultural anxieties about the feminine and even the female body itself. Annie is depicted as inhuman; her lack of overtly feminine characteristics and her position of dominance over Paul position her as an “abyss” (Misery 1). When Paul looks at Annie, he believes that she is a physical manifestation of non-existence. Like the abject, Annie is at once both there and not-there.

King’s texts express anxiety toward the female body, the grotesque body in particular. Mary Russo provides insight into gender as it is associated with the body. While the ideal male body is seen as closed, static, and independent from the external world, the female body is thought to be the opposite. The female body is associated with the grotesque, which is leaky, open, and in flux with the external world. In King’s work, the grotesque body is seen as dysfunctional and undesirable, while the classic male body is desirable. King’s female characters, such as Roberta Anderson, are associated with the grotesque female body, and as such are seen as a threat to the classical body. When exposed to grotesque female bodies, King’s male characters are under threat of becoming grotesque bodies themselves. Because of the imminent threat they

pose, female characters must be kept at a distance from male author characters.

King and the (Il)legitimacy of Female Authorship

French feminists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray's examinations of authority and the female body also relate to King's work. While King's novels seem to suggest that writing is a naturally male activity, Cixous and Irigaray argue that writing is only viewed as such because language is male-dominated, or phallogentric. French feminists explore the aspects of language that isolate, undermine, and marginalize women both as writers and as individuals. They also comment on how language has been used to "write" the female body as an opposition, or "other" to the normalized male body. Within literature, genres are associated with genders and classified hierarchically where epic poetry is viewed as a respectable masculine genre and gothic romance is seen as an illegitimate feminine genre. In their respective works, both Cixous and Irigaray identify a need for women to rewrite patriarchal language through feminized writing, or *l'écriture féminine*. Although *l'écriture féminine* does not correspond to a specific gender, it refers to writing that delineates from patriarchal structures. The Tommyknockers presents an instance in which a female character begins to write in a form which deviates from established convention. Cixous and Irigaray also suggest that by writing outside of the established tradition, women can not only rewrite their relationship to language, but also to their own bodies. King's novel, The Tommyknockers, demonstrates the opposite of Cixous and Irigaray's hopeful outcomes. Bobbi Anderson, the novel's main character, eventually uses language and writing unconventionally when she forgoes the use of traditional writing implements in favour of a thought-recording typewriter. She eventually rejects written and oral language entirely and communicates solely through transmission of telepathic images. However, her evolution beyond

patriarchal language is revealed to be the influence of extraterrestrials.

King's work leaves room for the analysis of female characters as uncredited muses, dangerous monsters, and incomprehensible "writers." While in the texts male characters function as legitimate authors, female characters generally do not. As muses, female characters threaten the male authors' positions as authorities. Many of King's works also deploy representations of an internal male muse, which discourages the possibility of an external female muse. This internal muse serves to emphasize the position of the male author as a classical, closed body and the sole source of authority.

King Selections

The first chapter of this thesis identifies occurrences of uncredited female muses. In both Bag of Bones and On Writing, male authors neglect to acknowledge that specific women directly influence their creative processes. Instead, male authors do not acknowledge internal figurative male muses. Both texts emphasize this internal male muse figure, which allows the male authors to assert authorial independence from the women in their lives. When the women are given credit, it is most often for their domestic abilities rather than creativity. In addition to ignoring the women's influence on male authors, the texts also devalue the women's creative efforts. Feminized modes of production such as handicrafts and scrapbooking are depicted as trivial, while writing, which is depicted as a male pursuit, is portrayed as serious and worthwhile.

While the first chapter focuses on uncredited female muse figures, the second chapter considers the position of the muse when she no longer passively inspires the male author. In Misery, Annie Wilkes functions as a distorted version of the muse. Although she is very influential in Paul Sheldon's writing, she influences him by threatening his very life. Despite the

torture she inflicts, Annie causes Paul to start and complete what he comes to recognize as his best work. In Annie's absence, Paul finds that he struggles to write, as he has come to depend on Annie as his muse.

Lastly, the third chapter examines a rare case in King's work: a female author character. The Tommyknockers revolves around Bobbi Anderson's excavation of a buried alien spaceship, which affects the entire town. Because to this point King's texts associate authority with masculinity, the appearance of a female author might seem to restore balance. However, the novel overturns Bobbi's status as an author when it reveals that the buried ship has actually been responsible for all of her published novels. In addition to revoking her authorial status, the novel also presents Bobbi as a monster. When she is physically affected by the spaceship, she discards patriarchal language, both oral and written, in favour of an alternative: telepathic imagery. Instead of communicating using established language, Bobbi transmits information communally. Instead of considering the possibilities this non-linear mode of communication offers, the novel depicts it as deviant and dangerous. Ultimately, the novel suggests that Bobbi must be destroyed, not only because she has attempted to position herself as an author, but also because she is no longer clearly definable in patriarchal terms.

Chapter One: "The Boys in the Basement," or Denying the Female Muse

This chapter focuses on muses in Stephen King's On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft and Bag of Bones. These texts each feature two different muses: the unacknowledged literal female muse and the explicitly emphasized figurative male muse(s). In the novel, Bag of Bones, the protagonist's wife is key to his writing process. In King's memoir, his own wife, Tabitha, also plays a significant role in his writing. Although these women are obviously influential to the male authors, the women's contributions, both direct and indirect, are downplayed while the men's work is made the primary focus of both texts. Both novel and memoir attempt to define the figure of the muse as masculine and internal to the writer. Additionally, both texts inscribe creativity on the male body in an attempt to position the author as a complete, coherent body capable of creating independently from outside influence. In these two texts, male authors are made to seem autonomous, though they rely on specific female characters to aid them in writing.

In 2000, King published On Writing as a writing manual. The book consists of two sections that focus on writing practice and two sections that focus on King's personal life as he relates it to writing. King's perspective both on writing in general and on his own writing practice are useful as they offer his explicit opinions about authority and authorship. The novel Bag of Bones was published two years earlier, but shares many of the same images and metaphors used in On Writing. Despite the two-year gap between their publications, King wrote the two texts concurrently. On Writing's completion and publication were delayed when King was struck and nearly killed by a van. King's extensive use of images of the muse and explorations of the writing process link the two books.

King's choice of muse figures reflects some of the same anxieties proposed by Harold

Bloom. As discussed in my introduction, Bloom's study of authorship, Anxiety of Influence, examines the relationship between male poets and female muses. In relation to my study of King's work, I am most interested in Bloom's representation of the muse because he attempts to theorize the muse figure as well as the relationship between writer and muse. Bloom suggests that while the figure of the muse has customarily been viewed as beneficial to the author because the muse provides ideas and inspiration, this figure also threatens to overshadow the author: "the longer he [the author] dwells with her [the muse], the smaller he becomes, as though he proved man only by exhaustion" (61). The traditional relationship between a male author and a female muse models a heterosexual relationship. In Bag of Bones and On Writing, the female muse figures are married to the male authors they influence, which reflects the traditional heterosexual model. Bloom's study narrowly restricts the roles of muse and author as female and male, respectively, which in turn ignores the possibility of either a male muse or a female author. In The Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine the latter point at length. Gilbert and Gubar investigate the limited model of male author-female muse to determine how female authors have managed to situate themselves in the male-dominated field of writing. Gilbert and Gubar propose that there is a need for a sisterly relationship to precursors rather than a heterosexual relationship to the muse is most necessary for women to write. Unlike the conventional representations of muses as female, King's texts present a model of a male muse.

In his understanding of the relationship between male authors and female muses, Bloom proposes that the male author experiences anxiety toward the muse. Bloom suggests that the muse functions for the male author in the following manner:

Poetic anxiety implores the Muse for aid in divination, which means to foretell and put

off as long as possible the poet's own death, as poet (and perhaps secondarily) as man.

The poet of any guilt culture whatsoever cannot initiate himself into a fresh chaos; he is compelled to accept a lack of priority in creation, as the first of many little deaths that prophesy a final and total extinction. (61)

According to Bloom, the male author fears that he is not entirely responsible for his own work if he is guided by the muse and that the muse is not even entirely his own. The muse is a figure who may have served as inspiration for many male authors before him, so it is possible that she has already shared all that she has with his predecessors. As a result, the male author fears the muse and the possibility that she represents his inability to overcome his literary forefathers. The male author relies on the muse to help him write because writing symbolizes the deferral of his literary, and literal, death.

In On Writing, King attempts to differentiate his own concept of the muse from the traditional version. He writes that, "there is a muse, but he's not going to come fluttering down into your writing room and scatter creative fairy-dust all over your typewriter or computer station" (King On Writing 138-9, emphasis added). King writes against both the classical image of the female muse guiding the male writer and the standard associations of the muse with magic. King mocks general perceptions of the muse when he states the muse does not use "fairy-dust." King's defense against this image shows his interest in depicting the muse as a very masculine figure.

Bag of Bones also features this tension in the intimate relationship between the main character and his male muses. King acknowledges the classic image of the muse in a footnote: "traditionally, the muses were women, but mine's a guy; I'm afraid we'll just have to live with

that” (138). His “because-I-said-so” response shuts out the possibility that the women in his life may have an influence in his writing or that his wife has made his writing possible. The decision only to acknowledge the traditional muse in a footnote reflects King’s deliberate avoidance of female muse figures. Given that King is creating a writing manual, it may be justifiable for him to omit the logic behind his vision of the muse, but it is of interest that he chooses to acknowledge the traditional muse figure if only to dismiss it. By limiting discussion of the traditional muse to one sentence at the very bottom of the page, King attempts to leave no room for discussion of the relationship between gender, writing, and muses. Instead, King expands his own image of the muse, which further separates this muse from the classical figure: “[the muse is] a hardheaded guy who’s not susceptible to a lot of creative flattering. [Writing] isn’t the Ouija board or the spirit world ... but just another job like laying pipe or driving long-haul trucks... I assure you that sooner or later he’ll [the muse] start showing up, chomping his cigar and making his magic” (153). This figure is rough and his work is physically demanding; in other words, he is a “man’s man.” Even within the same paragraph, though, King’s vision of the muse is contradictory. While writing is supposedly a very physical job like that of the labourer, the muse smokes cigars, which is a characteristic not commonly associated with either truck-drivers or construction workers. This muse embodies cliched characteristics of both the male labourer and the male professional. King’s muse emphasizes stereotypical images of masculinity as King attempts to link all aspects of the creative process to a male center.

In both texts, male authors’ successes are intrinsically linked to female characters though King avoids any explicit mention of female muses. Early in On Writing, King describes how he sees his wife’s role in his own writing process. As with his footnote on the traditional muse, King

attempts to control the interpretation of Tabitha's role by acknowledging her and situating her away from the figure of the muse. He describes her as "ideal reader," in opposition to his fans, whom he dubs "constant readers": "every novelist has a single ideal reader; for me that first reader is my wife, Tabitha" (216). For King, "ideal reader" is the implied audience for all texts, or so he claims. Even though "constant readers" are faithful to King and read all of his works, only "ideal reader" provides him with an immediate, "honest" response to his work. This "ideal reader" is the critic King claims to be most interested in impressing. Part of King's writing process relies on his anticipation of Tabitha's initial response to the latest work, and he claims to assess his work through his wife's reactions: "In the end I listen most closely to Tabby because she's the one I write for, the one I want to wow" (220). Her reactions to his work are important and his desire for her approval motivates him to write. While writing, King envisions the response his work will trigger: "the Ideal Reader in my mind (my mental version of Tabby is rarely as prickly as my real-life wife can be; in my daydreams she usually applauds and urges me onward with shining eyes)" (232). While he admits a dependence on Tabitha for her reaction to a text, he does not present her as a muse figure, though his imaginary version of her is certainly muse-like. He avoids suggesting that she gives him ideas or inspiration while he writes, though he claims to always have her imagined response in mind. He imagines her response will be that of complete awe, even though in reality she is sometimes critical. King presents Tabitha with only the finished product, while he keeps the work-in-progress at a safe distance from anything feminine – all the better for the male muse to visit. Actual writing takes place in a closed room where the author can be isolated: "[You] need the room, you need the door, and you need the determination to shut the door" (153). Even if the author keeps an ideal reader in mind, the

writing is done in the absence of any actual readers or female muses.

In On Writing, King also states that the ability to write is innate: “I don’t believe writers can be made, either by circumstances or by self-will (although I did believe those things once). The equipment comes with the original package” (4). This metaphor reflects an understanding that writing ability is linked with specific “equipment” as well as the idea that evolved writers recognize this basic requirement. Given King’s choice of masculine muse, it is fair to suggest that the required equipment actually is male genitalia or “the original package.” In The Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar discuss the pattern of male reproductive organs being linked to writing:

Though many... writers use the metaphor of literary paternity in different ways and for different purposes, all seem overwhelmingly to agree that a literary text is not only speech quite literally embodied, but also power mysteriously made manifest, made flesh. In patriarchal Western culture, therefore, the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen’s power, like his penis’ power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim. (6)

Here, Gilbert and Gubar discuss the common association of pen and penis, while King’s metaphor seems more likely to link the muse and writing ability to the testicles. Colloquially, testicles are often referred to as “the boys” and King just happens to rely on “the boys” as a source of creative output. In his work, King develops the metaphor of the male muses, whom he names “the boys in the basement,” or simply “the boys.” Though this metaphor is most prominent in Bag of Bones and On Writing, it occurs to a lesser extent elsewhere in several of

King's novels, including Misery. Women, of course, are not born with the "equipment" King's metaphor suggests. If the muse is masculine and writing ability is innate, there is little space in the creative process left for women. Female characters are given the role of supporter for the male author, and they are limited to that role.

