

12-2011

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THE MISERY OF POPULARITY:
STEPHEN KING IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of English,
Indiana University

December 2011

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty,
Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, a special thanks to my thesis committee composed of Drs Michael Kaufmann, Stevens Amidon, and John Minton for their patience and understanding throughout this process. The work here is a reflection of the passion and knowledge I have gained from them and the influence they have had on my academic career. I would also like to thank Mark Sidey for his unwavering support, encouragement, feedback, and friendship—no words can explain my gratitude.

I would also like to thank my family for always supporting my passions and goals, for always loving me, and most importantly for always being proud of me. I would especially like to thank to my parents, James and Sharon Elkins, who have given me every possible opportunity to live my dreams no matter how big or how small, and for always letting me know they were just right there.

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The Misery of Popularity: Stephen King in the Literature Classroom

Waiting in the grocery check-out lane, it's inevitable to be bombarded with "popularity." Images of celebrities like Britney, Tom, Charlie, and Lindsey are pervasive. This bombardment reflects and fosters society's appetite for popularity, for celebrity. After all, who hasn't—especially in high school—wanted to be a celebrity, part of the "in crowd"? The culture of celebrity is a dominant theme in coming of age films like *Mean Girls*, *Clueless*, *Can't Buy Me Love*, and *The Breakfast Club*, and these films show adolescents that popularity is desirable, reinforcing the viewer's notions of popularity—the accepted versus the rejected. Whether it be through magazines, movies, or the internet, the message is that there are benefits to popularity, namely recognition, influence, money, red-carpet roll-outs, and diamonds as large as the African nations they come from. In fact, if people were honest, they would probably admit that they would love to be popular, remembered by everyone. But here's the rub: the perks don't always outweigh the negatives—being popular certainly can have its downfalls, particularly if you're a novelist named Stephen King.

Stephen King is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable writers of American fiction. However, it is this recognition, this popularity that has in the past stifled King's acceptance in the academe. Many academics write King off as merely a "pulp writer," or a "hack job" who regurgitates only one kind of story for cheap thrills. For many of these critics, King is the definition of popular "being suited or intended for the general masses; adapted to the ordinary intelligence or taste" (dictionary.com).¹ On the other hand, other critics maintain that "Anything so popular for so long merits attention, whether it is Stephen King, The Beatles, the Ford Mustang, or William Shakespeare" (Schuman qtd. in Davis 8). Now icons of Culture, The Beatles, the Ford Mustang and William Shakespeare were once merely common. Yes, even

¹ Obviously using a source such as dictionary.com would seemingly be unbecoming of an academic paper, but throwing caution to the wind I used a popular source to mimic the accessibility of King and culture.

Shakespeare and Dickens² were both to an extent dismissed by the intellectual elites of their day as popular “junk,” but as we learn from literature classes, “popular items of one generation become the classic items of the next” (Davis 8-9).

Academics have cited numerous reasons for not liking King’s work and in turn keeping him out of the American canon. Regardless of the fact that only time will tell if King’s works will endure long enough to be considered iconic or classic,³ two things are evident: King is highly popular and is widely read outside the world of academia. What may be less evident is that King is not merely a hack turning out texts; King’s books are culturally deep. Why does this matter? Because there is much to be gained by using King in the literature classroom. Instead of chastising and excluding King for being popular, academics should look beyond King’s reputation and take advantage of his popularity. King does more than just tell an interesting tale, and that is the part that academics are missing out on. I approach this thesis as a fan and also as a teacher who sees the value of King’s work in the literature classroom. While I am a fan, in this thesis, I attempt to analyze his work objectively. The purpose of this thesis is to argue that King could in fact play an important role in the American canon and therefore needs to be heard, and that the notion of canonical needs reexamined. By exploring some of the reasons King is not taken seriously and then examining some of the ways in which using his works would benefit students, King’s potential contribution to the American canon will be shown.⁴

² Interestingly, King is often compared to both Dickens and Shakespeare. This comparison will be examined later in this text.

³ King obviously believes in his ability to endure, and in fact alludes to it in his epic Dark Tower series. These stories take place long after the world as we know it exists—a world where paper is priceless and rare and where “our” language isn’t spoken. The characters find a book by Stephen King. Though the characters do not recognize the name Stephen King, they do recognize the significance of the book.

⁴ I will take on, as shown from the introduction, a much more informal tone as a way to parallel King’s use of language.

Context

Great Literature makes for great people, but popular Literature makes for mediocrity. Therefore, Great Literature must defend against the likes of Stephen King (Smith 330).

Exploring why academics dislike King's works helps to gain insight as to why his works are pertinent to academia. Many of the ideas for King's dislike overlap, but the most commonly cited reasons for keeping King out of the canon: King's audience, style, volume of work, genre, and academic value will be explored.

First, King is often attacked as being too popular and too accessible to the general reader—a notion that pigeonholes his audience as the “general reader.” In essence, King is disregarded because he is accessible outside the realm of academia. He writes “for the people.” Magstrale contends that the “academic elite” dismiss King in all reality because they haven't read him, because anything popular can't be good (Davis 120). Perhaps we should ask Oprah's Book Club about that. This mentality, or elitism, that keeps King from the canon seems to stem from academics who uphold dense, “scholarly” texts as visions of perfection, such scholarly texts that are only accessible to scholars in a specific field.⁵ King acknowledges that “Critics and scholars have always been suspicious of popular success. Often these 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” (*On Writing* 138). The problem is that the academic elite (English teachers and professors) are “custodians of culture,” and hard people to please. “In many cases, you are talking about people who really indulge in elitism”⁶ (Davis 125). “After all, academics are professionally condescending. They make a career of explaining literature to the less educated folk.” Hoppenstand argues that academics (in this case literature professors) are

⁵ For example Woolf, Joyce, or Pynchon.

⁶ This reemphasizes the point that academics at times superimpose their ideals of what is canon worthy.

searching for validity in their work, and they fear someone who doesn't have to have a Ph.D. to read and understand a work (163). In part, King's exclusion comes from the fact that he writes for a wide audience, not just an academic audience. It would seem that academics use Mark Twain's definition of "classic" when deciding what is canon worthy. Twain, whose works were once considered as simply popular literature, but now are considered classic, defined a classic as "something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read"⁷ (qtd in Lacayo 47).

