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Certain Death: Mike Flanagan's Gothic Antidote to Traumatic Memory and Other Enlightenment Hang-Overs in *Doctor Sleep*

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Abstract: This article uses the English Gothic's eighteenth-century dismantling of male lineage and Enlightenment certainty in Horace Walpole's *The Castle Otranto* as a lens for understanding the twenty-first-century commercial popularity of director Mike Flanagan's Gothic films, particularly *Doctor Sleep*. Building on Stephen King's 2013 novel and Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film *The Shining*, Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* establishes a new lineage of male writers who value how the Gothic traditions of irrational emotion and doubt can inspire new realms of knowledge to lessen psychological suffering caused by traumatic lineage. By "traumatic lineage" I mean the threat and violence some find necessary to maintain the patrilineal claim that it is "naturally" the only way to organize society. Like Walpole's mythopoeic Gothic novel, Flanagan's Gothic films demonstrate how patrilineal lineage damages other men, not just women; thus, Flanagan's films offer psychological workbooks for practicing a type of reparative masculinity that involves exposure-exercises of cognitive behavior therapy (*Doctor Sleep*'s "boxing" intrusive, traumatic memories), male communities of care, and interdependent empathy. I support this argument by closely reading how Flanagan's filmic tools of domestic metaphor, uncanny casting, and repurposed sets from Kubrick's *The Shining* not only tell how to exorcise the inherited stills of the Overlook Hotel but also show viewers how to do so. We experience Dan Torrance's reparative masculinity in real-time, communally sharing and recasting Dan's horrific images of 40 years ago, but we now relate to them in psychologically helpful ways that enable community. In this way, I illustrate and encourage future study of how Gothic texts not only point to marginalized, repressed problems, but more importantly, how they help us relate differently to a traumatic past and innovate strategies for immediate relief from inherited suffering.

Keywords: eighteenth-century English Gothic novel; domestic metaphor; generational trauma; *The Shining*; *Doctor Sleep*; Mike Flanagan

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1. Introduction

A frenzied mining of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic tradition is currently taking place in plain sight during the twenty-first century—and proving wildly profitable. Within a four-year period, director Mike Flanagan released *Doctor Sleep* (his 2019 filmic adaptation of Stephen King's (2013) novelistic sequel to *The Shining*) and adapted Edgar Allan Poe's short stories to an eight-episode *Netflix* series, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (2023). My dizzying, circuitous attempt to label Flanagan's "filmic adaptation of a sequel to a novel" calls forth how eighteenth-century Gothic fiction was multi-generic since it frequently involved an epic historical lineage, sequel and prequel narrative order and flashbacks, epistolary form, sung ballads, and the most radical genre of the time, novels.

Literary theorists and New Historicists in particular argue that a specific literary genre from the past regains popularity not due to readers' changing tastes, but because the genre attends to something urgently needed during the present historical moment.[1] Given the English Gothic's historical origins in Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, I argue that King, Kubrick, and Flanagan seem magnetized to the eighteenth-century English Gothic's dismantling of two Enlightenment-era obsessions: masculine lineage and empirical certainty.

It is uncanny that after decades of deconstructive practice and post-colonial inquiry, the terror of Flanagan's twenty-first-century Gothic still stems from Walpole's eighteenth-century targets (2001). Flanagan's commercially marketable, Gothic dismantling of patrilineal order and certainty (Flanagan's *Usher* focuses on a family invested in Big-Pharma opioids) suggests that we once again need to be frightened by what Enlightenment tradition ignores and marginalizes, not only because the margins determine the center, but also because attention to irrational emotion and interdependent hybridity (the traditional, vilified Gothic margins of heroic Enlightenment) may help manage current Enlightenment-induced problems that appear unsolvable or inevitable.