Despite King's admonitions that writing ability is an innate [masculine] characteristic, he does admit that Tabitha has been beneficial to his writing career. As with his decision to label her "ideal reader," this is another opportunity for King to downplay Tabitha's role when he makes her contributions seem specific and limited. He attempts to control the credit attributed to Tabitha by mentioning her himself. King admits that at times, she has helped him by showing confidence in both his work and his ability, while she has also provided him with physical space and time to write. He also credits his own mother for nurturing his early interests in writing. King discovered, at the age of six, that he found immense pleasure in his mother's response to his work: "I remember her slightly amazed smile ... I had never seen that look on her face before—not on my account, anyway—and I absolutely loved it" (On Writing 15). The next works King showed to his mother prompted her to tell him that they were "good enough to be in a book ..."; subsequently, she paid him for several copies, which she then circulated amongst their extended family. Her confidence and willingness to view him as an author, especially at such a young age, inspired and perhaps continues to inspire King.

King expresses similar nostalgia when he admits that his wife is responsible for "saving" the unfinished rough draft of Carrie, his first published novel. Though King thought the novel was trash, he reconsidered continuing to work on it when Tabitha told him that "she wanted [him] to go on with it" because he had "something here" (68). Her belief in the work and offer to help

him where she could were enough for him to finish the novel that launched his career. As he struggled to work a full-time job and write, Tabitha continued to support his writing efforts: “My wife made a crucial difference during those two years I spent teaching ... If she had suggested that the time I spent on writing stories on the front porch of our rented house ... or in the laundry room of our rented trailer ... was wasted time, I think a lot of the heart would have gone out of me. Tabby never voiced a single doubt ...” (64-5). Despite the personal sacrifices she had to make, Tabitha continued to encourage King to keep writing. She made sure that he had space to write in their tiny home, even if it was only a student-sized desk in the laundry room: “I wrote my first two published novels, Carrie and 'Salem's Lot, in the laundry room of a doublewide trailer, pounding away on my wife's portable Olivetti typewriter and balancing a child's desk on my thighs” (151). At this time, it was King instead of Tabitha using her typewriter, even though he admits she too was a strong writer: “Tabby tried her hand at confession stories ... she would have broken through if given an extra hour or two in every day” (63). King offers the possibility that Tabitha may have had the potential to be a successful writer herself had she been given opportunities, but in doing so he actually downplays her abilities. He not only associates her with a “lesser” genre, the confessional story, but also implies that she was less committed to writing because she did not make time for it. Although she has had several novels published since 1981, her success is still overshadowed by King's just as in On Writing, her creative influence is overshadowed by her domestic abilities and her role as King's supporter.

King claims that his initial attraction to Tabitha was based on her writing ability as they took a creative writing course together in college. He describes her work as realistic and grounded, and even includes his favourite of her early short poems. To assure that readers realize

Tabitha had a unique style, King recalls the work of another (female) classmate which described the relationship between the moon and her own menstrual cycle. King's sarcastic tone in this example presents the women in King's class as flaky and poor writers, as well. King seems to find it necessary to set his wife's writing apart as distinct from the other women in the class. King's novels suggest that writing is a male act, but he explicitly states that his wife is a good writer. Tabitha is set apart as an exemplary female who is capable of writing, and doing it well, though she is not representative of the female norm.

Tabitha provided encouragement once again for King following the accident that nearly killed him. She suggested that King return to writing, and when he agreed to try, she built him a workstation. She equipped this workspace with his computer, printer, rough notes, and reference materials. Once she settled him into the workstation, she made sure he had a fan and a cold drink of Pepsi. King's discussion of this scene echoes Misery. Like Paul Sheldon, King is provided with a makeshift workstation when his body is nearly crippled. Both men are able to avoid their pain when they immerse themselves entirely in writing: "Tabby spent a couple of hours putting things together...She had made me a wonderful little nest" (272). In On Writing, King praises his wife for her efforts to help him resume writing, but his language is entrenched in domesticity which positions her as a nurturer and not as muse or author. King focuses on Tabitha's ability to create a quaint "nest" for him, but really at this point she makes it possible for him to write. Unlike Paul Sheldon, a woman does not hold King prisoner, though Tabitha does act as a nurse (a good nurse, unlike corrupt Annie Wilkes) to both his body and his mind: "The former Tabitha Spruce of Oldtown, Maine knows when I'm working too hard, but she also knows that sometimes it's the work that bails me out. She got me positioned at the table, kissed me on the

temple, and then left me there to find out if I had anything left to say” (273). In this passage, Tabitha closely resembles a female muse as she touches the author and then leaves him on his own to create in the space she created for him.

In addition to encouraging King to write, Tabitha actually helps him from time to time. For example, after coaxing King to continue writing Carrie, Tabitha filled him in on details about girls’ locker rooms and her own experiences as a teenage girl. Another instance of Tabitha’s direct involvement in King’s writing is when she read his draft of Bag of Bones. King claims that Tabitha insisted that he reduce the pages of back-story. So although King’s novels suggest that the male author is a complete entity and that writing is entirely the product of the male author and “the boys in the basement,” he contradicts this idea when he admits Tabitha’s involvement in his writing process. Despite King’s claim that his muse is male, his work implies that Tabitha is more aptly suited to the title.

King’s novel, Bag of Bones, scrutinizes muse figures and authority. As in On Writing, descriptions and images of “the boys in the basement” appear throughout the novel. These images work to downplay Johanna Noonan’s involvement in her husband’s writing career. The novel is written from popular novelist Mike Noonan’s point of view and begins with him grieving over the recent and unexpected loss of his wife, Johanna. Following Johanna’s death, Mike is plagued by nightmares and is unable to write; any writing attempts he makes lead to violent spasms and vomiting. Four years after Johanna’s death Mike returns to their summer home, Sara Laughs. It takes him four years to return to the lake because Johanna had been the one who declared that it was time to leave for the lake or the TR, as the locals call it.

Sara Laughs, the lake-house, is named after Sara Tidwell, a black singer whose band

settled on the TR at the turn-of-the-century. When Mike returns to Sara Laughs, the ghost of his late wife and another ghost, whom he later identifies as Sara Tidwell, haunt him. Mike also meets Mattie Devore, a young widow whose wealthy father-in-law, Max Devore, is trying to take custody of her three-year-old daughter, Kyra. Mike feels compelled to stand up for the young woman and hires a lawyer on her behalf. He then begins writing again without any difficulty.

In the meantime, Mike has vivid dreams in which he returns to the TR's past. In one "dream," Mike finds out that Tidwell was raped and murdered by a group of young men who were infuriated that the community had accepted a black woman as "one of their own." These same men drowned Tidwell's son, Kito, to protect their identities. In an effort to "protect their own," the town failed to investigate the disappearance of the mother and son, which infuriated Tidwell's ghost. Mike does not learn until closer to the end of the novel that Tidwell's ghost has been influencing the descendants of the murderers to name their children with names that sound like her son's (e.g. Carla, Kia, Kenny, Kyra). Since her and Kito's deaths, Tidwell has haunted the fathers until they drown their own children to avenge Kito. Max Devore descends from the last murderer to be punished, so he wants to drown Kyra to stop Tidwell from haunting him.

When Max Devore discovers that Mike is involved in the custody battle, he mysteriously commits suicide and arranges to have Mattie killed. When Mattie is fatally shot, Mike is left to care for Kyra. The same night Mattie dies, Mike falls into a trance and barely realizes that he plans to drown Kyra. Johanna's ghost intervenes and stops him long enough for him to read the message she has encoded in his latest manuscript. The message reveals the location of her research that proves that like Max Devore, Mike also descends from one of the men who raped and murdered Sara Tidwell, so he is also part of Tidwell's grudge. With Johanna's help, Mike

defeats Tidwell's ghost and effectively ends the haunting on the TR. At the novel's end, Mike retires from writing, and focuses his efforts on gaining custody of Kyra who represents the unborn child he lost when Johanna died.

Amidst the complex plot, the novel presents a lengthy examination of the writing process and the figure of the muse. As in On Writing, the image of a hyper-masculine muse is repeatedly presented in Bag of Bones. Both books suggest that writing is inherently present in the male body, or as King describes it in On Writing, the "equipment" comes with "the original package." Just as King suggests in On Writing, Mike Noonan also imagines his muse to be male. Despite claiming to have a male muse, Mike admits that his wife is essential to the final stage of his writing. For Mike, a novel is only completed once he has announced its completion to Johanna. He then has her ritualistically type the last line of the novel, which he dictates to her, before they proceed to drink champagne and she announces the novel's completion. Mike relies on Johanna to speak the ritual phrase, "well then, *that's* all right, isn't it" (King Bag of Bones 30). This phrase confirms for him that he is an author and that he has completed his work on this novel. Although Mike gives Johanna little credibility as a literary critic, her faith in him bolsters his confidence: "she didn't know anything about the glamorous world of publishing, but if she believed, I believed" (24). Of course, the "world of publishing" is hardly glamorous and King's use of sarcasm draws the reader's attention to this point, rather than the fact that Johanna is depicted as merely moral support for Mike. In the novel, King regulates Johanna's access to writing through her husband. Mike is the only medium through which Johanna is granted access to write, and she never receives an opportunity to write freely. Instead, she types his words as the last sentence for his novel; her function here is really more secretarial than editorial and

definitely not authorial. As a writer, Mike spends much of the novel contemplating writing. He periodically considers his position as a best-selling author, and constantly laments the dual loss of his wife and his writing ability. Once he returns to the TR and resumes writing, he assumes that his muses, “the boys,” have returned to him. Johanna’s ghost also leaves him messages on the fridge using magnetic alphabet letters– the learning tool of a child. Johanna is restricted to using preformed letters and a limited number of consonants and vowels to convey her message to Mike. While she was alive, Johanna conceded authority to Mike, and even in death her access to language is restricted.

When Mike considers leaving the Devores and his haunted cottage behind, one of the ghosts, who is later revealed to be Johanna, forcefully takes over his writing hand: “Something hot and pillowy seized my wrist. My hand shot forward like a piston and slammed down on the steno pad. I watched as it pawed clumsily to a blank page, then seized the pencil which lay nearby. I gripped it like a dagger and then something wrote with it, not guiding my hand but *raping* it” (540). As his hand writes, he experiences a feeling of violation and compares it to rape. Mike is terrified and repulsed when he feels that he is no longer in control of his own hand, which he sees as his instrument of creation, his sexuality. Part of Mike’s refusal to recognize Johanna, or later Mattie, as influential in his writing stems from an anxiety about authority; if the author receives inspiration from an external body, then he cannot claim to be the sole source of authority over the text.

Before the novel’s climax, Mike fails to recognize that all along, Johanna made it possible for him to write. He also does not realize that she was more than merely a competent writer:

She *could* write, of course; most English majors can ... Did she demonstrate any blazing degree of literary creativity? No ... After a few experiments with poetry as an undergrad she gave up that particular branch of the arts as a bad job. Given the quality of her poems as opposed to the quality of her silks, photographs, and knitted art, I thought that was probably wise. (181)

The creative outlets for which Mike best remembers Johanna are traditionally viewed as feminine pursuits. He dismisses her as a writer and suggests that while she was technically able to write, she did not possess the internal force of creativity, as he of course does. Mike rates her poetry as mediocre and instead praises her handiwork, which demonstrates his inability to recognize Johanna as being equally capable to himself. Although Mike and Johanna shared an office on the second floor of Sara Laughs, her space in the office was used infrequently. While Mike used his side of the office for writing, Johanna kept her quilts, needlework, and photographs in an office in the shed. Johanna's pastimes are typically feminized modes of production, which is a contrast to Mike's masculine position as an author. She does write some correspondence in the shared office, but the "serious" writing is Mike's alone. Mike acknowledges that Johanna has always been capable of writing, but he is skeptical of her ability to write something valuable. Johanna's pastimes are hobbies, unlike Mike's writing, which supports them financially. Whether deliberate or not, Johanna perpetuates Mike's view of himself as the only "real" writer when she tells him, "*You write for the both of us, Mike*, she had said once. *That's all yours; I'll just take a little taste of everything else*" (181). Johanna's attitude suggests that she was willing to step back from writing to allow Mike to act as a representative for them both. In doing so, she encouraged Mike to view himself as the voice of authority as he writes not only for himself, but also for his wife.