By Twain's definition, King's works wouldn't be considered classics because they are widely read—he writes books that people do want to read. Since this is the case, academics could benefit from looking for a way to make use of King's popularity instead of chastising him for it. For instance, another frequently cited reason for King's disapproval is his use of style. Part of his popularity is because he "does not try to bog down his readers with overdeveloped, complex plots and language. He writes about common Americans with whom his readers can identify. He puts his characters in situations that his readers can sympathize with" (Davis 23). Using common language doesn't mean that the texts are not filled with somewhat formidable vocabulary—oftentimes they are. Instead, the language, especially dialogue, is something that the readers can recognize and identify with allowing somewhat surreal texts to seem "real." Perhaps, the use of common language and simple plot structure is one of the reasons academics have not taken King seriously, but if King were to use language that is over the heads of his readers, his writing could not be received; it would only fall on deaf ears. If complex language is a prerequisite for inclusion in the canon, then works other than King's⁸ would be excluded.

In addition to the popularity and accessibility of his works, the sheer volume of King's work lead some literature critics to deny King as one of the great American writers, thus keep

⁷ This list might include: *War and Peace*, *Dante's Inferno*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Moby Dick*, *The Waste Land*, or *Finnegan's Wake*.

⁸ Such as Dreiser or Dostoyevsky.

him from the canon. Schuman, a King fan and critic, argues that King has the “tendency to churn out enormous volumes of prose with great speed and without much of an inclination to go back over what he has written and make sure he has gotten everything just right” (108). This is a common notion about King’s works—anyone who is writing so prolifically can’t be writing carefully. But, being prolific doesn’t automatically mean bad. There are prolific writers that are considered acceptable. For one, Joyce Carol Oates, like King, has authored over 50 novels and hundreds of short stories. The expanse of King’s work and his success makes many academics and critics question King’s credibility as a writer. In fact, some have accused King of simply writing to make money. But, he has always argued that he does what he knows, and that’s writing. Because King’s characters are often writers, which reinforces the idea that he writes what he knows, he is often chastised as being lazy and repetitious. But, again, if one considers any other writer, it could likely be said that they too write the same kinds of stories. In fact, Willa Cather “declared, ‘Most of the material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen’” (qtd in Murray 67). Donald Murray argues that all writing is autobiography and that writing tells others what is important to the author, regardless if the writing is academic, poetry, fiction, a newsletter, or the like. That being said, it would seem that writer’s do in fact write what they know and build on that foundation with each work.

In addition to the above, the overall perception of King’s writing has kept him from the canon. King’s works are often considered light reading or literary “mind candy” because they are part of the gothic or horror genres, genres that are not generally considered academic. Regardless of the fact King does write more than one kind of story, he has been pigeonholed into the gothic and horror genres. As Hoppenstand puts it, “Academics perceive Stephen King and horror fiction as being unsophisticated, anti-intellectual, and crass” (162). However, all of Poe and some of Faulkner’s works also fall into the gothic genre—more specifically Southern

Gothic. Both writers, like many other canonical American writers, had little following until they gained academic praise. On the other hand, King received recognition from popular culture first—his acknowledgement came from the readers. In King’s case “Universities do not dictate this greatness; day laborers and seamstresses do” (Mosley). But, if academics “find” the writer they can then superimpose their own ideals and then those ideals become canon worthy. In essence, it could be concluded that King’s exclusion comes from the response of academics to how King came to be known and the genre in which his works have been categorized. *Different Seasons*, *The Green Mile*, and *Bag of Bones* are examples of texts that quite different from the texts King is known for. These works contain elements of the supernatural, but would not normally be considered gothic or horror.⁹ If taken more seriously, King’s works would definitely open up discussion about the notions of genre and how genres are defined and characterized.

The accusation that King writes only one kind of story seems moot since the same could be said about Tim O’Brien or Toni Morrison two writers who are widely read, yet also widely accepted in academia. If we were to judge a writer based on the fact that they write only one kind of story these two writers would be equally guilty. Moreover, King may be “known” for one kind of story, but he does in fact write more than one kind of story. King has written under the pseudonyms Richard Bachman, John Swithen, and Eleanor Druse, and written a wide variety of texts such as short stories, novels, novellas, nonfiction, autobiographies, and children’s stories. And, King’s works written under the pseudonym Richard Bachman (to avoid over publishing) were met with the same acclaim as the books published with King listed as the author. What academics and critics don’t understand is that there is more to King than blood and guts.

⁹ That is not to say that Goth and horror stories cannot or should not be considered canonical. Horror stories can be traced back to oral tradition where such stories were told as warnings. Horror stories—including those by Stephen King—often focus on the battle between good and evil a theme that can be found almost anywhere in literature. Through his works, “King holds out hope that, if fear doesn’t kill you, it leaves you with something invaluable which you could not otherwise attain” (Notkin 134). Horror novels “can embrace the complexity of the world we live in” (Barker 59).

Magistrale's contention is that "they [academics] are not open to the subtexts because they haven't even read the texts" (qtd. in Davis 120). King is in fact a good story teller—that is what academic elites are missing out on (Davis 121).

Taking into consideration the reasons cited for King's exclusion from the canon, the question becomes what do academics value in literature? Academics seem to relish stylistic density, which can often seem like obscurity. They often specialize in one area, and narrow specialization seems to go against what is implied in a humanistic education. If the idea of education is to gain a breadth of knowledge, why not open new avenues to doing so? Why chastise King? King himself claims that "a good deal of literary criticism serves only to reinforce a caste system which is as old as the intellectual snobbery which nurtured it" (*On Writing* 137). Therefore, on some level, King's accessibility takes away the need for explanation of meaning. Even the inexperienced reader can understand King on a superficial level.¹⁰ However, there is more to King's texts than just the superficial. King's seeming accessibility often leads literature professors to feel that there is no need for their expertise in helping lay readers unpack the layers of his texts. And there are layers to his texts. Helping readers unpack the layers of the text is one of the areas academics overlook. Take for instance *Cell*. King's 2006 novel could be read as a gory tale about a devastating zombie-like take over transmitted through cell phones. Not only is this an intriguing idea, it is also an obvious commentary about society's dependence on technology and in this case, specifically cell phones. Moreover, the work explores the human psyche. By looking at how humans interact and treat one another King is exploring the notion of human nature. The ability to look past the simple meaning and really explore the layers of the

¹⁰ This in no way is meant to be an elitist comment—that would be counterintuitive. Instead, I am simply acknowledging that all readers bring with them their previous experiences and read with those experiences in mind.

texts with students is the part academics are missing out on. This is an important role for us to play in students' intellectual development.