Flanagan's visual Gothic adaptations serve one function that has attended the English Gothic tradition since its eighteenth-century origins; that is, like supernatural phenomena, the Gothic's generic traffic-jam continually nurtures doubt and uncertainty. Supernatural Gothic fiction does this not only to highlight the blind-spots of Enlightenment reality but also to generate innovation. In Gothic writing, certainty and moral righteousness guarantees a character's death, so I approach Flanagan's filmic horror, particularly its infinite diversity of cast, characters, and settings, as an example of our inheriting the productive doubt of late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. Consider, for instance, how the main child-character in both the novel and film versions of *The Shining* is a white male named Dan Torrance; but in both the novel and film versions of *Doctor Sleep*, a Black female named Abra Stone inherits Dan's position.[2]

One of Flanagan's most unique innovations is what I call "reparative masculinity", or an interpretive approach that aims to alleviate immediate suffering caused by centuries of traumatic patrilineal inheritance. Reparative masculinity also alludes to Eve Sedgwick's call for "reparative readings" of texts that allow texts to speak for themselves, in contrast to decades of "paranoid readings" that obsessively and only search for evidence of a conspiratorial origin that, even when found, frequently does nothing to change the present (Sedgwick 1997, pp. 1–37). In short, reparative masculinity, like reparative reading, makes space for twenty-first-century humans to self-correct without relentless humiliation and blame.

I argue in this essay that Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* nurtures innovative doubt, condemning characters who behave righteously to certain (and efficient) death. In doing so, Flanagan repairs a type of masculinity from King's and Kubrick's *The Shining* that has outlived its perceived usefulness. In particular, Flanagan finally identifies King's 40-year project to define the power "to shine" as the power to empathize with another human. It is very Gothic (and disturbing) to cast empathy as a strangely distant supernatural power, but in doing so, Flanagan recalibrates what we think we know, makes what we know quite strange, and offers a new roadmap of knowledge that is, at last, inclusively human-centered, illuminating both reason and emotion.

2. English Gothic Origins: Absence, Disruption, Innovation

We can view Flanagan as one of America's most traditional Gothicists only when we recover the English Gothic's eighteenth-century origins. By "traditional Gothicist", I do not mean "conservative"; in fact, the first English Gothic novel was written by Horace

Walpole, a very non-traditional son of England's first Prime Minister, Robert Walpole. Partly a reaction against the dominance of Enlightenment science and empirical government, Horace Walpole's (2001) Gothic nurtured patrilineal suspicion and the innovative doubt resulting from that suspicion.[3] Quoting Walpole's prefatory material, E.J. Clery reminds us how Walpole's Gothic generated its own morality by engaging the reader's "fancy"; Walpole states that his moral is "that the *sins of the father are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation*" (Clery 2002, p. 23). Supernatural fancy is, itself, a marginalized form of inquiry, as Markman Ellis states, "the supernatural is an issue of epistemology: an opening out of imagination that leads to amazement and bewilderment" (*History of Gothic Fiction*, Ellis 2000, p. 9).

Walpole famously disrupts and "bewilders" patrilineal order in the opening scene of his *Castle of Otranto* as "an enormous helmet" (p. 18) randomly falls from the sky, killing the "sickly" Conrad (2001, p. 17), heir to Manfred's throne, on his wedding day. Like Charles I's 1649 execution and the subsequent monarchal void England later termed, euphemistically, the "Interregnum", Walpole's (2001, p. 99) novel replaces ordered lineage with traumatic absence—a void that overwhelms Manfred as he tries to maintain the myth of a seamless lineage. Indeed, Manfred's bloodline is ultimately exposed as false due to his "ancestor's crimes" of poisoning a rightful heir. We should note that Manfred's lineage was always false but experienced by the kingdom as authentic. Through a feminist literary lens, this is how patriarchy normalizes its fictions—a process that must be fiercely, violently policed since the patriarchal story is contradictory and vulnerable. Walpole's novel reminds us that we do not inherit seamless authority; we inherit the traumatic absence of seamless authority. Walpole (2001) demonstrates how this authority is ultimately a frail ruse, capable of erasure within seconds from a "giant helmet" or acts of nature.