After Johanna's death, writing causes Mike to physically identify with a feminized position. During his four-year mourning period Mike is unable to write, and he is physically afflicted whenever he attempts to write until he returns to Sara Laughs. When he attempts to write at home, he assumes a role closely identifiable with the grotesque female body as opposed to the classical masculine. Mary Russo describes the grotesque body as "images ... which are abjected from the bodily canons of aesthetics. The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical and sleek ... The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing" (8). Mike's reactions to writing post-Johanna further cement his position as a feminized body: "I suddenly couldn't breathe. It was as if iron bands had been clamped around my chest... I lurched into the bathroom and threw up with such force that vomit splashed the mirror" (King Bag of Bones 61-2). Mike's reactions are in opposition to the closed, clean classical body and is instead associated with the feminine. Russo suggests that "the category of the female grotesque is crucial to identity formation for both men and women as a space of risk and abjection ... their [men] identities as such are produced through an association with the feminine as the body marked by difference" (13). Mike's identification with the open grotesque body positions him as a vulnerable feminine body. His inability to write is linked to this feminized position, which suggests that femininity and writer's block, or inability to write, are connected. Mike's insistence the muse figures are male suggests that his writer's block is a lack of masculinity and that he must return to an active masculine role to reclaim his position as author.

Although Johanna has obviously influenced Mike's writing process, and he relates his writer's block to her death, he fails to consider how intricately the two are related: "My writing

career and my marriage covered almost exactly the same span” (King Bag of Bones 22). He sees that the two overlap, but by focusing on an internal, male muse, he ignores Johanna’s role in his work. In his grief, Mike misses both his wife and his ability to write. He curses Johanna, “Stupid, inconsiderate bitch to leave me alone like this, not even able to work” (92). When he expresses this anger, he is sexually frustrated and he associates his inability to be sexually satisfied with his inability to write. Johanna’s death leaves Mike creatively and sexually impotent, though he is not yet capable of recognizing the former. This impotence directly relates to Bloom’s suggestion that the muse drains the male author. Without his wife or writing, Mike feels utterly empty: “Looking at that Word Six icon was suddenly like looking at the pictures of Jo I kept in my wallet.

Studying those, I’d sometimes think that I would sell my immortal soul in order to have her back again ... and on that day in March, I thought I would sell my soul to be able to write a story again” (64). This thought is one of Mike’s earliest connections between his wife and his writing. Here he does not fully realize that she is a vital component in his creative process, but he does realize how completely desolate his life is since he has lost both her and his ability to write.

Mike’s position as a male source of authority is further complicated by the feminized genre in which he writes. As in many of King’s novels, Bag of Bones also expresses deprecating attitudes towards popular and literary writing. Mike’s self-deprecating attitude towards his work suggests that he has insecurities about his position as a writer of popular fiction. His description of himself as an author is both cynical and unflattering, and in some ways reflects the same insecurities King implies in On Writing:

I was what midlist fiction used to be in the forties: critically ignored, genre-oriented (in my case the genre was *Lovely Young Woman on Her Own Meets Fascinating Stranger*),

but well-compensated and with the kind of shabby acceptance accorded to state-sanctioned whorehouses in Nevada, the feeling seeming to be that some outlet for the baser instincts should be provided and someone had to do That Sort of Thing. (27)

Mike undercuts his abilities as a writer when he reduces his work to mere cookie-cutter plot and proceeds to affiliate his work with legalized prostitution. He also reveals his discomfort with his authorial status when he claims a reviewer practically calls him “V.C. Andrews with a prick” (25). Andrews is a best-selling serial writer who has also received little critical attention, perhaps justifiably (most of her books have actually been ghost-written). Significantly, Mike is unhappy to be classified with her. He suggests that the only difference between himself and V.C. Andrews, a woman, is anatomical. Considering the implications of this particular anatomy, “the boys” as the source of creativity, the difference between Mike and Andrews is substantial. His attitude also suggests that he is deeply offended at being compared to V.C. Andrews, a woman. A larger part of his unease may be attributed to his unspoken concern that Johanna was actually responsible for more than moral support and that she perhaps had a more active role in his process than he wanted to admit or accept.

Mike’s writer’s block impacts him just as significantly as his wife’s death, and he struggles to deal with both. This block lasts from shortly after Johanna’s death and continues until he eventually relocates to the TR and becomes involved with Mattie and Kyra. As Mike attempts to cope with and overcome his block, he contemplates his impressions of his muses. Before he returns to the TR, Mike takes a vacation and although at this point he has not yet overcome his writer’s block, he feels his mind returning to the thought-patterns produced while writing:

It's like some guys with a big truck have pulled into your driveway and are moving things into your basement. I can't explain it any better than that. You can't see what these things are because they're all wrapped up in padded quilts, but you don't need to see them. It's furniture, everything you need to make your house a home, make it just right, just the way you wanted it.

When the guys have hopped back into their truck and driven away, you go down to the basement and walk around... touching a padded curve here, a padded angle there. Is this one a sofa? Is that one a dresser? It doesn't matter. Everything is here, the movers didn't forget a thing, and although you'll have to get it all upstairs yourself (straining your poor old back in the process, more often than not), that's okay. The important thing is that the delivery was complete. (82-3)

The muse or, in this case, muses are burly men who are overtly coded masculine. They move ideas like furniture into the writer's mind. These ideas are moved into the basement where the writer can later retrieve them and bring them up into the inhabited part of the house or the mind for closer examination. The male muse's aid demands not only the mental yield, but also the physical efforts of the author. Although the ideas delivered are only vague shapes like covered furniture in the basement, these ideas are sound and ready for use. At considerable cost, the writer can haul them out whenever he is ready, after which he can work them out in writing.

In an effort to overcome his writer's block, Mike tries walking to distract himself. He believes that by clearing his mind and getting physical will give his muse time to work: "Work your body, rest your mind, let the boys in the basement do their jobs" (169). Because the source of creative output is deep within the male psyche, it has no relationship to a female muse and

thus writing can take place in the absence of any female characters. Mike relies on an internal source for inspiration to write, and believes that the writing process is driven by this internal force. Of course, the internal force is personified as a team of manly fellows who work best when allowed to fully take charge of the situation:

When trouble comes and steps have to be taken, I find it's generally better to just stand aside and let the boys in the basement do their work. That's blue-collar labor down there, non-union guys with lots of muscles and tattoos. Instinct is their specialty, and they refer problems upstairs for actual cognition only as a last resort. (245)

After he decides to help Mattie Devore, Mike thinks about "the boys" taking charge of not only his writing, but also his personal life. He is uncertain as to why he is compelled to help Mattie, but he listens for what he believes to be instinct, a product of "the boys," for the next move. Mike believes he should step back from the situation and rely on instinct, or "the boys." When it comes to writing, he also feels that he should allow the "boys in the basement" to lead the way. These figures within himself are stereotypically male because they are labourers. Unlike stereotypical writers, these men are unrefined and tough. Although Mike himself is not a blue-collar worker, he has the makings of one inside himself through the "boys." He not only has the internal masculine muse to guide him, but he is able to take this information and use it to write. He is able to refine the brute force and harness it in his writing, which allows him to perceive himself as an independent source of authority.

Just before he resumes writing, Mike believes his male muses are present. Although he views them as aggressive to the point of invading his home or his mind, he is pleased and unwary:

This time I thought–hoped–the delivery truck had brought the stuff I needed for the back forty: the years I might have to spend in the No Writing Zone. To the cellar door they had come, and they had knocked politely, and when after several months there was still no answer, they had finally fetched a battering ram. HEY BUDDY, HOPE THE NOISE DIDN'T SCARE YOU TOO BAD, SORRY ABOUT THE DOOR!

I didn't care about the door; I cared about the furniture. Any pieces broken or missing? I didn't think so. I thought all I had to do was get it upstairs, pull off the furniture pads, and put it where it belonged. (83)

Mike is grateful for his muses' persistence and is comforted by the thought that the muses will visit him whether he looks for them or not. Unlike the classical image of the delicate female muse, "the boys" will simply storm the writer's home if he fails to respond. This violent image associates muses with masculinity and masculinity with forceful entry. When he thinks about writing, Mike assumes a passive role which has traditionally been viewed as feminine. In this feminized position, Mike allows the active masculine figures to act upon him as they make their way into his house.

King's departure from the traditional female muse-male author dichotomy changes the nature of the relationship. His choice of a male muse creates a homosocial relationship between the male author and the muse as the two are joined intimately by the bond of writing. In Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains the term "homosocial" as

a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy

with 'homosexual,' and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual.'

In fact, it is applied to such activities as 'male bonding,' which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. (1)

In her study, Sedgwick expands René Girard's study of erotic triangles, two men concurrently in pursuit of one woman, to examine homoerotic aspects of relationships between men in these triangles. In Girard's discussion of erotic triangles, he suggests that the bond between two men competing for the affection of the same woman is actually stronger than the bond between the woman and either suitor: "the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle... [is] even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the two lovers and the beloved" (Sedgwick 21). The presence of the woman in the triangle justifies the bond between the men. Sedgwick expands the use of triangles to include more than just rivals and lovers. To further expand the use of triangles, we can examine how Mike and his male muse(s) function in a triangle where writing takes the place of the woman. Mike and the male muse(s) are intimately joined by their collaboration on Mike's work. In the relationship between Mike and the muses, Mike assumes a passive role where he allows the muses to take control in an active role which is commonly associated with masculinity.

Johanna's role as muse becomes clear when Mike returns to the TR and finds himself able to write without the negative consequences he had experienced since her death. Mike is overwhelmed by happiness to be writing again and fails to consider the source of his creativity: "it felt solid, like the real thing, and this morning it had come out as naturally as a breath" (328). However, nothing he had written that morning had been "real" or natural. The entire work is written by Jo's spirit, using his hand, rather than the boys in the basement. By the end of the

novel, Mike discovers that he is only able to write again because Johanna is guiding his hand:

I remember how deliriously happy I had been to discover that the block had been dissolved and I could write again. It had been dissolved all right, but not because I'd finally beaten it or found a way around it. *Jo* had dissolved it. *Jo* had beaten it, and my continued career as a writer of second-rate thrillers had been the least of her concerns when she did it. (Bag of Bones 638)

To communicate secretly with Mike, Johanna has guided his hand and given him a story; one that he initially thinks is a pretty good one. Mike realizes that *Jo* could write a novel, but she only does it to get him to understand that he and Max Devore are both blood relations of the men who murdered Sara and Kito Tidwell, so that he can protect Kyra Devore from being drowned.

Johanna's motives for writing, unlike her husband's, are clear and obviously very noble. Johanna writes to save a life, while Mike writes to save his career. Mike is humbled by her ability.

Ironically, when Johanna was alive, he discredited her writing abilities.

At the end of the novel when Johanna's ghost is long gone, Mike retires from writing: "the machine has stopped ... There's gas in the tank, the sparkplugs spark and the battery bats, but the wordyurdy stands there quiet in the middle of my head. I've put a tarp over it" (730). Mike claims that he is still capable of writing as he is still equipped, but "these days, [he] prefer[s] not to" (732). Perhaps he is still capable, but his emphasis on choosing not to write seems overstated. Indicating that he simply does not wish to write implies that perhaps he really cannot, which seems probably given that his muse, Johanna, is gone. Mike's writing career dies with his muse in an echo of Bloom's notion of authorial anxiety. Instead of writing, Mike devotes his energy to his custody battle for Kyra Devore which is really a continuation of the battle Johanna

began. In the end, Mike is picking up the story where Johanna left off as perhaps he has been doing all along.

In both On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft and Bag of Bones, King credits male muse figures for aiding both himself and fictional author Mike Noonan. In many ways, these male muses, or “the boys in the basement,” work to delegitimize the actual contributions by women in the male authors’ lives. While Tabitha King and Johanna Noonan are very obviously helpful and influential to Stephen King and Mike Noonan, respectively, “the boys in the basement” receive all the credit. Both books downplay the contributions of females as muses while privileging a figurative hyper-masculine muse.

Chapter Two: Writing (as) Misery: The Threat of the Female Muse

“Writing does not cause misery, it is born of misery” (King Misery 99)

In Misery, Stephen King presents a psychotic woman who is both a muse figure and a direct threat to a popular male author. Unlike the women presented in Chapter One who were unacknowledged passive muses, Annie Wilkes defies the role of passive assistant to the male author. When her favourite romance novelist, Paul Sheldon, is injured near her home, Annie imprisons him. Her obsession with Paul’s “Misery” series causes her to nearly murder him, but at the same time convinces her to prolong his life. When she realizes that Paul has killed the series’ heroine, Misery Chastain, Annie is devastated and forces him to “write” her back to life. Annie becomes intricately involved in Paul’s writing process as she encourages him to write through a variety of measures. Annie becomes Paul’s distorted muse when she makes his life so miserable that he needs to write.

The novel begins with Paul moving in and out of consciousness as he discovers that he is recovering from a serious car accident in Annie Wilkes’s home. His lower body is broken in several places and he relies on heavy doses of narcotic drugs to manage his pain. From the start, Annie emphasizes that she is Paul’s “number-one fan” (6), and that she is pleased to have rescued him. Early on, she also reminds Paul that he is in debt to her for rescuing him from his overturned vehicle: “You owe me your life, Paul. I hope you’ll remember that. I hope you’ll keep that in mind” (18). Almost immediately, Paul feels threatened by Annie even though she appears to be making efforts to tend to his needs. He quickly realizes that Annie is mentally unstable, and that her obsession with him, and particularly with his “Misery” novels, is preventing her from reporting his whereabouts to authorities. Annie forces Paul to resume writing “Misery” novels in

exchange for his life; like Sheherazade, Paul writes for survival. As his legs and pelvis mend, Paul manages to escape his room to explore Annie's home, though he remains unable to escape the house. He discovers that not only does Annie lack a telephone, but that she is becoming progressively more unstable. His exploration of her home leads him to find documentation of her career as a serial "mercy" killer. When Annie notices that Paul has been moving about, she "hobbles" him, or cuts off his foot with an axe (221). Annie's increasingly erratic and violent behaviour leads Paul to realize that she is never going to free him, so he plots her murder using the new "Misery" manuscript as a distraction. Though Paul's murder plan fails, Annie dies when she trips on the typewriter Paul tried to use to bludgeon her. Paul is rescued and his newest Misery novel is an instant bestseller, which pleases him since he finds that he has been unable to write after his rescue. In the last two pages of the novel, Paul dismisses a hallucination of Annie, and he almost immediately begins to write after this "encounter." Even after her death, Annie continues to function as a muse for Paul. Paul's image of Annie is similar to Johanna Noonan's influence as discussed in my first chapter.