While the reasons cited for dismissing King in academics are varied, understanding some of the objections to his work opens up an interesting discussion about what literature is and who defines literature. Furthermore, looking at how King responds to this criticism and objection too is another layer of the texts to be unfolded.

King's Response

"What do I care for their opinions? I never truckled. I told them the truth" (Norris qtd. in *On Writing*).

King knows, and at times acknowledges what critics say about him, and he doesn't mince words in response. He claims that it doesn't matter what side you are on (for him or against him).¹¹ Instead, what is significant is that people speak out because they are passionate about the word [literature] and to King that is what is important (King, *Building Bridges*). Again, this is an important point of discussion. King isn't making this comment as a way to say "I'm a better human than snobby intellectuals." Instead, his point is that there is a discussion about literature to be had, and the more people who participate in this discussion, the better. Further, King, in his 2003 National Book Awards¹² acceptance speech, reemphasized the need to bridge the gap between the popular and the literary. In fact, he claimed "For far too long the so called popular writers of this country and the so called literary writers have stared at each other with animosity and a willful lack of understanding." The elitist wall must come down so that "Bridges can be built between the so called popular fiction and the so called literary fiction" (*Building*

¹¹ Further, King has never been ashamed or apologized for being considered a horror writer (Barker 59).

¹² This award was one of King's first acknowledgements for what he has contributed to literature. This award is perhaps an indication of King's acceptance, however grudgingly in to the literary community.

Bridges). Why must this happen? Because the readers have something to gain from this. Writers are readers; which means that we all have something to gain (*Building Bridges*). While King's argument is that it is necessary to bridge the gap between the literary and the popular because there is much to gain by doing so, in the literature classroom there is a need for the important discussion about what defines something as popular versus what defines something as literary. This is a question that keeps getting posed, yet rarely seems to be answered. And, since the current contemporary American canon seems to be consistently changing this discussion is even more vital. Further, since King's works in many ways do bridge that gap his works are significant to the discussion of literature. What defines literature? What is the difference between Literature and literature? Who defines the canon? Why is the canon defined that way? What makes something "classic"? Discussing these questions allows for further understanding of literature and further, how King fits within literature.

King often addresses the topic of the gap between popular and "literary" fiction in his prologues. He frequently references canonical writers in them as a way to tie his works to the other works. For instance, King begins his epic *Dark Tower* with the same words as the famed Thomas Wolfe in *Look Homeward, Angel*:

. . . a stone, a leaf, an unfound door; of a stone, a leaf, a door. And of all the forgotten faces.

Naked and alone we came into exile. In her dark womb, we did not know our mother's face; from the prison of her flesh have we come into the unspeakable and incommunicable prison of this earth.

Which of us has known his brother? Which of us has looked into his father's heart? Which of us has not remained forever prison-pent? Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?

O waste of lost, in the hot mazes, lost, among bright stars on this most weary unbright cinder, lost! Remembering speechlessly we seek the great forgotten language, the lost lane-end into heaven, a stone, a leaf, an unfound door. Where? When?

O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again. (3)

There are numerous ideas that can be discussed about King's use of Wolfe as the prologue to *The Dark Tower*. For one, King rearranges the order of the words in the first line to "of a leaf, a stone, a door." This begs the question, was it intentional or accidental? If it was intentional, why is it significant? Secondly, King excludes the fourth paragraph. Why would King exclude this part? This paragraph still fits with the concept of *The Gunslinger*. What is the significance of these novels beginning with these words? By using King in this way, the reader is introduced to a canonical American writer, and by understanding Wolfe's text the reader comes to understand more about King's and vice versa. This analysis goes beyond just reading an interesting tale. It is about understanding the text on a new level, and exploring how works of literature affect each other.

Many of King's works would fulfill this link between the popular and the canonical, but because these texts tend to be "popular," most academics likely do not read them. King openly states that he has no patience for those who take pride in saying that they have never read anything in the popular genre, and asks: "What do you think you get social academic brownie points for deliberately staying out of touch with your own culture?" To King, people have to read their *own* culture and that includes popular fiction. Reading these (popular) books will open eyes to a new world of American Fiction, and in turn a new world of fiction. Therefore, "The time has come when you must be inclusive rather than exclusive" (*Building Bridges*). In this case, literary theories can be discussed to explore the cultures being defined within in the texts. Yes, reading Dickens's texts allows the reader to look at culture, but the culture defined by that time period and place—in this case the European Industrial Revolution. To use a more contemporary writer, O'Brien looks at culture, but at the culture revolving around the Vietnam War. What about current contemporary culture? This area is an important aspect of King's works, since his texts often reflect the current American culture.

Considering these various issues, it is clear that King has always known what academics and critics say about him, and his works reflect that. Despite his claims to the contrary, King does seem to have some anger and jealousy toward the literary establishment which has pushed him to channel that energy into his works. In fact, often in King's works the reader can find King's response to the literary establishment, and that attitude has spanned his entire career. Some of King's works are more telling than others as to his attitude toward the elite, but perhaps the most evident are *The Shining* (1977), *Misery* (1987), and *Lisey's Story* (2007). These stories come from different decades in King's career, but the message is clear in each: "I do bite my thumb, sir"—and it's at you!

King acknowledges that there are two types of writers—those bound for more literary or serious writing and those who are destined to write more popular novels. These two types of writers ask very different questions. The literary writer asks "What would this sort of story mean to me?" Whereas, the more popular writer asks "What would writing this sort of story mean to others?" (*The Gunslinger* XIV). King answers these questions. "The 'serious' novelist is looking for answers and keys to the self; the 'popular' novelist is looking for an audience. Both kinds are equally selfish" (*The Gunslinger* XIV). At first glance, it would seem that King is categorizing himself where academics and critics have always put him—in the popular. However, King goes on to say that at the time of its publication, many considered Tolkien's epic *Lord of the Rings* popular, and now that notion has changed. When the *Lord of the Rings* first appeared in the United States in the 1960s, it was widely popular due to its themes of resisting corruption and preservation of the environment. Originally, the *Lord of the Rings* was considered "escapist" (and somewhat juvenile) literature, but now there are fields of academic study dedicated to it. This emphasizes the point that attitudes about literature can and must change, and that there is much to gain by doing so. Having an open discussion would allow for

that to happen. King is the perfect candidate to bridge the gap, and where is a better place to start than in the literature classroom?