In the wake of lineage's destabilization, doubt and uncertainty reign. But Walpole (2001) suggests that doubt can be productive as it forces us to acknowledge what patrilineal order marginalized: diverse hybridity and irrational emotion. For example, *The Castle of Otranto* contains supernatural portraits, bleeding statues, and skeletal spirits speaking prophecy, all pointing toward how "the supernatural" is, itself, a type of knowledge; that is, the supernatural knows what we do not know. The supernatural betrays human righteousness and makes the space for doubt, and doubt is a precondition for creativity. One result of Walpole's productive doubt is his contribution to what Nancy Armstrong has argued in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (Armstrong 1990) was the trademark of many nineteenth-century women writers: domestic metaphor, or a novel that uses a home, estate, or castle as a metaphor for the mind. To Walpole (2001), Jane Austen, and even Poe, a house is an efficient metaphoric vehicle for feeling the psychological "otherness" of those inhabiting the house. For example, "a clap of thunder" is heard as the walls of Manfred's castle are "thrown down with a mighty force" (p. 98), prefiguring the demise of Poe's House of Usher: "I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound . . . and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly an silently over the fragments of the *House of Usher*" (p. 245). For Kate Ferguson Ellis, the Gothic home has always been a "contested" metaphoric site where gender roles are exposed as contradictory (*The Contested Castle*, Ellis 1989, p. xiii). Through domestic metaphor, the phrases "Castle of Otranto" and "House of Usher," signify not only a male bloodline, but also meticulously designed containers in which men no longer can defend their patriarchal order by discounting emotions as "weak" or "non-masculine." Thus, domestic metaphor constitutes a kind of proto-psychology for Walpole and Poe as they narrate the margins of Enlightenment reason. As Fred Botting notes, the Gothic recovered "characteristics like extravagance, superstition, fancy, and wildness" to effect "a more expansive an imaginative potential for aesthetic production" (Botting 1996, p. 22). Thus, the Gothic of Walpole and Poe encourages our awareness of naming and acknowledging how emotions color our perception

of external reality and are, therefore, a new source of productive inquiry and survival in the late eighteenth-century.

Situating Flanagan within eighteenth-century origins of the English Gothic allows us to identify a unique lineage of Gothic innovation: patrilineal absence leads to traumatic inheritance (for both women and men) of the threats and violence necessary to curate and maintain male fictions amid disruptive absence.[4] Anne Williams's *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Williams 1995) is the touchstone for studies of how the Gothic highlights the maintenance of patriarchy: "Gothic narrative enabled their audiences to confront and explore, and simultaneously to deny, a theme that marks the birth of the Romantic (and modern sensibility) that 'the Law of the Father' is a tyrannical *paterfamilias* and that we dwell in his ruins" (1995, p. 24). Even most recently as 2016, Julia Wright's study of Gothic masculinity speaks in Enlightenment terms: "Masculinity's long conventional association in Western thought with order, reason, and self-governance means that to challenge masculinity is to challenge . . . modernity" (Wright 2016, p. 21), especially since masculinity intersects with and underpins so many conversations between academia and entertainment media. Wright stresses how "[m]asculinity can be invented and then perpetuated through media representation until . . . it becomes 'invisible' and we cease to notice the artificiality of it" (Wright 2016, p. 22). In these terms, Kubrick's and Flanagan's Gothic films work to make masculinity visible.

But I suggest that some Gothic texts, like Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep*, go further than just complicit awareness or exposure. For example, traumatic absence can lead to innovative doubt, which spawns a domestic-psychological metaphor, which leads to the radical acceptance of marginalized psychologies and ends with radical empathy. Combine all these, and we arrive at Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* where we witness how ignoring generational trauma hobbles the psychological health of future generations. But what is ultimately unique about Flanagan's inheritance of the psychological project of domestic metaphor in both *Doctor Sleep* is that he uses King's Overlook Hotel and Usher's Otranto-like mansion to identify psychological suffering *and* demonstrate cognitive strategies to lessen that suffering.