Annie's relationship to Paul reflects some characteristics of the (male) author-female muse relationship and addresses some of the same concerns, such as the author's anxiety toward the female muse, as addressed in Chapter One. Annie, however, is more obviously threatening than the traditional muse figure, and in the novel, she embodies a rather twisted version of the muse. As discussed earlier, in Anxiety of Influence, Harold Bloom addresses the figure of the female muse in relation to the male author. He suggests that the author harbours conflicting feelings for the muse. Though she is thought to be beneficial, she also poses a direct threat to the male author. According to Bloom,

The poet... is compelled to accept a lack of priority in creation, which means he must also accept a failure in divination, as the first of many little deaths that prophesy a final and total extinction. The longer he dwells with [the muse], the smaller he becomes, as though he proved man only by exhaustion. (61)

Though this relationship might seem to confirm the author's position as a masculine authority, it in fact threatens to undermine his masculinity because he relies on his opposition to femininity for confirmation. Bloom's use of the term "little deaths" supports this notion of a threatening sexual relationship between author and muse as it echoes the translation of the French term "petit mort," which refers to sexual orgasm. The author's relationship to the muse extends the link between writing and sexuality to depict the muse as an insatiable sexual being who threatens to consume the male author entirely. The male author lives under the constant threat that the muse may harm or kill him, leaving him creatively impaired and impotent. In *Misery*, Annie Wilkes threatens Paul Sheldon in just this way.

Annie's threat to Paul stems not only from her role as a twisted muse figure, but also from what the novel depicts as her complete and utter lack of sexually appealing femininity. From the start, Paul perceives Annie as deranged and dysfunctional. He is suspicious of her motivation for nursing him privately in her home rather than bringing him to a hospital. As Paul regains consciousness, his first understanding of Annie is that she is completely unfeminine and not even human. Despite her obvious femaleness, she lacks what Paul perceives as femininity. According to Paul, "She was a big woman who, other than the large but unwelcoming swell of her bosom under the gray cardigan sweater she always wore, seemed to have no feminine curves at all— there was no defined roundness of hip or buttock or even calf below the endless

succession of wool skirts she wore in the house” (7). When Paul analyzes Annie’s appearance, he is disturbed to find that she is bulky and block-like. Even though Paul describes Annie as having breasts and wearing skirts, superficial details typically associated with women, he discounts these aspects as indicators of her femininity. Paul rejects Annie as a woman because she lacks the curves and softness he expects of a woman. He also criticizes her because he finds her body to be void of sensuality. Because Paul cannot easily identify with Annie sexually, he is unable to acknowledge her as either woman, or human. He recognizes that she may technically be a woman, but her lack of particular feminine characteristics causes Paul to question her humanity. He considers that, “Her body was big but not generous. There was a feeling about her of clots and roadblocks rather than welcoming orifices or even open spaces, areas of hiatus. Most of all, she gave him a disturbing sense of *solidity*, as if she might not have any blood vessels or even internal organs” (8). Paul criticizes Annie’s body because she does not appear to possess “welcoming orifices.” That is, she is unavailable for penetration, sexual or otherwise. She is entirely closed off from both him and the outside world. For Paul, because Annie does not clearly display stereotypical indicators of femininity, she is not a woman. She lacks what Paul believes to be femininity, and he sees her as somewhat masculine, but also inhuman (Schopp).

Before Paul actually sees Annie for the first time, he experiences her physically. Paul’s pain medication causes respiratory failure and Annie resuscitates him. He recalls the feeling of the unknown mouth on his:

[T]here was a mouth clamped over his, a mouth which was unmistakably a woman’s mouth in spite of its hard spitless lips, and the wind from this woman’s mouth blew into his own mouth and down his throat, puffing his lungs, and when the lips were pulled back

he smelled his warder for the first time, smelled her on the outrush of the breath she had forced into him the way a man might force himself into an unwilling woman, a dreadful stench of vanilla cookies and chocolate ice cream and chicken gravy and peanut-butter fudge. (4-5)

Though Paul does not specify what exactly makes the mouth “unmistakably a woman’s,” he is able to list the foods he can taste on her breath. His intense disgust at her touch reflects more than his opinion of her, but also implies a homophobic response. The text makes it quite clear that the lips touching Paul’s are not a man’s even though there would be no real way of determining this fact given the limited information provided. Paul is on the verge of death and requires resuscitation, but the narrator conveys Paul’s insistence that it is a woman saving his life. Paul also seems more concerned with the taste of Annie’s breath than he does with the fact that he is unable to draw in a breath of his own free will. He himself compares the resuscitation to a rape when, in fact, Annie saves his life. Annie, however, is not a savior figure. Even as she prevents Paul’s death, he believes that she is invading him intimately as she forces breath from her own lungs into his. Paul seems to be equally disgusted by the feel of her mouth and the smell of her breath. His shock at her firm, dry lips suggests that he expects a woman to have a soft, moist mouth, which Annie does not have. Annie’s breath is sweet, but also sickening as it is a combination of an excess of sweet foods mixed with animal fat. The very smell of her breath reflects her excessive consumption of a variety of foods, her pattern of binge eating. This would seem to suggest that Annie is an indiscriminate consumer whose foremost concern is the quantity that she can consume. As a consuming body, she poses a threat to Paul, whose written work is also a product available for consumption.

Prior to actually seeing Annie, Paul depicts her as a grotesque figure. Paul's intense repulsion and his sensation of being invaded dominate the majority of the opening resuscitation scene: "The lips clamped down again. The breath blew down his throat again. Blew down it like the dank suck of wind which follows a fast subway train, pulling sheets of newspaper and candy-wrappers after it, and the lips were withdrawn, and he thought *For Christ's sake don't let any of it out through your nose* but he couldn't help it and oh that *stink*, that *stink* that *fucking STINK*" (5). Paul focuses on Annie's breath and the intimate contact they share, but his fear is of her and not death. His emphasis on her ripe breath again depicts Annie as an individual who binge eats. As such, she becomes a figure of excess, and thus a representation of the grotesque (female) body. As a grotesque body, Annie poses a threat to Paul, who needs to identify himself with the classical closed body to position himself as a source of authority.

Paul's later disgust with Annie stems at least in part from his inability to make sense of her as a woman. She clearly fails to meet his expectations of women when he finds her to be void of any feminine characteristics. Not only does he find Annie to be sexually unattractive, he finds her downright repulsive. Paul's lack of interest in her as a woman causes him to interpret her as a monster long before she exhibits threatening behaviours toward him. In using "solidity" as a descriptor for Annie, Paul also imagines that she is impenetrable:

It seemed to him that if he made the first two fingers of his hand into a V and attempted to poke them up her nostrils, they might go less than an eighth of an inch before encountering a solid (if slightly yielding) obstruction; that even her gray cardigan and frumpy house skirts and faded outside-work jeans were part of that solid fibrous unchanneled body. (8)

In attempting to make sense of Annie, Paul considers how he might approach penetrating her body, and he speculates as to what reaction he expects. In this case, he no longer sees her as a grotesque figure because he imagines her to be closed off from him and the world, but she does not really appear to be a classical figure either. Instead, she, like Bobbi Anderson from The Tommyknockers, becomes a creature not of this world, and so he is relieved of the responsibility of treating her as a human being. He perceives her as solid and thus impenetrable, and this speculation reveals that Paul has determined Annie to be both sexually undesirable and actually sexually incompatible. Paul's convoluted logic suggests that because he cannot penetrate her, he cannot have sex with her, and therefore she cannot be a woman.

Before Paul identifies Annie as a grotesque body and then a solid piece of matter, the narrator identifies Annie with absence and lack. King quotes Friedrich Nietzsche on the title page of the first section of the book, which is called "Annie": "When you look into the abyss, the abyss also looks into you" (1). Presumably this epigraph reflects some aspect of the chapter, and since the chapter is titled "Annie," one can conclude that Annie is the aforementioned abyss. Annie is a figure defined by immeasurable lack, or a bottomless pit. While the grotesque body can be seen as an "other," defined by lack of the phallus, the abyss goes far beyond this. As an abyss, Annie lacks not only the phallus and authority, but also everything including existence itself. She becomes a walking paradox as her body is both closed and vacant. Once Paul has interpreted Annie as grotesque, and later solid, he considers that she may actually be defined in terms of dark, immeasurable space: "Her smiles suddenly collapsed into a narrow watchfulness he didn't like much—it was like discovering a deep *crevasse* almost obscured by summer flowers in the midst of a smiling, jocund meadow" (10). Here Annie is compared to an unexpected deep

fissure in the ground hidden by pleasant surroundings. The most disturbing part about the crevasse is not that it might be deep and wide enough to fall into, but that it is hidden and cannot easily be avoided. While Paul sees Annie as an enormous absence, or lack, he perceives her as a trap he could fall into without so much as a sign of his disappearance. To some degree she is just that when he falls into her home with no reliable way to trace his path.

At first glance, Annie Wilkes and Misery Chastain, the main character of Paul's "Misery" novels, appear to be opposites. Unlike Annie, Misery is demure, delicate, beautiful, and most importantly sexually available. While Misery epitomizes idealized feminine sexuality, Annie lacks these qualities entirely. At one point Paul finds a photograph "of a younger, startlingly pretty Annie Wilkes" (189). He is shocked to consider that he in fact does find Annie attractive in the twenty-year-old picture. This of course shakes his understanding of Annie as an impenetrable, non-female entity. Paul's use of Misery as a recurring character reflects his own expectation of women as sensual, though he harbours hostility toward her because he feels she is an inferior character even though she is adored by fans. Paul resents Misery Chastain and the fact that his fame is dependent on her. He owes his commercial success entirely to the Misery series, yet he derives immense pleasure from killing off the series' heroine:

Misery—thank God for *large* favors—was finally dead. Not a dry eye in the house when *that* had happened, including Paul's own—only the dew falling from *his* ocularies had been the result of hysterical laughter. ... then he had gone capering about the room ... screaming *Free at last! free at last! Great God Almighty, I'm free at last! The silly bitch finally bought the farm!.* (14-15)

Paul is not just tired of writing about Misery, he actually hates the character and dislikes her fans

nearly as much because he views them as demanding idiots. Paul works out his fantasy of independence from female influence when he kills off Misery Chastain. Annie, however, puts Paul in a position where he is once again dependent on a woman: writing about Misery becomes the only thing that keeps Annie from killing him. The male author exhibits a desire to be free of his dependence on the female muse because he fears and resents her, but he remains dependent nonetheless.

Like most of King's novels, Misery is written from the position of a limited third-person narrator. The narrator is privy to Paul's thoughts and this perspective is supplemented by Paul's internal narration. King's use of this style encourages the reader to identify with Paul and to accept Paul as the voice of reason. Critic Michael Arnzen argues that "the narrative itself encourages the reader of the book to adopt the viewpoint of Sheldon" (244). The narrator offers little insight into Annie's activities outside of her interactions with Paul. The narrator reports entirely through the lens of Paul's character and thus all depictions of Annie reflect Paul's ideas about her. Paul's internal dialogue suggests that he is unable or unwilling to speak aloud and offers insight into his fragile mental state.

As Annie assumes a masculine role as provider and keeper, Paul finds himself in a feminized passive position. Before he fully regains consciousness he drifts in a dream-like state of semi-consciousness that is periodically interrupted when Annie forces his pain-killers into his mouth: "Next real memory: her fingers pushing something into his mouth at regular intervals, something like Contac capsules, only since there was no water they only sat in his mouth and when they melted there was an incredibly bitter taste that was a little like the taste of aspirin" (6). At his point Paul realizes that even though he finds Annie's fingers and the pills unpleasant, they

are his only opportunity for relief from the pain of his injuries. In resignation, he accepts both the fingers and the bitterness. Paul resents his dependency on Annie, but he is unwilling to resist. The bitterness of the pills represents not only their actual taste, but also the resentment Paul feels when he cannot gain independence from Annie's "care-giving."

Paul finds additional evidence of Annie's mental instability when he finds her "work." Annie weaves together her own story through the creation of a scrapbook. As Paul discovers when he reads her scrapbook, Annie is a serial killer who began her "legacy" of murder at an early age. Her first victims were her childhood neighbours, all of whom she killed in a building fire. She eventually becomes a nurse and moves on to kill elderly patients and later infants. As Paul moves through the scrapbook, he finds that he is able to empathize with Annie even though he does not share her rationale for killing: "If it was right to equate each obituary pasted in this book with a murder, then her score was more than thirty people by the end of 1981... all without a single murmur from the authorities. Of course most of the victims were old, the rest badly hurt" (195). She has collected newspaper articles that document her "work" and compiles them in a scrapbook. While the scrapbook demonstrates that she has the literal power of life or death over individuals, it also suggests her inability to write her own story. Her scrapbook is fashioned from the words of the journalists who write about her, yet she does not write about herself.