In Comparison

“We are perpetually misled in our judgment by the impossibility of identifying ourselves with the writers—of inducing a full sympathy with the circumstances that impelled them, and thus with the objects for which they wrote” (Poe qtd in Moss 4).

King is disliked in academia—that point is clear—but he is not the only popular writer who has been chastised by academics. He has often been compared to other highly popular writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and William Shakespeare. These three writers, from very different eras, are now seen as influential writers; however, at one point these writers were disliked by academics and critics, in part, because of their popularity.¹³ While there are obvious differences between King and these writers, there are some overwhelming similarities, and exploring some of these similarities lends credence to the idea that “popular” does not necessarily mean trite—an idea that if academics embraced would lead to an enrichment of the canon.

King is most often compared to Poe, and for obvious reasons—their stories are similar. And, King often pays homage to Poe in his works through the use of allusions. King and Poe focus not only on monsters, but the monsters within. Like King, Poe’s work is “a constant reminder to readers that life is often neither neatly ordered, nor rational, nor divinely inspired” (Magistrale 1). The theme of the inner demon is not a new one, and in fact goes back to the roots of literature. This can be seen in the *Bible*, Greek mythology, or medieval literature. Further, Poe’s works often contain “violent themes—featuring passionate, out-of-control

¹³ In Shakespeare’s case, it is his reputation with his contemporaries I am referring to.

protagonists whose irrational behavior transforms them into monsters and victims simultaneously” (Magistrale 1). The monsters aren’t fictions. In the stories they are real. That’s why the characters are easy to relate to. Poe’s influence can be seen throughout contemporary American literature, but Poe too was once “considered beneath scholarly attention” (Magistrale 9). However, Poe is now likely the most popular American Gothic writer and even more likely one of the most recognizable American writers. What separates them is that—with the passage of time—Poe’s work is now accepted literature and King’s is not. It seems that the difference lies in death and time.

Not only are King and Poe similar in their careers, but in many ways also in their lives. Poe and King both struggled with alcoholism,¹⁴ a theme that manifests itself throughout their works. Furthermore, both struggled with gambling, fame, acceptance, financial struggles and the like. For these reasons, during his life, Poe was often discredited as a writer. It was essentially Poe’s personal conduct that barred appreciation of his work (Hutcherson 211). In the 1880s, few of Poe’s works were widely known, “yet there is no American author of whom so much has been written as of Poe, and perhaps the reason lies as much in the wide fame of these few works, as in the sad, romantic, and entangled story of the author’s clouded life” (Hutcherson 220-21). Walt Whitman acknowledged Poe’s “genius” by stating: “Poe’s verses illustrate an intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty, with the rhyming art to excess, an incorrigible propensity toward nocturnal themes, a demonic undertone behind every page—and, by final judgment, probably belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat” (Hutcherson 220). Whitman’s implication is that Poe had the technical facility to be a great writer, but suffered disregard because of his subject

¹⁴ King was addicted to cocaine as well as alcohol.

matter. Even though, Poe's defect was in his character and not in his writing, it wasn't until almost forty years after Poe's death that his work gained any real acknowledgement or praise.¹⁵

While it may seem sacrilegious, a valid comparison can also be made between King and Charles Dickens. Like King, Dickens was seen as a writer for the masses. In a time of the Industrial Revolution where the gap between the rich and poor was greatly divided, Dickens wrote about the lives of the poor. What's interesting about this is that while Dickens wrote for the masses, typically those who had access to his works were the educated elite. Where King differs is that his works are easily accessible by everyone. Dickens, however, gained academic praise from literary circles and critics, but the people who Dickens was writing about and for did not have access to his works. Because of this, Dickens later republished many of his works in "cheap editions" as a way to bring his works to the audience they were primarily written for (Glancy 11).¹⁶ Doing this made some critics question Dickens as a writer.¹⁷

While there are innumerable similarities between Dickens and King, one of the most striking similarities is their portrayal of children. Children are often the main characters of both Dickens' and King's novels. Many of King's "children" have some sort of supernatural power, perhaps as a way to combat the everyday evils of life. King's first published novel, *Carrie*, focuses on a teenage girl who is abused by her single mother, bullied at school, alone and vulnerable. King's *Shining*, *Firestarter*, *It* and *The Girl who Loved Tom Gordon*, are other examples of other King novels with children as the main characters. While each of King's "children" face different monsters—both literally and figuratively, each possesses some sort of supernatural ability that in some way empowers them. Similarly, many of Dickens' novels, including *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Nicholas Nickleby*, focus on

¹⁵ This again reiterates the idea that a writer's worth is somehow about timing.

¹⁶ Further, Dickens wrote prefaces in these editions to offer hope and inspiration to the poor.

¹⁷ It is almost if to say "if everyone likes you, you can't be good."

the life of a child. For instance, *Great Expectations* was written from the point of view of Pip, an orphan who was left to be raised by his abusive sister. Throughout *Great Expectations*, Pip is teased, tormented, and abused. While Pip has no supernatural powers, he does continually combat the demon within.

While Dickens' novels typically follow the character from childhood into adult hood, and King's are typically about a particular instance in childhood, both seem to use a physical journey of sorts that leads the character on some sort of spiritual search. Both writers' portrayal of children seems to call into question the notion of human nature—good versus evil (Gold 209). In the end, as a result of the character's actions, he finds something out about himself. This journey requires the character to face issue that people can relate to (such as poverty, debt, isolation). The story unfolds by examining how the character reacts to these situations, and ends by the character improving his fortunes or by being a wiser person. For instance, Dickens' *Little Dorrit* "tears off several social masks, the religious, the economic, the class pretention and reveals behind them all the corruption of the individual soul" (Gold 208).

Even more blasphemous perhaps, is the comparison that can be made between King and Shakespeare. Shakespeare's popularity has somewhat mythicized him, and caused some to overlook where Shakespeare came from as a writer. Regardless, various comparisons can be made between King and Shakespeare, including the sheer volumes of their works, writing as social commentary, the appearance of ghosts (or other supernatural figures), the use gore, and the theme of humanity. One of the easiest comparisons to be made between Shakespeare and King is on the amount of work each writer has produced. Shakespeare was credited with writing thirty-seven plays and openly admitted to writing for money—as previously mentioned, these are two objections to King's usefulness. Schuman acknowledges that King will not likely be the Shakespeare of our day, but "Shakespeare was not the 'Shakespeare' of his day either" (108.)