3. Seeing Third-Terms Within Binaries: *The Shining*'s Gothic Defamiliarization

Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* reproduces the visual and aural setting of Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film *The Shining* with such obsessive attention that our revisiting of Kubrick's film is essential to understanding how Flanagan's film not only literally inherits Kubrick's horrifying material but also makes audience members feel the weight of inherited suffering and then, most importantly, begin to heal. In the following analysis of Kubrick's and Flanagan's visual adaptations of King's novels, I examine how the films employ tools unique to visual media to sustain King's Gothic literary focus on figurative meaning, where "figurative meaning" focuses on the shadows and connotations of words beyond literal certainty. While my primary texts are films, their traces of King's linguistic play and domestic metaphor are baked into the films' scripts and come along for the ride.

In King's novel *The Shining*, Wendy and Jack Torrance are parents to five-year-old Danny, a child who possesses the skill of "shining", or the ability to experience the minds of others and, consequently, predict future behavior. Jack wrestles with alcoholism and losing his teaching job while trying to write a novel, and Wendy is desperately trying to keep the family together. Danny's talent therefore threatens to expose the Torrance family as deeply flawed and in need of help, a threat that might explain why Jack takes a job as the winter caretaker at the Overlook Hotel, empty and isolated among the Colorado Rockies, to try and regain control of his role as man of the house. Kubrick recognizes that King's supernaturally Gothic premise focusing on an isolated, troubled, quotidian middle-class

American family offers a perfect petri-dish for examining how we all inherit destructive psychological patterns of behavior caused by manufactured certainty and an over-reliance upon reason.

Analyzing how Kubrick defamiliarizes certainty via aural and visual tools, we see how the main target of Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* is the topic of inheritance itself. Bleeding elevators, rotting bath-tub corpses, phantom twins, "Heeeere's Johnny", the twenty-first century continues to parade screen-shots from *The Shining* in a way that eerily mimics how survivors of trauma may not be able to rid themselves of nightmarish images of the original traumatic event.[5] Flanagan recognizes this analogous position between audience members and a grown "Dan" Torrance since both have carried *The Shining*'s horrific images "in real time" for almost 40 years. Flanagan uses this opportunity to demonstrate how traumatic inheritance need not mindlessly dictate our repeating the sins of our fathers. In particular, Kubrick uses the filmic tools of soundtrack, framing, slow transitional fades, and new technologies in music (the synthesizer) and camera-work (the Steadicam) to defamiliarize audiences' supposedly normal perspectives of everyday life and, in a move towards Gothic tradition, to nurture uncertainty.

In Kubrick's (1971) film *A Clockwork Orange* (adapted from Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel about the ethics of brainwashing), Kubrick plays classical tracks of Beethoven over scenes of intense physical violence to replicate how the novel's protagonist, Alex, is brainwashed by being shown images of violence while medicated to experience nausea.[6] After viewing Kubrick's film, some audience members may never experience classical music without thinking of Kubrick's violent scenes, thus *experiencing* (not just witnessing) the novel and film's theme of brainwashing. Kubrick uses film not just to describe the exact theme of the novel but to perform and demonstrate it in the aural and visual ways that only film can provide. Kubrick's film, like the literature he revered, not only tells but shows.

Add to this the fact that Kubrick recorded the tracks of classical Beethoven with a synthesizer (one of the first times the instrument was ever heard in theaters), and Kubrick's affective calling-card (his favorite tool for generating terror) becomes defamiliarization, or destabilizing the complacent norms of audience members by making the familiar quite strange. Kubrick's defamiliarization hits its stride in *The Shining* where the hostile strangeness, or what some post-colonial and gender theorists might identify as the regulatory violence of everyday life, threatens almost every frame and sound of the film, from the human screams that meld into sustained synthesizer notes in the opening credits (Kubrick 1980, 2:08) to the crown of knives festooning the Overlook Hotel's kitchen-columns that seem ready to fall upon Danny's head as he eats ice-cream with chef Dick Halloran (Kubrick 1980, 31:54).