In "Writing (with) the Body: Stephen King's Misery," Andrew Schopp considers how the novel presents Annie's scrapbook to the reader: through Paul's mental narration. Schopp suggests that Paul's internal dialogue, which is corroborated by the limited third-person narrator, dictates the storyline in Annie's scrapbook to the reader:

The result of ... complicity between narrative voices is that the reader can easily accept

Paul's speculative image of Annie as monster from birth. We know for a fact that the events in the scrapbook happened, and we know that Annie finds them important for some reason. We can speculate, as Paul does, that she played a part in the various murders. But the evidence is still circumstantial, and any conclusion about her motives is even less substantiated. The complicit narrative strives to make the reader ignore this circumstantial aspect, especially since the external narrator *affirms* Paul's speculations. In essence, as Paul reads Annie's scrapbook, he effectively authors her, arranging the material to construct an image of Annie that the reading subject feels compelled to accept.

(36)

Because Annie's scrapbook is presented to the reader entirely through Paul, her story becomes his. Paul spends a significant portion of the novel narrating Annie's past, present, and future: "Paul 'writes' the parts of Annie's history she doesn't provide him. ... consequently, Paul writes a version of Annie even as he reads a version of Annie, to come up with a complete view of the woman who holds him captive" (Berkenkemp 205). Paul uses his imagination to fill in the gaps in Annie's story. In doing so, according to Schopp, Paul "writes" Annie. Schopp also notes that Annie, to some extent, is writing Paul's story when she includes in her scrapbook the article that reports his disappearance (57). This realization forces Paul to recognize how much control Annie actually has over him. Paul is shocked to discover that at this point Annie is actually writing his story at the same time she writes her own: "Paul ... realizes that his storyline, at least to some extent, is in Annie's hands" (Berkenkemp 208). Paul's reaction to this recognition is despair, and he feels as though this inclusion in Annie's book of death foreshadows his own impending fate at her hand. Schopp also discusses the implications of Paul's interpretation of "Memory Lane":

This reflective narrative process reveals a complex interplay of power systems: control of the body, control of pain, control of language, and most importantly control of language through control of the body and pain. As the narrative progresses, the boundaries between body and voice blur: for Annie, Paul's body becomes the instrument she must appropriate to gain some voice, some control over the symbolic; for Paul, his body becomes a 'feminized' text that he must rescue, and whose phallic power he must restore. Paul's body, then, functions as the site of contention over phallic power, specifically as this power is manifest in language. (30)

Part of Annie's obsession with Paul stems from the control she has over her favourite author. She is able to manipulate Paul and forces him to write her a Misery story of her very own while at the same time she is physically changing Paul. Although she depends on Paul to write the novels she loves, she is able to force him to write by re-writing his body. She amputates several of his body parts and also controls the drugs to which he is addicted; in doing both of these things, Annie assumes an authoritative position over Paul, his body, his voice, and his writing. According to Berkenkemp, Annie "'writes' [Paul's] survival, not only by controlling his medication and recovery, but also by forcing him to burn *Fast Cars*, and by shaping the narrative direction of *Misery's Return*" (208). In addition to forcing Paul to resume writing the "Misery" series, Annie destroys the sole copy of his newest manuscript, which he completed the same day he had his car accident. Annie knows that she is destroying the only copy of the manuscript and in doing so, she manipulates its un-writing. In this aspect, Annie controls Paul's authority when she deems *Fast Cars* inappropriate and forces him to burn it. For a portion of the novel, Annie takes on some characteristics of an author, though in the end she is destroyed by Paul and he returns in full to

his position as author. Annie's death implies that she, the deviant woman who appropriated language through the manipulation of a male author, needed to be destroyed. While in some capacity she functions as a muse for Paul, she oversteps her boundaries when she manipulates Paul.

Like so many of the female characters in King's novels, Annie evokes a sense of disgust. She is the perverse female who dares to position herself outside of the stereotypical roles of the passive muse. As she is an active participant, Paul does not know what to make of her and identifies her as a monster. Even before Annie becomes hostile towards Paul,

King initially establishes Annie as a monster, not for her violent acts, but for her deviation from a prescribed role for women, a deviation most threateningly embodied in her attempted appropriation of language.... King establishes that Annie is monstrous precisely because she has appropriated a role of power and control and thus deviates from a standard of 'femininity'. (Schopp 31)

That is, Annie is actually more monstrous because she controls Paul in an effort to control the language he produces; she is a twisted muse for assuming control. She shrugs off the role of reader as passive recipient of product and instead becomes the head of production as she violently coerces Paul to write for her; she adopts control over language and authority when she controls Paul. The scrapbook she produces also reflects an unsettling aspect of the muse and woman writer. Annie's labour of love, "Memory Lane," is a book of death. When Annie confronts Paul about his explorations outside of his room, she is pleased that he stopped to read her scrapbook: "I know you've read my book. I suppose that I sort of hoped you would read it, you know; otherwise, why would I have left it out?" (208). Her creative efforts reflect not only

her own mental illness, but also the fact that she is able to commit murder with complacency and even pride. When the muse writes, she writes horrific tales. Like the women writers examined by Gilbert and Gubar, Annie becomes a monster: “women who did not apologize for their literary efforts were defined as mad and monstrous” (63). Part of Annie’s monstrosity results more from her attempts to control language through controlling Paul. Throughout the novel Annie is difficult, if not impossible, to sympathize with because her extreme acts of violence suggest that she is dangerous, corrupt, and evil. Thus, Paul’s actions against her are completely justified and Annie “gets what she deserves.” Schopp suggests that the novel employs graphic violence to “continually reestablish Annie as monster, as locus of fear, and in order to remind us that she is the monster because she attempts to appropriate male access to the symbolic” (40). Annie’s efforts to control Paul as a writer are equated with her psychotic behaviours. While Annie is dependent on Paul for his novels, Paul becomes dependent on Annie to live. Paul despises Annie because she forces him to reconsider his own position as an author when she withholds his medication until he permits her to read *Fast Cars*: “That she would do that to him—that she *could*, when he had spent most of his adult life thinking the word *writer* was the most important definition of himself—made her seem utterly monstrous ... if she didn’t kill him, she might kill what was *in* him” (29). Paul recognizes that Annie has coerced him into something he has never done: allow someone to read an unrevised manuscript. In doing so, she demonstrates her power over him. He fears that if she can manipulate him in this instance, he might actually be dependent on her for his writing ability, and she might be capable of usurping it. He also loathes himself for conceding authorial control to her. Annie inverts the relationship between reader and author and in doing so, she blurs the distinction between the two.

As a stand-in for the reading public, or “constant readers,” Annie is terrifying. Her ability to force Paul to write with the threat of mutilation realigns the roles of reader and author, specifically female reader and male author. Annie avoids acting as a passive recipient of Paul’s work when she actively criticizes his new manuscript and also forces him to continue producing it. Annie forces Paul to directly satisfy her demands as a reader, and in this she acts as the authority. As a reader, Annie is very much reminiscent of Bloom’s vision of the muse: ravenous and insatiable. Schopp claims that Annie “is clearly addicted to Paul’s output” (39), and he is right. While Bloom’s author fears that the muse may leave him, Paul fears that Annie may never leave him. Eventually Annie does leave Paul, though, and her absence renders him impotent as an author. Only later, through indirect contact with her does he manage to regain some writing ability. As a stand-in for “constant reader,” Annie reflects authorial fears of the reading audience. The relationship between Annie as fan and Paul as author reflects King’s position as a popular author with a predominantly female reading demographic. With this in mind, King’s creation of Annie as “the number one fan,” is disturbing as it implies that “the ideal audience is passive and accepting, totally within the thrall of the writer’s creative/sexual power just as the ideal woman is submissive and silent in the traditional paradigm for heterosexuality” unlike Annie, who is “an overbearing and demanding fan/woman [who] has perverted and reconstructed the essentially heterosexual relationship between writer and reader” (Lant 175). Annie epitomizes the most extreme version of the “number-one fan,” and she is clearly a threat to Paul.

If Paul represents male-centered authority, he is responsible for withholding language, or in this case texts, from Annie. Although Annie’s physical and mental crippling of Paul is unarguably horrific, his position as an individual with access to language is also quite destructive.

As a woman attempting to appropriate language for herself, Annie takes Paul, the male center of authority, apart one piece at a time. The novel would seem to suggest that women lack suitable means with which to appropriate language and that any attempts to do so would inevitably lead to acts of violence characteristic of an insane individual. That is, the woman who attempts to appropriate language is a butcher.

Ultimately Paul re-asserts himself through the pseudo-rape scene, and Annie dies. The novel also makes it clear throughout that Annie is really the deviant character for failing to remain in the position of passive reader. The novel avoids sympathizing with Annie, and in the end, Paul's actions against her appear to be justified. Because Annie is such an extreme threat to Paul, the novel seems to suggest that she needs to die. The novel then also implies that the threat of the muse's power to the male author justifies her destruction.

As Paul's self-proclaimed "number-one fan" and a representation of his general audience, Annie is obsessed with the "Misery" series and this is what saves, threatens, and prolongs the author's life. Lant examines Misery and the similarities to King's own life: the widespread commercial success, the largely female reading audience, and scorn from the academic community. The result of this study is that the novel reflects the strain fans appear to impose on writers, especially popular writers such as King. The novel empathizes with Paul's need to "evolve" as an author, and leave behind his popular series:

King inverts [Barthes' "Death of the Author"], as well, killing off the reader in order to maintain the author's cultural status by personalizing him as the wounded yet redemptive master over not simply his 'number one fan,' but a feminized conception of textuality.

(Arnzen 243)

In Paul's case, for the author to survive, the overbearing reader, Annie, must die. Misery's Return, the manuscript Paul produces during his time with Annie, differs from the preceding novels in the series and reflects what Paul sees as development in his writing. He hesitates to admit that Annie is, at least in part, responsible for his authorial "evolution." Annie's death also means that Paul does not have to admit how much her "encouragement" changed him as a writer. Despite his position as a popular writer, Paul criticizes both the type of work he produces, and the fans who read it. According to Michael Arnzen, "Annie's status as phallic mother and excessive 'unruly' woman as a conceit stemming from a long patriarchal tradition of aesthetics, one which obsessively 'feminizes' popular art in order to raise the cultural status of the 'masculine' master artist" (247). Because he has always resented the genre for which he is known, Paul feels that he has been trapped by popular art, though he has now graduated and moved on to more "serious" literary endeavors.

Although Annie and Paul are never involved in a sexual relationship, their relationship becomes intimate and even pseudo-romantic at times. If Paul's writing is the product of the phallus, then Annie's desire for it suggests that they are intimately involved. When she first introduces herself to him, Annie is shy to admit her romantic feelings toward him. She accidentally reveals her feelings when she is asking to read his unpublished manuscript of *Fast Cars*: "I would never presume to do such a thing without your permission,' she said earnestly. 'I respect you too much. In fact, Paul, I love you.' She crimsoned suddenly and alarmingly ... she went vague again, looking toward the window. 'Your *mind*,' she said. 'Your *creativity*. That is all I meant" (King Misery 19). At this point, Paul does not realize the extent of her madness, but he falls into the role of her companion as the novel progresses: "At five o'clock she would serve

him a light supper, and at seven she would roll in the black-and white television and they would watch *M*A*S*H* and *WKRP in Cincinnati*” (164). When Paul attempts to draw out the days until the novel is complete, he often resorts to flattery to appease Annie because he no longer allows her to read each day’s output. The intimacy of their relationship begins to more closely reflect Bloom’s model of the relationship between author and muse.

Despite Paul’s obvious resentment of her, Annie Wilkes functions as a muse for him and as such she provides him with motivation to write in a number of ways. When he has trouble moving past a block, Annie helps by providing him with a suggestion that turns out to be both thoughtful and intelligent: “with a deep and almost painful timidity, she offered the only editorial suggestion she ever made to him: ‘Maybe it was a bee’” (149). As soon as Annie makes the suggestion, she has “a blush creeping up her neck and over her cheeks,” and as she explains the logic behind her suggestion, she becomes “so red she was almost purple” (150). Despite her earlier domineering attitude toward Paul’s writing, Annie becomes shy and reluctant when she makes this suggestion. At this moment, she appears to be vulnerable. Here Annie displays what Hélène Cixous describes as characteristic of women when they attempt to speak. Cixous claims that when a woman speaks, as Annie does in this case, “all of her passes into her voice ... She physically materializes what she’s thinking; she signifies it with her body” (881). When Annie tries to speak to Paul, she becomes flustered and nervous and barely manages to utter the words. Cixous also suggests this sense of being overwhelmed is common for women attempting to speak. In response, Paul thinks he intends to disregard her suggestion: “Yet he could not tell Annie that, and not just because it might rile her up. He could not tell her because it would hurt her badly, and in spite of all the pain she had afforded him, he found he could not hurt her in that way”

(150). Although this exchange reveals a human side of Annie, it is overshadowed by Paul's saint-like willingness to empathize with her. Annie's direct role as Paul's muse in this exchange is also minimized when the focus shifts back to his character. The fact that she is at times insecure and shy in Paul's presence gets lost behind his benevolent appearance even though he spends the majority of the novel focused on her inhumanity. Even though Paul questions the believability of her suggestion, he eventually uses it to form the basis for the plot of the new novel, though he does not acknowledge her contribution.