Shakespeare was not recognized as a master of literary art, and in fact was considered a “popular hack” by the educated and literary folk of his time (Schuman 108).

Perhaps the two most obvious comparisons can be made about the use of gore in their works and the theme of humanity. King admits he “will try to terrorize the reader. But if I find I cannot terrify him/her, I will try to horrify; and if I find I cannot horrify, I’ll go for the gross-out. I’m not proud” (qtd in Schuman 109). Magistrale believes that the “comparison between Shakespeare and King is a natural one Both King and Shakespeare possess a similar breadth of imagination: their work commands an intense fascination from the reader and the audience alike; scenes unfold through language that is both visual and visceral” (qtd in Smith 331). At times King’s use of description may seem obscene, but there are instances where it seems Shakespeare went for the “gross out,” too. For instance, in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* Lavinia reveals the names of her rapists by putting the “staff” in her mouth and guiding it with her stumps because her hand have been cut off and her tongue cut out. Or, in *Cymbeline*, Imogen mistakes Cloten’s body for that of Posthumus (because it has been beheaded) and then fondles and collapses upon the corpse (Schuman 109). While these examples may not seem shocking, their actual description in context is. As previously stated King’s “vulgar” descriptions often lead critics to question King’s appropriateness. However, King and Shakespeare are using these descriptions to achieve a purpose.

Not only are King and Shakespeare similar in their ability to “gross out” the audience, they both question humanity.¹⁸ Humanity is about questioning what it means to be human—the battle between right and wrong, good and evil. Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* all focus on the internal spiritual struggle of man. Their characters reflect “the sufferings of the weakest in their society” (Selden 145). Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*,

¹⁸ As does Dickens.

exemplifies some of the complex workings of the human mind. This internal struggle with what is right is perhaps what takes Hamlet so long to avenge his father's death. Hamlet could be seen as a character questioning morality. King's characters find themselves in the same kinds of situations. For instance, Father Callahan in *'Salem's Lot* struggles with alcoholism and is tormented with questions about his faith in God.

While Poe, Dickens, and Shakespeare are widely accepted and widely read, not everything they wrote was perfect—not every piece is. Schuman argues that King, Dickens, and Shakespeare all suffered from the same flaw—the “tendency to churn out enormous volumes of prose with great speed and without much of an inclination to go back over what he has written and make sure he has gotten everything just right” (108). Perhaps it is the sheer volume of their works that make this so. Regardless, King's works are analogous in many ways. These comparisons are no way exhaustive—nor were they meant to be, but they do show the similarities between King and these widely popular and critically accepted writers, all of which lends credence to the idea that there is something to gain by using King in the literature classroom.

King in the Classroom

“The big deal in relation to Stephen King where academics are concerned, interestingly enough, seems not to be whether his books are dangerous, but whether his books are good” (Smith 331).

The point is not that King is perfect, but that he is worthy of being read. Many of King's works could be useful to the literature classroom, but perhaps one of the most enlightening novels for students to explore would be *Misery*. Admittedly, there are aspects of Stephen King's works that are flawed, but those same kinds of flaws can be found in Literature (Hoppenstand 163). The objections made about him can also be made about any other writer. Obviously, it is

not enough to say that King is popular and therefore should be accepted by academics and used in American literature classrooms. Further, it is not just that King understands and responds to academics and therefore there should be discussion about it. As the examples above show, using King's works does allow for very important discussion about contemporary American literature, but there other ways in which his works would be beneficial. King's work provides an opportunity to discuss perceptions and distractions created between literature and Literature? Who decides what literature is? Is literature simply the published writings of an author, or is it the expressive meaning and value of a work? What makes a book great? According to Carroll Terrell, it is "Vitality. Perception. Ability to get down on the page just what these people are up to and why." The only thing that matters is the story and that is what King is concerned with (134). If these are the qualities that make a work great, who writes a story shouldn't matter. And in the case of Stephen King, all of the above reasons for academic disdain should be disregarded.

However, it is clear that the writer does matter. This begs the question who defines the canon? Is it the academe? Is it the perception of the work being artistic? Magistrale asserts that here are two things that make something canonical. Firstly, it is how the work is measured by the people who take it seriously (read it, write about it, talk about it, etc.). Secondly, the "academic" definition of classic is the works' ability to endure (Davis 119). Consequently, reading the texts allows for the ability to read about it, write about it, talk about it. Further, how long must a writer "endure" before he is accepted into the canon? Exploring these types of questions should help students understand what literature is and how it functions instead of just saying "it is because it is." Being able to discuss what literature is should help the students to see what defines the canon and "good" writing, and why writers like William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Henry James, and Mark Twain have long been considered part of the American

canon, and why more recently the contemporary American canon has expanded to include writers such as Kate Chopin, Willa Cather, and Zora Neale Hurston the latter being women and minorities.¹⁹

But, since King is not widely accepted, it is unlikely that many literature professors use King in the classroom. And, while Tony Magistrale is an exception to this, other literature professors have much to gain by using King in academics. While some have argued against his use of language, an idea that will be further explained later in the paper, James Jarrett, author of *The Humanities and Humanistic Education*, argues that for something to be artistic and therefore fulfill the purpose of the humanities the work must be aesthetically satisfying. For something to be art it must make the reader feel with all of his or her senses. Therefore, just because something occupies space does not mean that it is artistic²⁰ (214-215). Considering the number of King's books that have been sold, there must be something that draws readers in; seemingly it is the words that make them feel something regardless of what that emotion is. King admits "I'm not that interested in what you think all the time, but I am interested in what you feel" (Truitt 7). While language is typically determined by the intended audience, a notion of rhetoric, in this case, the language King uses is representative of the culture. Therefore, the language isn't about Rhetoric; it is about theory. In this case, cultural theory.

While King's works could likely be read under various lenses, cultural theory is pluralistic and focuses on both the text and the context. Further, cultural theory focuses on present day works and particularly those that are considered nonliterary. While this would typically mean

¹⁹ Interestingly, the 2007-2008 NCTE catalog offers books on how to teach the canon using the works of the "accepted" contemporary canonical writers like O'Brien, Carver, Walker, and Morrison. These writers are the current contemporary writers in the same era as King. The idea behind these texts is to show teachers how to teach these writers texts and "to make connections with other material in the literary canon" (22). If the idea of these books is to use popular texts as a way to introduce the students to the "literary canon," it would seem pertinent to use texts that the people are already reading, such as King.