Continuing Kubrick's use of new technology to defamiliarize audiences, *The Shining* is one of the first films to use the Steadicam, a gravity-defying device that allows Kubrick to float without bumps or jarring turns, just inches behind Danny's head as he races through the Overlook's benzene-ring maze of carpeted hallways (Kubrick 1980, 34:33). The defamiliarizing and otherworldly feeling of floating provided by Kubrick's Steadicam does not align us with the frantically pedaling Danny; rather, the Steadicam generates the feeling of our effortlessly chasing him, just inches from the back of his head, positioning us with the Overlook's ghosts in threatening pursuit. Amid the confusion of Kubrick's visual defamiliarization, we find ourselves seeing through the villain's perspective, a technique Kubrick also uses to anchor us behind Jack's perspective at his writing desk when Danny appears wounded with a ripped sweater after visiting Room 237. Note that we begin this scene from a position just behind Danny's head (1:01:13), but when Wendy suspects that Jack has physically assaulted Danny, we end the scene from a perspective just behind Jack's head (1:02:08). Amid Wendy's suspicions, and precisely when Wendy begins hugging

Danny, Kubrick welds us to Jack's perspective (1:01:54), distancing us from Wendy's care for the rest of the film. Kubrick knew that in the confusion caused by aural and visual defamiliarization of new soundtrack-instruments and Steadicams, he could force audience members to adopt new perspectives that they would never consider beyond a movie theater. Like Gothic novels, Kubrick's *The Shining* uses defamiliarization to destabilize our certain perspectives and productively confuse us into considering how the daily lives we silently lead contribute to suffering and pain.

The most influential filmic tool Kubrick uses in *The Shining* to defamiliarize everyday life and shock audience members into doubting certainty is his glacially slow transitional fade. At some moments, Kubrick's transitions include radically abrupt transitions marked by loud noises and slides (usually listing the day of the week the scene takes place), so their noisy abruptness makes Kubrick's quiet, slow fades all the more deserving of attention. Consider, for instance, the leisurely three-second fade between the post-interview scene where Jack's boss Stuart Ullman orders that Jack's luggage be carried to his apartment and the subsequent tour Ullman leads through the hotel's Colorado Lounge with Jack and Wendy trailing him (Kubrick 1980, 20:25–20:28). By 20:26, the screen resembles a ghostly, overlaid mélange of two simultaneous scenes, or a kind of third scene caught between the past and the future. If we skip a close analysis of these transitional scenes, dismissing them simply as "conventions" of connecting past scenes to future scenes, then we miss the fact that Kubrick's slow transitional fades scream to be recognized as scenes themselves; the transitional overlay constitutes a "third-term" between the binary of past and present, a third reality that we might not see if we are too certain about how to interpret filmic transitions. For example, in Kubrick's framing, the mountain of luggage piled behind Jack in the lobby at 20:24 fades directly into a group of the hotel's seasonal employees, some of them young, talking (Kubrick 1980, 20:28). Describing the factual evidence that Kubrick's visual canvas provides, we see a pile of baggage become humans. Tempting Kubrick's metaphoric connection further is the fact that Jack says, just as the fade begins, "I better collect my family first" (Kubrick 1980, 20:24), and with that scripted cue, we might consider how Jack considers humans and his family in particular to be baggage that weighs him down. Kubrick's transitional fade completes the aural-visual metaphor and almost summarizes the entire plot of *The Shining*—a summary we would miss if we did not closely read the "third-term" that Kubrick creates here. A second, more suggestive fade occurs earlier in the film when we first see the Overlook Hotel's mountainously alienated exterior fade into the lobby (Kubrick 1980, 19:38–19:41). In the "third-term" of this scene, exterior and interior settings merge as the A-frame structure of the Hotel's center tower becomes an A-frame ladder in the lobby (Kubrick 1980, 19:40). At the very least, Kubrick's fade exposes the difference between nature and constructed culture, a difference that the Overlook's hedge-maze (made of a plant meticulously shaped and pruned by humans) also highlights. Some humans make mazes for us and then try to convince us that the mazes are naturally occurring objects. In the transitional fades between scenes and the "third-terms" they create, Kubrick's *The Shining* suggests that certainty blinds us to the other realities that might exist.