Annie also motivates Paul with the threat of physical violence, and this aspect of her character is unlike the traditional romantic image of the female muse as a helper figure. Annie acts as muse and consumer at the same time, but all the same becomes an integral part of Paul's writing process. He is reluctant to admit this while he writes the new novel, but he cannot help but recognize the irony of his situation; that is, he is in the process of writing what he believes may be one of his greatest novels, but he only begins to write it to save his own life: "The irony was that the woman had coerced him into writing about what was easily the best of the Misery novels" (203). Her obsession with the series forces Paul to stretch his imaginative capabilities as he must write to stay alive. As he works on the novel, even Annie has to admit that the new novel is better than any of the previous when she states that, "It's fair. And it's *good*. Exciting. But it's gruesome, too! It's not like *any* of the other *Misery* books" (148). Though Paul is afraid to comment on this aloud, he thinks, "*The man who wrote these pages was in a rather gruesome frame of mind, my dear*" (150). In a twisted way, his intense suffering through his relationship with the twisted muse changes his writing process. As muse, Annie makes Paul's life so unbearable, that escaping into the novel is his only respite. Because it becomes his escape, Paul

pours all of his energy into the novel and he creates a piece that is both intriguing and credible.

When he later considers this new manuscript, Paul praises its qualities:

Annie was right; the story was turning out to be a good deal more gruesome than the other *Misery* books—the first chapter had not been a fluke but a harbinger. But it was also more richly plotted than any *Misery* novel than the first, and the characters were more lively. The latter three *Misery* novels had been little more than straightforward adventure tales with a fair amount of piquantly described sex thrown in to please the ladies. This book, he began to understand, was a gothic novel, and thus was more dependent on plot than situation. (167)

He finds that in the most dangerous situation of his life, he is able to produce the most compelling piece of literature he has ever written. He is also able to recognize some of the flaws in his previous novels, while at the same time once again criticizing his target audience when he implies that his female fans are little more than sex fiends.

Annie helps Paul write Misery's Return by providing a suggestion for the plot. Besides contributing to the plot, Annie takes on the role of assistant by filling in the missing letters in the manuscript by hand when the typewriter she provides persistently loses letters. When the manuscript is nearly complete, Paul removes Annie from her clerical role and withholds the final chapters so that she can read them all at once. Really, Paul is withholding the novel's conclusion so that he can threaten to destroy it in front of Annie to show once and for all that he is the sole author, which he proves when he kills her. Schopp proposes that, "[T]he final scene can also be read as a reinscription of the appropriate order. By having Paul metaphorically rape Annie, King returns Paul's phallus and validates the phallus' power to victimize women. Paul has literally

written the body, written himself a new phallus and rescued himself from his ‘feminized’ position” (Schopp 40). The relationship between Paul and Annie during this period reflects the tradition of amanuensis. Although Paul is the recognized author of Misery’s Return, Annie contributes to the plot in addition to filling in the missing letters. Annie helps to fill in the literal and metaphorical gaps in the text. One of the reasons Annie needs to die is to remove her from the authorship of the text. If the amanuensis is dead, then the author is the authority.

Ironically, Paul comes to depend on Annie as muse and finds that once she is dead he is unable to write. Following her death and his rescue, hallucinations of attacks haunt Paul, and his own memories terrorize him on a day-to-day basis. He considers that “Annie Wilkes was in her grave. But, like Misery Chastain, she rested there uneasily. In his dreams and waking fantasies, he dug her up again and again” (336). Paul finds his mind returning to Annie frequently: “Annie rose up from behind the sofa like a white ghost, dressed in a nurse’s uniform and cap. The axe was in her hand and she was screaming” (334). In this fantasy, which represents the norm for his hallucinations, Annie decapitates Paul and he imagines his own death at her hands which reaffirms the perceived threat of the muse to the male author. He sees her as a threat to his writing ability and even his life. His initial reaction to seeing visions of Annie is to try to turn to run. In the last pages of the novel, Paul reacts against his own hallucination as he struggles to write:

He heard a noise from behind him and turned from the blank screen to see Annie coming out of the kitchen dressed in jeans and a red flannel logger’s shirt, the chainsaw in her hands. He closed his eyes, opened them, saw the same old nothing, and was suddenly angry. He turned back to the word processor and wrote fast, almost bludgeoning the keys.

(337)

Paul moves from being a passive victim of these images to an engaged party when he allows himself to experience anger. Immediately after he engages with the memory of his muse, Annie, he can write. Paul uses his anger from this encounter to start writing and finds that he is in fact capable of writing. He has had to make contact with and imaginatively dismiss his muse in order to write. He also has to write violently to “bludgeon” the muse out. Essentially, Paul discounts his realizations from throughout the novel that Annie was in many ways responsible for Misery’s return when he blinks her away and resumes writing.

Chapter Three: Woman as (Alien) Writer

This chapter focuses on the representation, or lack thereof, of female authorship in Stephen King's novel, The Tommyknockers. Like the previous two, this chapter examines how much of King's work downplays the validity and value of women's creative efforts. In their respective novels, both Johanna Noonan and Annie Wilkes's artistic abilities are largely ignored while the efforts of their male counterparts, Michael Noonan and Paul Sheldon, are associated with legitimacy and authority. In The Tommyknockers, King presents a female character who, for the first chapters of the novel, appears to be an author. However, the novel eventually reveals that she is not an author after all. In fact, she transforms into an alien and a monster. As with the rest of the texts examined in this thesis, The Tommyknockers ultimately reserves authority for male figures, while female authorship is dismissed, denied, or cast out entirely.

Roberta "Bobbi" Anderson, the main character of The Tommyknockers, is one of King's few female professional author characters. Bobbi's discovery of a buried spaceship in the woods behind her home is the basis for the novel's action. King describes the novel as "a forties-style science fiction tale in which the writer-heroine discovers an alien spacecraft buried in the ground. The crew is still on board, not dead but only hibernating. These alien creatures got into your head and just started ... well, tommyknocking around in there" (King On Writing 90).

"Tommyknocking around" consists of the Tommyknockers, who are telepathic aliens, transforming those who come within range into Tommyknockers themselves, while also inspiring acute bursts of intelligence in those transforming; unfortunately, this "intelligence" is relatively impractical and lacks applicability beyond building "gadgets" and various small machines. As Bobbi obsessively digs to uncover the ship, she unknowingly contaminates the air.

The contaminated air leaks into the nearby town of Haven and causes Haven's residents to begin to transform, or "become." Meanwhile, Bobbi's on-again-off-again lover, Jim Gardener, comes to stay with her because of his premonition that Bobbi is in danger, and also because he is suffering from a personal breakdown. When he arrives at her home, he realizes that she and the residents of Haven are in deep trouble, but he is too easily distracted by alcohol to take action. Unlike the rest of the town, Gardener is resistant to the ship's effects because of a steel plate in his head. Because her complete transformation takes time, a small part of Bobbi remains human until nearly the end of the novel. Her traces of humanness and fondness for Gardener protect him from the rest of those "becoming." By the end of the novel, the ship is unearthed with Gardener's assistance and as Bobbi prepares to kill him, he kills her instead. He then dies as he pilots the ship away from the Earth. Gardener makes up for his inaction throughout the novel when he takes action; in doing so, he becomes the hero, unlike Bobbi who is corrupted to the point that she becomes the villain.

King's reference to Bobbi as the "writer-heroine" in his memoir is unsettling for several reasons (90). King's choice to declare Bobbi the gender-specific term, heroine, instead of the more generalized term, hero, undermines her as a heroic figure as traditionally, heroines have not been revered to the same degree as the hero. Ellen Lew Sprechman considers the established connotations associated with the terms "hero" and "heroine":

[historically] the literary heroine has not carried the same weight as the hero. Her role has generally been a subsidiary one, consisting mainly of passively supportive activities within the confines of her home or village.... Although there have been exceptions to the traditional portrayal in every era, the appearance of strong, 'heroic' heroines has been so

rare that their impact has rarely been felt. (2)

As an author, Bobbi assumes a subordinate role as a poet in comparison to Gardener, who was her writing teacher. In addition to positioning her as Gard's understudy, the label heroine misrepresents Bobbi's role in the story. Although King names her the heroine, Bobbi becomes the villain when she allows herself to be corrupted by a supernatural force that threatens to destroy the world. The novel's ultimate hero who actually saves the world is Jim Gardener, Bobbi's former writing instructor and "pet drunk" (King The Tommyknockers 442). Gardener eventually takes action against Bobbi to save humankind, though he spends most of the novel in a drunken stupor. When he is fired from his poetry-reading caravan, he returns to Bobbi's home only to become slave to her digging expedition. Rather than attempting to stop the madness he sees, he chooses to ignore it and keep drinking while following Bobbi's sick desire. He finally redeems himself when he restores order by destroying Bobbi, the deviant woman writer.

Although active heroines have become more common in contemporary popular culture, King's application of the term holds connotations of passivity. The term links Bobbi to the deliberately flat character, Misery Chastain, King creates in Misery as fictional author Paul Sheldon's most-frequently used character. King refers to Chastain, "the foundling who had risen to marry a peer of the realm," as a heroine (King Misery 27). By using similar terminology to describe Bobbi Anderson and Misery Chastain, King associates the two. By associating Bobbi, a female writer, with Misery Chastain, a gothic-style heroine, King reduces Bobbi's effectiveness as a credible character. While King defines Chastain's life as entirely superficial, he implies that Bobbi's own activities as an author are quite possibly frivolous and trivial. It becomes difficult to take Bobbi seriously as an author when she is described with the same term as a character from

King's mock-romance excerpt.

Despite the implications of King's comments in On Writing, which suggest that writing is an innate male ability, he spends the first part of The Tommyknockers positioning Bobbi as an author. To do this, King highlights the traits she possesses that validate her position as a writer. Like some of King's other female characters, Bobbi is university-educated; however, unlike most of King's female characters she is neither a wife nor a mother and lives in practical isolation near the small town of Haven, Maine. Her reclusive lifestyle initially appears to be an advantage for her writing career as she can make writing one of her central focuses; however, the novel later reveals that the peculiarities of her location, particularly the buried spaceship in her woods, are what have made her authorship possible and which will eventually destroy her. Bobbi's seeming departure from traditional female roles appears to allow her to be a writer, as she is associated with the stereotypical persona of the male author. Her distance from traditional female roles allows for the possibility that she might be able to write in a King novel, at least at the outset. Because King's texts position only male characters as authors, Bobbi's initial distinction from femininity suggests that she may be "man enough" to write. Shortly after her initial contact with the ship, Bobbi becomes obsessed with it even as it begins to change her mind and body. Bobbi develops telepathy and also starts to morph into a translucent, tentacled alien. The changes to Bobbi's mind and body reveal that she is more of a scribe than an author, as it turns out that the ship has always been her source of creativity. Eventually, the novel reveals that all of Bobbi's novels have been inspired by the ship which means that she has never been an author in her own right. In The Tommyknockers, Bobbi, a woman, initially appears to be an author because she is so un-feminine.

In relation to writing especially, Bobbi assumes a masculine role as she possesses a number of masculine traits. Bobbi's name itself is one of the first ways her character is masculinized. Her full name is Roberta Anderson, but is referred to as "Bobbi" by both herself and others throughout the text. The novel's omniscient narrator refers to Bobbi as "Anderson" for the first four chapters of the novel, which sounds more like a reference to a soldier or a sports star than the novel's main character. The narrator depicts Bobbi as masculine when she is not addressed by her given name until thirty pages into the novel. In addition to her name, Bobbi has a number of stereotypically masculine characteristics such as her hermit-like self-imposed isolation from others and the genre in which she writes. As King develops her character, he emphasizes her non-feminine attributes. This suggests that there is a possibility for her to be a writer because she herself is distanced from femininity.

The concept of the author as a gendered term is examined at length by Gilbert and Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic. In their study of female authorship, Gilbert and Gubar examine the sense of internal division female authors experience when they write: "Inalterably female in a culture where creativity is defined purely in male terms, almost every woman writer must have experienced the kinds of gender-conflicts that Aphra Behn expressed when she spoke of 'my masculine part, the poet in me'" (66). This understanding of authorship reinforces the association between authority and masculinity. For Bobbi Anderson, masculinity is not limited to her creative self, but applies to her entire personality and lifestyle. King further develops Bobbi's masculine characteristics when she enters a bar and orders a "Cutty Sark...Double. Water Back" (King The Tommyknockers 54). The bartender, who has already referred to her as "purty lady," is taken aback and inquires if she always "drink[s] like a man" (54). Bobbi is mildly irritated by

the remark but makes no effort to contradict the bartender's suggestion that her choice would be expected from a man. Bobbi's day-to-day activities are also stereotypically masculine: "Anderson wandered restlessly around the house, made a trip with Peter to Augusta in the pick-up for supplies she didn't really need, drank beer, and listened to old Beach Boys tunes while she made repairs around the house" (29). Here Bobbi engages in the mundane pastime of "puttering around" while she contemplates digging up the ship. This passage works to further develop Bobbi as a masculine character. When she finally decides to go ahead and start digging, she is again compared to a man: "She had gone into some sort of daze and done digging a crew of four husky men could have been proud of... her, a woman who [weighed] one-twenty-five, maybe one-thirty, tops" (34). Bobbi describes even her own efforts in relation to men; she is only able to comprehend herself and her accomplishments using masculine terms. Bobbi's identification with masculinity allows her to appear as an author in the text until she eventually begins to transform into a feminized and eventually alien creature.