²⁰ Jarrett also notes that the "very size" of *War and Peace* can create its own effect, but the real art comes from within the text.

forms such as film, fashion, music, television and the like, King's works often contain many of these cultural references, so reading King's works gives insight into our culture and in turn people's lives. By looking at these cultural references, it allows the reader to understand the human perception and experience. The argument is that King should be considered literary; using cultural theory is one way to identify King's importance.

Doing this allows the reader to see that texts do not stand alone, and instead that texts are built upon other texts. This is something King does by paying homage to other writers, often canonical writers like the ones mentioned above, in his work. Further, "[King's] own canon gives good indication of the amount of reading in the genre he has accomplished" (Davis 23). Not only is King a prolific writer, but also an avid reader. The depth of his understanding of other texts is made clear through the use of allusions in his texts. King makes mention of and alludes to innumerable writers in his works—often canonical writers. Despite his official exclusion from the canon, King often pays homage to the canon and in many ways introduces his readers to the canon. However, it isn't enough to say that he pays homage to the canon. What is more striking is the way King takes earlier significant writers and spreads them to a wider audience (Davis 24). Often, understanding the allusions in King's texts gives deeper meaning to the work, and can even bring new understanding to the works being alluded to. For instance, in *Lisey's Story* King introduces each section with a quote from a D. H. Lawrence work, particularly *The Rainbow*. Both *The Rainbow* and *Lisey's Story* explore the intricacies of relationships. *The Rainbow* focuses on three generations of a family and the tension that sometimes exists between men and women. Lawrence shows that feelings cannot always be expressed through conventional language, a theme also explored in *Lisey's Story*. King's work focuses on the relationship between a husband and wife. It isn't until the husband's death that Lisey really begins to understand who her husband was. In fact, Lisey's husband communicates with her

through other worlds which parallels Lawrence's idea that expressed language is not always conventional. This idea is further proven though King's use of Lawrence's "Bei Hennef."

You are the call and I am the answer,
 You are the wish, and I the fulfillment,
 You are the night, and I the day.
 What else? It is perfect enough.
 It is perfectly complete,
 You and I,
 What more—?
 Strange, how we suffer in spite of this! (463)

This section from Lawrence's poem looks at the dichotomy of how a relationship ideally functions, yet ends with the idea that we suffer "in spite." Really, the poem parallels the relationships that exist both within *The Rainbow* and *Lisey's Story*. Being able to understand how Lawrence's works function within *Lisey's Story* helps the reader to understand more about King's work and what is going on within it. It could also be assumed that having read both texts, the reader also comes to understand more about Lawrence's works.

Lawrence is not the only writer King references in *Lisey's Story*. There are at least thirty-five other easily identifiable allusions within the text. King admits "There really *is* a pool²¹ where we—and in this case we I mean the cast company of readers and writers—go down to drink and cast our nets. *Lisey's Story* references literally dozens of novels, poems, and songs in an effort to illustrate that idea" (511). By exploring the significance of the allusions, the reader gains more understanding of the text. In turn, a connection is made to the texts being alluded to. The reader can see the significance of the other works and the role they too play in literature. Through the allusions, an introduction into other texts has been made. This too is a great place for professors to help unpack the layers of meaning in the texts.

Obviously, the use of allusions is a significant aspect of King's work, and he shows his respect for past works. Though, he has not been given the liberty of building on the literary

²¹ The pool is where Lisey goes to gain "knowledge."

past, even though he acknowledges his debt to that past (Collings 86). Further, “as required of a significant artist, King has not abandoned the influence of the writers who most affected him, but has reshaped the thoughts and feelings of past generations to accommodate the present; this in itself should be noteworthy of King’s overwhelming contribution to present day literature, a contribution that has not been fully recognized because of his placement in the popular culture entertainment arena” (qtd. in Davis 111). As previously noted, being part of the popular genre can have its benefits. Not only because looking at cultural theory gives insight to the human experience, but also because doing so allows the reader to understand the human condition.

Therefore, the “same qualities that established his literary predecessors’ greatness [are] in Stephen King’s fiction. The themes found in his books are those that were expressed years before he began writing—they are as relevant to the need to understand the human condition as anything produced before him” (Davis 110). And, if literature as a discipline is to have a role in higher education, we need to do more with helping students explore the human condition. The human condition is about exploring the positive and negative aspects of being human, and about the emotions associated with the human existence. As previously stated, part of King’s popularity is due to his ability to relate to his readers. Part of this ability is the keen insight into human nature. Therefore, when we use King we learn more about what it means to be human—as we do when we read Dickens, Shakespeare, or Morrison. In this case, allowing students to examine and analyze how King’s characters react and interact with one another should allow them to further learn what it means to be human. King’s works often explore contemporary problems and themes such as marital infidelity, peer acceptance, human cruelty, alienation, treatment of children, and morality. Many of King’s works do fall in the horror genre, but according to King, “the horror genre has often been able to find the national phobic

pressure points, and those books and films which have been the most successful almost always seem to play upon and express fears which exist across a wide spectrum of people. Such fears, which are often political, economic, and psychological rather than supernatural, give the best work of horror a pleasing allegorical feel. . ." (484). King is basically questioning what people would do in difficult situations. As previously introduced, *Cell* is a great work look at to study human interactions. Using specific instances in the book and events happening in society, the students can see King's text as a commentary about the human condition and in turn see it as a warning, and because it deals with cell phones (something most students own) they can directly relate to the text.

As a more contemporary example, King's "Morality" questions what humans are willing to do to get what they want. As the title implies, it is about questioning our morals as humans. Here the characters, Chad and Nora, are faced with job loss and debt—things many people are often faced with. Nora's employer offers to rid her of her debt if she does him one small favor. The task is small and insignificant, but once Nora decides to fulfill the task her life spirals out of control. What she and Chad once had no longer exists, and while her debt is gone so is her life as she knows it. The reader has to question if it was all worth it and perhaps what they would do in the same situation. King is questioning what it means to be human and perhaps what we would do in a similar situation. And, even "If one cannot recognize the importance of King's contributions to and extension of American literature, one can observe King as a contemporary commentator of significance" (Davis 111). King's works contain topics being discussed in society and also struggles the readers may face.