Due in part to the terrifying defamiliarization provided by Kubrick's Steadicam and slow fades, the most disturbing Gothic moments in *The Shining* have been seared into cultural memory. For the remainder of this essay, I am interested in how Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* views these intrusively memorable images as vehicles for helping audience members not only feel how traumatic inheritance can be self-perpetuating but also how its cycle can be broken.

4. *Doctor Sleep*, *The Shining*, and the 40-Year Project of Reparative Masculinity

Thanks to the Gothic's historically determined focus on the margins of Enlightenment culture, most readers can readily see how Gothic art reveals terrifyingly abusive secrets about everyday life. However, a question that Gothic studies has not yet adequately answered is as follows: can Gothic art terrify us to self-correct? Can it even offer strategies to self-correct?

It took Stephen King 36 years to write the novel *Doctor Sleep* (2013), the sequel to his 1977 novel *The Shining*.[7] Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining* (1980) and Mike Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* (2019) are separated by 39 years. It is fascinating to note how these 40-year gaps between origins and sequels mimic, in real-time, Danny Torrance's maturation into an adult male in his 40s, thus turning the two films into bookends of a 40-year meditation on changing masculinities. Indeed, the entire plot of *Doctor Sleep* can be summarized as our watching Danny Torrance mature into "Dan" Torrance—a subtle name-change, but one that refuses to infantilize (and therefore dismiss the agency of) "Danny" as simply the fated product of Jack Torrance. One could argue that Dan effects the very thing that his patriarchal father Jack, devoted to the violently policing gender roles, never did: become an emotionally intelligent adult by "trying to find an accommodation between their inner priorities and the demands of the world" (de Botton 2019, p. 3).

This directly contrasts with his dad's violence and alcoholism. Never comfortable with his role as a monogamous, care-giving father, Jack Torrance finds an equally ill-suited position as caretaker of the Overlook Hotel, King's eighteenth-century Gothic domestic metaphor for the psychology of patriarchy. By "psychology of patriarchy", I mean the male power of definition and storytelling, interpreted here (with the help of Ellis's gendered lens of the "contested castle" metaphor) as a father-writer trying to maintain the Overlook's traditions. To King and Kubrick, patriarchy pretends to "host" humans in a hotel that schedules all of your activities and from which it is almost impossible to leave since strict boundaries and roles are maintained by the patrilineal ghosts of previous male guests (the murderous Delbert Grady is Jack Torrance's predecessor and mentor) in black-and-white photos shellacking the Hotel's walls.[8] Consider, for example, King's favorite literary tool, the pun, and how the job-title of "Caretaker of the Overlook Hotel" might sound benign, but only if we ignore that care-*taker* can consume care rather than give it, and only if we ignore how the Overlook's name can mean "ignore" or "repress." In short, King's puns show us how all words contain marginalized (aka "Gothic") meanings constantly screaming another truth. Patriarchy, frequently obsessed with "literal meaning" or "clarity", overlooks words' figurative connotations to enforce myths of literal certainty, but our doubting literal certainty restores language's innovative and marginalized potential. From a perspective of words' marginalized meanings that Gothic tradition provides, the Overlook is screaming before the Torrances even enter the Hotel.

The Overlook also functions as the patriarchal brain in its reliance on endless male-authored stories, from children's fairy tales (Jack's threatening, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me come in!" (Kubrick 1980, 2:03:20)) to Jack's manuscript that repetitively mimics a children's textbook ("All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy", infinitely repeated).[9] As David Punter has observed about the strength of King' s domestic metaphor, "[I]n the end, there is no way of separating the mind of the writer from the 'mind' of the hotel itself" (Punter 2009, p. 50). Jack's typed manuscript faultlessly follows *MLA*-citation style, even indenting long-quotes; thus, while Jack's structure suggests sane cognition, the content is repetitive insanity. Wendy connects this structured insanity to Jack's masculinity when she frantically pages through the manuscript, hoping to find evidence that she has not wasted her life performing the labor assigned to her role as wife while her husband