Early in the novel, the narrator reveals the progression of Bobbi's writing career. Her first publication was a small book of poetry facilitated by Jim Gardener, her professor and lover at university. She surprises him when she is more astute than her peers and is able to answer him, though he internally critiques her lack of eloquence. He sees raw potential in her that he feels needs to be cultivated, unlike the rest of his talentless apathetic undergrads. As a professional writer, Gard provides this guidance, while at the same time becoming her lover. She was unable to seek out her own publisher and was forced to rely on Gard, whose nickname reflects an aspect of his character before he becomes an alcoholic. As his name suggests, Gard has acted as a guardian in Bobbi's life. Unfortunately, he is a flawed protector and his addiction to alcohol

prevents him from actually helping her when she is most desperate. When he arrives on the scene to help Bobbi, he ends up occupying a passive (feminine) role while Bobbi is the active (masculine) figure. By the end of the novel the gender roles must be reversed to restore order. Gard redeems himself as an active figure and Bobbi, the deviant woman, writer is destroyed.

In the evening following her discovery of the ship, Bobbi reflects on her first publication, and reveals how she perceives herself as a poet. Thinking to herself, she declares that only one of her published poems was “pretty good” while “the rest of them were crap—the casual reader might have been fooled, because she was a talented writer...but the heart of her talent had been somewhere else” (24). When Bobbi attempted to write in a “literary” genre such as poetry, she perceived herself as a fraud. She only explored poetry because Gard offered her a place as a writer when he took her under his wing, despite what she saw as her mediocre abilities. Her subsequent, less literary writing earns her commercial success, but causes her academic acquaintances, who disapproved of her decision to abandon poetry, to shun her despite the autonomy popular fiction seems to afford her. Even though she is a successful author of westerns, Bobbi’s writing does not receive the same recognition as more “literary” genres.

When Bobbi moved to Haven, she abandoned poetic form entirely and instead began writing popular fiction novels, specifically westerns. As a genre, the Western is identified with masculinity, both in content and readership. Upon first examination, Bobbi is writing in a very masculine form, but closer study reveals that she actually writes as a woman trying to write as a man in an implicitly feminized yet explicitly masculine genre. Since most of Bobbi’s novels are about gun-slinging heroes and the American frontier, they are associated with masculinity; however, in terms of literary analysis, they are also lumped into the marginalized category of

popular fiction. As a marginalized genre, popular fiction has historically been marked as less legitimate, deviant from the norm, and thus feminine. Bobbi is moderately successful in this genre, is accepted by the locals, and publishes novels with no assistance from Gard. According to one local, “She wrote good old western stories that you could really sink your teeth into, not all full of make-believe monsters and a bunch of dirty words like the ones that fellow up in Bangor wrote. Goddam good westerns, people said. Especially for a girl!” (386). The locals regard Bobbi’s novels as successful, though literary critics completely ignore her, as she writes in a genre that receives little or no critical attention. Within the marginalized genre of the western, Bobbi’s gender is still taken into account when the locals comment on her work. The fact that Bobbi is a woman, which is seen as a writing handicap by her fellow townspeople, and capable of writing “good” books suggests that she has overcome great odds. Although the novel seems to critique the blatant sexism expressed by the local resident, who stands in for the average American, the novel’s conclusion suggests that Bobbi was never really a writer, but merely a slightly evolved stenographer. Although Bobbi is recognized as an author by the community of Haven and her venture into the Western genre is successful in terms of popularity, she still fails to achieve literary recognition. This idea also reflects King’s own anxieties about his status as a best-selling author in the genre of horror fiction.

King’s inclusion of a self-reference—“that fellow up in Bangor”—in which he acknowledges criticisms of his use of “make-believe monsters” and “dirty words” is typical for him. Faithful King readers, or “Constant Readers,” recognize these qualities which are present in several of King’s texts, including The Tommyknockers. Though King is one of the best-selling authors in North America, his novels reflect anxieties related to genre and literary recognition, as

well as his position as a male writer working in a marginalized or feminized genre. In On Writing,

King attempts to delegitimize literary criticism:

Even if a writer rises in the estimation of an influential critic or two, he/she always carries his/her early reputation along, like a respectable married woman who was a wild child as a teenager. Some people never forget, that's all, and a good deal of literary criticism serves only to reinforce a caste system which is as old as the intellectual snobbery which nurtured it. (137)

King's attitude suggests that literary criticism is unjustifiably exclusive. Interestingly, King uses a simile to illustrate how a writer's early works affect response to later works. He equates a writer gaining literary recognition to a promiscuous teenage girl getting married and settling into a more recognizably domestic role. While an author's status is based on critical attention, a woman's status is based on her marital status. King continues his attack on literary critics when he claims that:

critics and scholars have always been suspicious of popular success. Often their suspicions are justified. In other cases, these suspicions are used as an excuse not to think. No one can be as intellectually slothful as a really smart person; give smart people half a chance and they will ship their oars and drift...dozing to Byzantium, you might say. (138)

While he gives credit to some criticism of popular success, King implies that many critics are really more interested in excluding entire genres than in engaging in scholarly research. King's attitude towards critics and scholars is both harsh and unfair. Given the number of studies written based on King's work alone, it is fair to say that popular fiction is acknowledged by the literary community. Michael J. Meyer suggests that King's complicated, and often contradictory, attitude

towards his position as a popular writer is that “despite his [King’s] protests to the contrary, ... King is offended by the suggestion that he has never written anything serious” (98). While King often claims to be content as a horror writer, his work continues to reflect a self-consciousness. King also alludes to Yeats’ “Sailing to Byzantium” as an attempt to reinforce his stance against literary critics, but he only manages to reinforce the notion that an authority on writing, even a horror novelist, must be well-versed in canonical literature. Although King’s awareness of “the classics” does not render him a critic, it lends him credibility to shun literary criticism. In addition to discomfort with literary criticism, much of King’s work reflects his interest in gender and authorial control. Bobbi Anderson’s relationship with the Tommyknockers demonstrates a pessimistic theory of authorial influence for a female writer.

When Bobbi first discovers the ship in the woods, she is inspired with more ideas than she can keep in order. She begins to “invent” a number of things that make her life easier, though she really only acquires “a kind of superficial intelligence” which helps her modify common appliances into “gadgets” (90). One of her first inventions is a telepathic typewriter which is capable of recording her thoughts. She uses this typewriter to write what will be her last novel. As is the case for Mike Noonan in Bag of Bones, Bobbi declares the latest novel to be her best even though she has not had to expend any conscious energy to write it. Later in the novel as the Tommyknockers drive Bobbi to work herself beyond physical and mental exhaustion, she admits to herself that they have been largely and perhaps almost entirely responsible for the book: “she knew now that The Buffalo Soldiers was her last book... and the irony was that she now suspected that The Tommyknockers had written most of that as well” (King The Tommyknockers 408). This notion is echoed in Bag of Bones when Noonan realizes that

Johanna's ghost wrote his final novel. Paul Sheldon must also admit that his tormentor, Annie Wilkes, deserves credit for inspiring what he and his publisher see as his best work. Both Noonan and Bobbi Anderson each come to a point where they realize that their most successful work has been in part, or even entirely, written by someone else. For Noonan, his dead wife's ghost writes to contact him, while for Bobbi the Tommyknockers have always been influential in her work, though their effects are much more pronounced following her physical contact with the ship. King's novels frequently return to the topic of authority, which reflects an interest in the relationship between authorial control and gender though authority is associated with being male. In addition to realizing that her last novel is likely not a product of her own labour, Bobbi also realizes that all of her successful novels were produced at her home in Haven; her thoughts reveal that "her entire career as a publishing writer was here" (23). All of Bobbi's successful works are produced in the vicinity of the Tommyknockers' ship. This fact implies that Bobbi has never been responsible for her own writing and that the ship in the woods has been the driving force behind her success as an author all along.

When Bobbi first shares her "word accordion" and her new novel with Gard, he rejects the possibility that she could have invented such a device: "*typewriters don't write books by themselves,*" he thinks (178). Gard reluctantly accepts that Bobbi has managed to write the latest manuscript in the short period of three weeks because he believes her to be incapable of holding an unpublished manuscript in reserve. Despite his awareness of the common practice among authors of keeping manuscripts or "trunk books" in reserve, Gard cannot imagine Bobbi engaging in the practice for two reasons; first, he does not believe she writes enough to have a surplus of publishable material, and second, he does not believe she has the self-discipline to

keep a completed novel secret. As Gard struggles to make sense of Bobbi's latest inventions and new novel, he

half-believ[ed] he had gone insane. That had to be it, of course. There could not be a tiny sun in the bottom of Bobbi's hot-water heater, nor a new gear on her Tomcat which suggested levitation... but it would have been easier for him to believe either of those things than to believe that Bobbi had written a four-hundred-page novel called The Buffalo Soldiers in the three weeks or so since Gard had last seen her— a novel that was, just incidentally, the best thing she had ever written. Impossible, yeah. Easier— hell, *saner*— to believe he had gone crazy and simply leave it at that. (166-7)

When faced with consideration of Bobbi as an author, Gard cannot fully accept Bobbi as an independently functioning writer. Even though Bobbi's inventions defy rational scientific laws, Gard is less unsettled by these devices than he is by her manuscript. He is astounded to the point where he questions his own sanity when he has to comprehend that Bobbi has been able to produce a complete, well-written text in a remarkably short period of time. Though this practice is heard of in the publishing community, Gard cannot fathom that Bobbi may have actually done it. His skepticism about the new manuscript shows how little credit he gives Bobbi as a legitimate author.

In explaining her writing machine to Gard, Bobbi suggests that “it's like a direct tap into the subconscious, more like dreaming than writing... but what comes out is unlike dreams, which are often surreal and disconnected. It really isn't a typewriter anymore. It's a dream machine. One that dreams rationally” (179). Bobbi believes that the “word-accordion” reaches into her mind and harvests her ideas without the need for her to directly contribute to the writing. While many

writers, both male and female, perceive writing as an almost unconscious act, in Bobbi's case her writing is not driven by her own unconscious. Instead, her writing is a direct product of the Tommyknockers, though this fact is not revealed until much later. Initially, it appears that Bobbi has indeed created a sophisticated machine that can read her thoughts, though this is later proven untrue. She attributes the machine to "them" without explaining to Gard who "they" are; at this point in the novel, Bobbi is unable to explain who "they" are because she herself does not know who "they" are or how much "they" control her. She also fails to consider how much of the thoughts recorded by the word-accordion are hers or how these thoughts are altered as they are recorded.

The Tommyknockers appear to be helpful to Bobbi before she discovers the ship because they only affect her enough to fuel her writing. When she discovers the ship, she begins to dig her way closer to the source of her creativity, although she does not recognize the ship as such. Bobbi becomes obsessed with digging and is physically affected from the moment she touches the ship. Her first "dig" puts her into a trance and she begins menstruating heavily the following morning. Subsequent visits to the ship cause her menstruation to ebb and flow depending on her proximity to the ship. When she puts distance between herself and the ship, her bleeding slows: "back at the house, she showered and changed, using one of the Maxi-Pads even though the heavy menstrual flow already appeared to be lessening" (37). Contact with the ship causes Bobbi's body to change from the classical, closed, masculine form that she has attempted to emulate. She changes into a grotesque, open, feminine form. In The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity, Mary Russo associates the grotesque body with "Blood, tears, vomit, excrement— all the detritus of the body that is separated out and placed with terror and revulsion

(predominantly, though not exclusively) on the side of the feminine” (2). The grotesque body is also associated with what Julia Kristeva describes as the feminine and the abject. As Bobbi’s body undergoes transformation she becomes less associated with masculinity and she experiences excessive menstruation. In Powers of Horror, Kristeva explores symbolic relevance of menstrual blood and suggests that it “stands in for the danger issuing from within the identity” (71). According to Kristeva, menstrual blood not only signifies sexual difference or “otherness,” it also signifies an internal threat to the self, unlike tears or sperm which are also excreted from the body, but do not carry the same negative connotations. Kristeva also suggests that the menstruating female body is inherently associated with threat and danger. Bobbi’s excessive bleeding forces the reader to re-interpret Bobbi, who has been set up as masculine, as undoubtedly female and feminine, or to recognize her as “other” and not male. Unexplained menstruation is the first stage of Bobbi’s eventual transformation into an even more grotesque and open body. By the end of the novel, her body loses clear definition and boundaries almost entirely. This transformation places her in a position where her ability to use language is limited as she herself is outside of representation. That is, Bobbi’s body moves beyond being a grotesque form to an abject form that is defined only by the boundaries it exceeds. While theorists have classified and defined the grotesque body, the novel describes Bobbi in terms of being undefinable. When she attempts to explain her transformation to Gard, she cannot explain what she has become; she can only tell him, “we’re not a ‘people’.... We’re not a ‘race.’ Not a species” (King The Tommyknockers 644). Like the abject, she is only described in terms of negation, or what she is not rather than what she is. The novel resists fully explaining what or why she “becomes” which makes her transformed character difficult to comprehend.