King's commentary on various aspects of society and humanity is a notion Tony Magistrale, a King scholar and literature professor at the University of Vermont, explores in his classroom. One way Magistrale does this is through the use of *The Shining*. *The Shining*

chronicles the story of Jack Torrance a struggling writer who is faced with the difficulty of providing for his family, alcoholism, and abusive behaviors. Magistrale uses *The Shining* as a way to discuss pertinent topics such as: “What personal price must an artist pay in order to produce his art? How closely aligned are self-respect and monetary success in America? And why do people frequently turn to alcohol and gambling as a response to depression and financial stress?” (8). While not everyone wants to be an “artist,” people are often faced with decision of following a dream, or choosing a more secure path. So, then it becomes about the consequences we all face for our decisions. Further, the idea that people turn to alcohol and gambling as a response to stressful situations is not a new one—history tells us that, but if literature is about exploring the human condition, *The Shining* is a prime example of exploring what it means to be human.²² And, according to Magistrale, “this discussion will frequently extend personally and directly to the students in [the] classroom, who have their own stories to tell” (9). Furthermore, many of the issues discussed in *The Shining* are issues that King (as well as many other writers) faced. This kind of autobiographical information lends credence to understanding how humans act and react. In this instance, the notion of the human condition almost comes full circle.

Magistrale also notes that in his classroom, King’s novels “inspire more student writing and more lively class discussions than the works of any other writer the class studies” (9). He notes that most of his students are familiar with King, but have never looked at his fiction as literature. Again this brings up the question of what distinguishes “popular” writers from

²² Not only does *The Shining* explore the human condition, but the story itself mimics the writing process. Torrance’s seems to be alone in his writing experience, which could in part be to blame for his insanity. This idea that the writer stands alone contradicts current ideas in Rhetoric and Composition theory where the idea that writing in the garret is passé. Instead, current theory looks at writing as a collaborative act. In fact, this is seen in the literature classroom as well when students peer review each other’s papers. Again, this is a point of discussion for students.

“serious” writers. By using King, Magistrale discusses the idea that “popular” doesn’t necessarily mean “sub-literary” (9).

Magistrale uses King not only for lively discussion or to distinguish popular writing from serious writing, but also as a way to introduce his students to other American writers. “King’s fiction helps invite otherwise-reluctant students into the world of books and encourages them to understand and enjoy more canonical writers” (3). As one example, Magistrale uses *The Shining* to introduce Poe. He notes that when his students first read Poe they have difficulty understanding the language and the text. However, after his students read King they begin to understand more about Poe’s texts. The various allusions to Poe in *The Shining* shed light on the meaning in Poe’s works. Doing this gives the works more accessibility (6-8). Magistrale’s use of King in the literature classroom show one way his works can be used, and further goes to further prove my argument about the usefulness of King’s works. This lends credence to the idea that instead of chastising King for being popular, academics should look beyond King’s reputation and take advantage of his popularity.

Using Misery

“It is the tale, not he who tells it” (King, Different Seasons).

Even if there are weaknesses in King’s works, Schuman argues that he is still a “gifted and important writer” (109). Schuman notes King’s greatest strengths:

- a surprisingly effective prose style, especially in the area of descriptive composition and dialogue;
- an ability to create characters at once unique and universal, and who therefore interest and engage us;
- a strong and clear ethical stance, which often generates a reassuring thematic message;
- most importantly, an ability to imagine and represent plots which is absolutely brilliant. (109)

One way to fully understand King's strengths and why he needs to be heard is to examine one of King's works and how it could be effective in the classroom. King's *Misery* is an interesting text that in some ways mimics King's experience with academics and critics. Therefore, by examining *Misery*, some of the ways in which this specific novel could be used in the literature classroom, reiterates the notion that there is much to gain by using King. Like many other of King's works, *Misery's* protagonist is a writer. Like King, Paul Sheldon is a popular writer wanting to be taken more seriously. To do this, after a series of novels that brought him fame, Sheldon decides to kill off the main character of his novels, Misery. King's *Misery* "parodies and pathologizes fandom and obliquely manifests an author's fear—if not hatred—of the popular reader" (Arnzen 237). While King acknowledges the need for the popular reader, because his works wouldn't exist without them, it is also clear that he acknowledges that being popular can pigeonhole a writer. In many ways, this text examines high and low culture by stereotyping the parts played by each. Sheldon's popularity is what brought him fame, but at the same time, it is also what led to his tribulations. This is why popularity can bring *Misery*.

In many ways the character of Annie Wilkes parallels King's situation. Wilkes plays the part of the popular reader who brought Sheldon to fame, but she is also the one who holds him back. She also ends up with dominant control over Sheldon. Wilkes is the one who nurtures Sheldon, but at the same does not allow him to enter the realm of more serious writing. This is an obvious point. The popular reader can bring the writer to attention, but this fame can also hold him from critical esteem. In the case of King, he was first considered a popular writer and it was this fame, this attention, that make many believe that he is not worthy of serious attention. In *Misery* the oppressed overcomes his oppressor. It is almost as if King himself is saying that he will not be held back by anyone. Instead, like Sheldon, he will come out on top and will be taken seriously.

It has been made clear that academics aren't particularly fond of Stephen King and that there is still value in using his works. So, how can we use *Misery*? There are various ways that King's *Misery* can be useful in the literature classroom.

King uses *Misery* to show how the gap between popular and canonical can be bridged. One way King does this is through innumerable allusions to more "accepted" works. Canonical writers such as Wordsworth, Dickens, Hemingway, Conrad, Tolkien, Doyle, and a list of others²³ are all mentioned in *Misery*. By doing this, King not only gives the reader a good story, he also introduces them to works of the canon. He in essence, connects the popular and the canonical. One way this can be useful is by asking students to identify the allusions and discuss why the allusions are important to the text. This could be done by asking the students to read some of the texts that King alludes to as a way to introduce students to perhaps more difficult texts. Not only can this text be seen as a commentary on the American canon, it is also a useful text in exploring the various aspects of literature. For instance, King alludes to Haggard by comparing Annie to "an African idol out of *She or King Solomon's Mines*" (7, 60). *She* was the subtitle to Haggard's *A History of Adventure*, and short for "She-who-must-be-obeyed." Not only does this tell the reader something about the role that Annie plays within *Misery*, but introduces the reader to a highly accepted work. These two texts that King alludes to are considered classic literature. In fact, they were instantly accepted, have been translated into several different languages, and have never been out of print in over a hundred years.

This particular allusion to Haggard introduces another idea within King's work—that is the accepted versus the rejected. In *Misery* King openly speaks to those critics and academics who refuse to see that there is a need to bridge the gap, and that he is worthy of their attention.

Sheldon says:

²³ See appendix.

As a result, hadn't his "serious fiction" become steadily more self-conscious, a sort of scream? *Look at me! Look how good this is! Hey, guys! This stuff has got a sliding perspective! This stuff has got stream-of-consciousness interludes! This is my REAL work, you assholes! Don't you DARE turn away from me! Don't you DARE, you cocadoodie brats! Don't you DARE turn away from my REAL work! Don't you Dare . . .* (286)

King doesn't mince words about his treatment as a writer, and the use of allusions again, helps the readers to understand the influence of canonical works, their role, his reaction, and his treatment as a writer. Again, saying that we must bridge the gap between the literary and the popular.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Misery* is that King writes a text within a text. Not only is King writing the novel *Misery*, he is also writing the novel that his protagonist is writing. This writing of a text within a text allows the reader to see many of the moves made in writing. For instance, the protagonist Sheldon is held captive by Annie Wilkes, his biggest fan; she will not allow him to kill off the beloved *Misery*. Instead, Sheldon must write and rewrite the story to bring *Misery* back to life. The revisions are written as part of the text. The reader is able to see moves a writer must go through. For instance, chapter 28 of *Misery* is a handwritten chapter (Chapter 37 within the book) of Sheldon's book. The handwriting is somewhat difficult to read, but the underlining and emphasis in the text within in the text helps the reader to see how the writing has progressed and the steps Sheldon took to get there. In addition, the text within a text is done in a different font than *Misery*. These chapters within chapters include internal thoughts, underlining, and revisions that ultimately lead to the "completion" of *Misery*. This tactic allows the reader to see how revision works and how the writer must be able to gauge his audience. In this case, Sheldon revises the text in order to please Annie Wilkes. In this she plays the role of the general reader. On the other hand, it shows Sheldon polishing the craft as though he has something to prove.

The text within a text not only shows the reader the moves within writing, it also introduces the reader to metafiction.²⁴ Metafiction is not likely a term that beginning literature students are familiar with, and by reading *Misery*, the students are introduced to this Modern/Postmodern type of writing. King's text within a text poses questions the relationship between fiction and reality. Such as, how does fiction reflect upon itself? Doing this could also lead to discussions about other Postmodern works, such as *Slaughterhouse Five*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The World According to Garp*, or *The Crying of Lot 49*, and ultimately to the discussion of literary theories.

One possible way *Misery* could be used to discuss literary theories, is by using *Misery* as a way to introduce Postmodernism; it could also be used to introduce Feminist theory. Annie Wilkes is an androgynous character. Annie plays two roles, one of the loving mother who nurtures Sheldon, and at the same time, she causes physical pain and suffering by cutting off Sheldon's appendages. "The ambiguity of Wilkes' character is horrifying precisely because it amplifies our patriarchal culture's contradictory treatment of feminine social role" (Arnzen 239). Making Annie an androgynous character brings into question the idea of femininity and the role women play. King describes Annie as:

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. . . . 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. (7-8)

Annie at times plays the nurturing mother, but also plays the role of the terror. Further, Annie is often described as "forcing herself" on Sheldon as a man would "an unwilling woman" (5). King goes so far as to liken what Annie is doing to rape (5-8). Rape is typically thought of as a forcing

²⁴Other King works could be considered metafiction as well, such as: *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden* and *The Dark Tower*.

act against women, not by women. Asking students to explore the role Annie plays opens the door for discussion about gender roles and Feminist theory in literature. Because the dichotomy of Annie Wilkes is so obvious, the students should be able to easily grasp the representative ideals of Feminist theory.

As noted before, one important way King's works can be used is by defining what literature really is. Since *Misery* focuses on a writer who is considered a popular writer trying to be taken as more of a serious writer, it would be beneficial to the discussion of High culture versus Low culture. If High culture is about the art, literature, ideas, and perspectives that are acceptable to the elite, and Low culture is about the art, literature, ideas, and perspectives of the masses, *Misery* allows students to question where the line between High and Low culture is drawn—especially since that line is continually blurred. Sheldon's response to High culture versus Low culture questions the notion of acceptability. Further, since Low culture is typically considered a "dumbed-down" version that the masses can understand, this further explores the idea that there is a myriad of messages in King's works. King explicitly explores this idea:

Each time he had taken a year or two off to write one of the other novels—what he thought of as "serious" work with what was at first certainty and then hope and then finally a species of grim desperation—he had received a flood of protesting letters from these women many of whom signed themselves "your number one fan." The tone of the letters varied from bewilderment (that always hurt the most, somehow), to reproach, to outright anger, but the message was always the same: *It wasn't what I expected, it wasn't what I wanted. Please go back to Misery. I want to know what Misery is doing!* He could write a modern *Under the Volcano*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Sound and the Fury*; it wouldn't matter. They would still want Misery, Misery, Misery. (28)

At first glance it may seem that this quote is about understanding audience and what an audience wants, but King is really questioning culture and where literature lies within culture. Further, the question is whether or not the writer can ever escape the genre he is known for—a question King has long asked.

Obviously, these examples are not an exhaustive list of how King can be beneficial to the literature classroom. Instead, the purpose is to examine ways in which using his works would benefit students. King's potential contribution to the American canon is more pertinent than the argument against his popularity. King does more than just tell an interesting tale. He combines various elements of literature into something that many people want to read, and instead of chastising him for that, academics and literature professors need to take advantage of King's popularity. Why? Because the students have something to gain. Without this change in attitude, all there is is the *Misery* of popularity.

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Appendix

Sample allusions in King's *Misery*

H. Rider Haggard	7
William Faulkner	28
H. Rider Haggard	60
Bible	75
Lewis Carroll	113
Bible	139
Charles Dickens	140
William Wordsworth	170
Joseph Conrad	182
Thomas Hardy	201
Mark Mazower	203
Ernest Hemingway	214
William Faulkner	214
F. Scott Fitzgerald	214
William Faulkner	237
Sir Arthur Canon Doyle	249
John Irving	250
William Golding	250
Charles Dickens	250
J. R. R. Tolkein	251
H. G. Wells	283
Alexandre Dumas	325
Anthony Hope	325
<i>One Thousand and One Nights</i>	Themed throughout

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