Bobbi's physical transformation and her position as author are intrinsically linked. For the first part of the novel, she reflects her insecurities about attempting to write. In their own independent studies, both H el ene Cixous and Luce Irigaray examine the relationship between the female body and writing. Both Irigaray and Cixous understand language and dominant discourse to be patriarchal, masculine, linear, and inherently anti-female. They suggest that women are taught to understand themselves through language as an opposition to the norm. This results in women understanding themselves as "other" based on language itself. Women are taught to understand their bodies as shameful and lacking in comparison to the ideal male body; women's relationship to writing is understood the same way: "I know why you haven't written.... Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great-- that is, for 'great men'; and it's 'silly'" (Cixous 876). Cixous addresses the correlation between women's anxieties about writing and perception of self. Bobbi is already well-versed in language and the related social structures by the time she meets Gard, and he is the one responsible for her introduction to writing. As a voice of authority, he defines her as a writer. As a young woman, Bobbi deposits herself within the established social roles for writers; she is the inexperienced yet talented student, and Gard is the seasoned writer who is necessary to help her recognize and reach her own potential. For Bobbi to fulfill what Gard sees as her writing potential (she can only see herself through how she believes he perceives her), he claims she must distance herself from her past and dysfunctional family:

Leighton Street ..., the street in Utica where she had grown up, [was what] she needed to escape before she could even start being what she wanted to be-- a simple writer of simple stories. She could do that; she could do that with flash and ease. Gard had known that

almost at once. Later that year, he had sensed that she might be able to do more: to surmount the careless, profligate ease with which she wrote, and do, if not great work, brave work. (King The Tommyknockers 88)

Although Gard does not deliberately attempt to separate Bobbi from her body, or in this case family, he asserts that for her to be an author she must be a separate and distinct individual, or a classical figure. She must abandon her past to make room for her new identity as a writer. Gard encourages Bobbi to occupy an independent space as an individual as a part of her development as a writer. Following her transition to writing fiction, Gard criticizes Bobbi for her response to rejection by her former circle of literary friends:

Get your mind right, Bobbi. If you want to go on doing what you like, get your fucking mind right and stop that fucking crying. That fucking crying makes me sick. That fucking crying makes me want to puke. You're not weak. I know weak when I'm with it.... Grow up. Stop bitching.... There's a big difference about being good at what you DO and being smart about what you KNOW, he said.... Give yourself some time to grow up. And stop being your own jury. It's boring, I don't want to listen to you snivel. Sniveling is for jerks. Quit being a jerk. (24-5)

While Gard is supposed to be Bobbi's close friend, he is hardly supportive. Instead of consoling her over what she perceives to be a loss, he attacks her and instead turns the conversation to his own response to her mood. Gard insists that Bobbi is not weak, which would appear to be supportive if his reasoning was not based entirely on the fact that he would recognize weakness in her if it were present. Gard also expresses immense disgust at Bobbi's tears, which signify her as a leaky, grotesque body. His disgust is so great he threatens that he may vomit, which would

associate him with the grotesque and thus feminize him. Through his criticism, he again attempts to influence Bobbi's definition of herself through his eyes.

As she is changed by the ship, Bobbi joins a collective consciousness and moves completely away from distinct individuality. Her "new" self is in some ways similar to Irigaray's designation of the feminine as multiple. Bobbi begins to see herself and the rest of the "becoming" as an extension of the ship. She relinquishes her sense of individuality in favour of a collective self. In her work, Cixous claims that the distance between women and their bodies mirrors their relationships to language. This disconnection creates the need for women to write using a language that does not reinforce the established negative image of self as woman. According to Cixous, women's voices as well as their bodies are bound by language. The patriarchal constructions of language make it necessary for women to write differently or outside what has been declared standard if they hope to reunite their voices and bodies. Unfortunately, as a novel, The Tommyknockers denies the possibility of female authorship and equates the female body with the incoherent and the undefined.

For women to write, Cixous suggests that "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies— for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text— as into the world and into history— by her own movement" (875). Cixous argues that women need to write to re-write cultural representations of the female body as a lack, as well as to make space for more women to write. In The Tommyknockers, although Bobbi writes, she does not actually write herself as a woman; instead, she writes herself as a man, or attempts to. Women's writing, or *l'écriture féminine*, is conceived as cyclical and fluid and offers

an alternative to male-centered, phallogocentric, language. In This Sex Which is Not One, Irigaray advocates *l'écriture féminine* when she addresses what she sees as the problematic nature of women attempting to write using patriarchal (dominant) language: "What claim to raise ourselves up in a worthier discourse? Erektion is no business of ours: we are at home on the flatlands. We have so much space to share. Our horizon will never stop expanding; we are always open" (213). According to Irigaray, it is necessary for women to write and speak in voices that reflect their multiplicity. She argues that women's voices are meant to be always open as the female anatomy is without separation or division or definition by male/masculine use/introduction. She writes of the necessity for women to accept and express their bodies in non-masculine terms, but deliberately avoids writing one direct solution to emphasize her point of women's communication being "naturally" non-linear. She advocates women to "leave definitiveness to the undecided; we don't need it. Our body, right here, right now, gives us a very different uncertainty. Truth is necessary for those who are so distanced from their body that they have forgotten it" (214). Irigaray critiques truth and definition for their distance from the physical. As such, she encourages women to speak and write in multiple voices, that is to write instinctively without consideration for criticism (patriarchal) or conformity. Cixous suggests that the very act of writing helps bridge the gap between women and their own bodies: "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display— the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you sensor breath and speech at the same time" (880). Like Cixous, Irigaray suggests that the female voice is reluctant to speak because it fears speaking poorly, according to established

hierarchy.

As a woman writing herself as a man, Bobbi has censored both her speech and body; however, when she stops writing herself as a man and becomes associated with the feminine, she becomes incomprehensible. Bobbi's transformation in the novel works against Cixous's suggestion that reuniting breath and speech allows for the female voice to be heard. The feminine/female voice is multi-faceted which makes it expansive and broad, but also limits its ability to speak directly: "We haven't been taught, nor allowed, to express multiplicity. To do that is to speak improperly. Of course, we might— we were supposed to?— exhibit one 'truth' while sensing, withholding, muffling another. Truth's other side— its complement? its remainder?— stayed hidden" (Irigaray 210). Because dominant discourse is linear, the feminine voice is unrecognizable as it is dominated or driven by the female body itself. Both Cixous and Irigaray suggest that reconciliation between language and the female body offers room for female voice and is necessary for women to be able to speak and write.

In The Tommyknockers Bobbi's novels are part of an established, linear genre that in no way reflects what Cixous and Irigaray explain as the multiplicity of the female body. While writing westerns, Bobbi is effectively attempting to write as a man. After contact when she starts "becoming", she moves away from this effort to associate herself with masculinity. Bobbi quickly develops telepathic abilities to communicate with the rest of those "becoming", and in doing so, becomes more open. By using telepathy, Bobbi is able to communicate without using patriarchal language which, when combined with her excessive menstruation, suggests that she is perhaps reflecting a more feminine mode of communication. However, abandoning patriarchal language does not liberate Bobbi or allow her to write more freely. Instead, she becomes a

monster hell-bent on making sure the whole world “becomes.” Bobbi’s move to telepathy is not a form of *l’écriture féminine*, but it does at the very least offer a possibility for communication outside of developed language. Rather than invoke curiosity about the options this new (writing) offers, the novel appeals to a cultural fear of change to established hierarchies. The novel depicts Bobbi as insane and dangerous, and her destruction suggests that change can be deadly, though a man can save the world from the mad woman, or the one who dares to write.

Women’s bodies have historically been written by men (Gilbert and Gubar). That is, women are unable to experience their bodies in terms that are not defined by men. Women are then distanced from their bodies, which denies them the ability to move beyond physical expression to written and verbal expression. Women’s bodies are seen as a trap as women are taught to understand their bodies as foreign and lacking when compared to the ideal male body. Much of Irigaray’s discussion reflects a Lacanian understanding of language as the expression of desire. Irigaray extends Lacan’s theory when she suggests that female expression of desire is imperative to avoid the imposition of what a male system designates as female desire. This overwriting of female voice by a patriarchal system risks rendering the female body immobile and destroys its fluidity and mobility. Irigaray encourages women to speak, but their voices are multiple and changing. The problem with this voice is that it can become incoherent, not so much to other women who know how to listen, but to society, which is already entrenched in linear, direct speech.

Bobbi’s obsession with the Tommyknockers’ ship obscures her interest in and ability to write and eventually destroys her. In a somewhat cautionary tale, Bobbi is unable to handle the force of her creativity and she is worked to death by the source of her art. In *On Writing*, King

asserts that The Tommyknockers are a deliberate metaphor for drugs and alcohol. More interestingly they are the telepathic extraterrestrial force that permits a woman to write. The Tommyknockers rigidly reinforces gender roles where authorship is reserved solely for men while women who attempt to write dissolve into insanity. Bobbi's writing is proven to be the result of supernatural interference because only aliens could make a female writer plausible within the context of patriarchal language and authority.

Conclusion

Several of Stephen King's works, specifically On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Bag of Bones, Misery, and The Tommyknockers, depict writing as a masculine, inherently male ability, while at the same time they delegitimize instances of female authorship. King positions female characters as either unrecognized muses, or menacing monsters in relation to male authors. Authority and legitimate authorship are reserved exclusively for male characters. While King's works examine gender roles in relation to writing, they ultimately serve to re-inscribe patriarchal norms. Even when King presents characters who do not occupy prescribed roles, these characters are "corrected" before the close of each novel. Female characters who fail to occupy the prescribed gender role as uncredited muse are depicted as deviant or sick, and they are either returned to their "proper" role or are destroyed, often both. When male characters occupy passive feminized positions, they must reassert their masculinity and resume more active roles in order to secure their authority.

In On Writing and Bag of Bones, the significance of female influence on male author-characters' writing processes is dismissed, while a figurative male muse is privileged. In Misery, Annie Wilkes is a very real threat to Paul Sheldon as he is forced to depend on her for both creative and literal survival. Even when a female character appears to be an author, as Bobbi Anderson does in The Tommyknockers, the novel later reveals that she has not in fact been responsible for writing any of her works. The other King texts examined in this thesis further delegitimize female authorship by diverting the reader with an explicit image of a male muse, and by depicting female characters who attempt to control language as dangerous monsters.

In terms of authority, King's books attempt to position the male author as the sole

authority. King tries to position the masculine author free from female influence as the source of meaning. King's work, Misery in particular, attempts to ignore the female reader as an authority by emphasizing the significance of the author.

At the same time, the novels encourage readers to recognize King's self-references within each novel, which reinforces King's status as a "brand name." These references encourage readers to recognize King as what Foucault terms the "author-function." King's branding of himself reflects an effort to reassert the author as the sole authority of a text.

King's explorations of authority involve the relationship between the muse and the male author. While King's works claim that the muse is a highly masculine, figure internal to the male author, evidence within the texts suggests that various females, such as Johanna Noonan and Tabitha King, actually serve as unrecognized muses. This unwillingness to recognize female muse figures relates to Bloom's study of authorship in which he suggests that male authors are wary of the muse. Bloom speculates that the male author fears that he not only owes his creative ability to the muse, but that she also threatens to consume him entirely. King's depiction of Annie Wilkes as a twisted muse illustrates this theory when she becomes a very real threat to Paul Sheldon. King's male muses, or "The boys in the basement," distract attention from the women who actually serve as muses. This hyper-masculine image of the muse implies that writing is an inherently masculine ability that is actually threatened by femininity. In contrast to the grotesque female body, the male author is a closed, static body. Many of King's female characters, such as Bobbi Anderson, are grotesque, open bodies and pose a threat to the male author because proximity to the grotesque body threatens the classical masculine body.

Besides depicting women as twisted muses and failing to openly acknowledge their

contributions to male authors' writing, King's work implies that women are incapable of writing, as is the case with Bobbi Anderson. Even though Bobbi initially appears to be an author, the novel later reveals that a telepathic alien force was actually responsible for all of her writing. Like Annie Wilkes, Bobbi also turns out to be a monster, which Gilbert and Gubar suggest is a common stereotype of the female author. King perpetuates this image through Bobbi's transformation and ultimate destruction.

Stephen King's books present few, if any, authoritative roles for females. Instead, female characters are relegated to positions where they act as uncredited muse figures to male authors. Even though male author characters obviously rely on these uncredited muse figures, the male authors fail to explicitly acknowledge this influence. Instead, male author characters attribute their creativity to "the boys in the basement." Additionally, women's creative efforts are marginalized, while patriarchal forms of discourse are privileged. When female characters attempt to write, they are depicted as deviant and corrupt. As such, they are destroyed by the end of each story, allowing the male author to remain the sole source of authority.

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