failed to fulfill his role as a male-creator and provider (Kubrick 1980, 1:42:20).[10] Kubrick's decision to repeatedly cut between Wendy's face and Jack's manuscript for a full two minutes makes *The Shining*'s truth about patriarchy even more terrifying: we watch a woman tragically realize that her entire life has been trapped in fiction authored by men, maintained through threat and violence.[11] Even worse, patriarchy's man-made fiction has been made to appear "natural", like the symmetrically designed hedge-maze whose pattern bleeds into the Overlook's orange, benzene-ring carpeting delimiting the roads for Danny's toy cars. Jack's lording over the model of the hedge-maze in the hotel (with his crown of overhead chandelier-lightbulbs) completes the Overlook's domestic-psychological metaphor of the patriarchal mind.[12] "Great party, isn't it?" (Kubrick 1980, 2:12:58), the tuxedoed-male, Horace Derwent, famously asks, toasting Wendy as she tries to escape patriarchy's party-games.

By 2019, Dan is barely surviving in both King's and Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep*, still stuck in his father's patrilineal maze. Flanagan's film begins by presenting Dan as a violent addict who wakes up in an unknown woman's bed and who, like his father, even dismisses children's requests for help and care (Flanagan 2019, 20:20). After one of Dan's benders, *The Shining*'s chef Dick Hallorann appears, convincing Dan of his being trapped in his father's traumatic lineage, partly due to Dan's repressing his "shine." Dan hits the road to try and outrun his memories, eventually settling in New Hampshire where a group of men from Alcoholic Anonymous adopt him, house him, and give Dan a job caring for dying male patients in a hospice-facility. The key word is this new masculine world is "care."

Dan's ability "to shine" (or telepathically enter other peoples' minds and predict their future actions) makes Dan's existence even more threatening to a power-structure the relies upon men's stories being interpreted, without question, as natural reality. But when *Doctor Sleep* suggests that Dan's childhood nickname of "Doc" from Bugs-Bunny cartoons (Kubrick 1980, 27:01) simply prefigures Dan's medical career at a hospice where he uses his shine to comfort people as they die, Dan fulfills his destiny as "Doctor Sleep"—a doctor of knowledge yet to be codified and credentialized because he not only talks about realms of supernatural existence beyond our supposedly certain life, but also *proves* that claim by telepathically entering his patients' heads and communicating without speaking aloud. Dan's patients experience his shine as a magical, final consolation:

> Elderly Patient: You're a strange kind of doctor
>
> Dan: I told you, I'm not a doctor.
>
> Elderly Patient: Oh, I think you are. Doctor Sleep. Doc, I am so scared it's going to hurt or be dark or be nothing at all. And I don't wanna---
>
> Dan: [telepathically speaking without opening mouth] Nothing to be scared of. Just going to sleep. Finally, true, restful sleep.
>
> Elderly Patient: Oh, Thank you. Thank you, Doc.
>
> Dan: Look, I shouldn't be here. Let me go get you someone . . .
>
> Elderly Patient: No, no, no. You're exactly where you should be. (Flanagan 2019, 39:21)

Telepathy does not trigger panic for the dying, but easeful assurance that everything we thought we knew about death (and life) might be wrong. Dan comforts patients by destabilizing concepts of certain death; thus, Danny from *The Shining* fulfills his nickname as Doc—a preternatural, before-his-time health professional attending to the most uncertain moment in humans' lives.[13] In the same way that nineteenth-century Gothic fiction such as *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, or Poe's short stories were placeholders for what we now know as modern psychology, it is fascinating to think of *Doctor Sleep* as a placeholder for what might become a new care-industry addressing death. Leave it to

the Gothic to remind us that we do not know what we do not know. The deathbed, King suggests, is only terrifying to those with Enlightenment-hangovers who cannot stomach uncertainty and doubt.[14] How strange that the Gothic's nurturing of uncertainty and doubt sometimes leads to comfort and peace.

If we recall the scene from Kubrick's *The Shining* in which Dick Hallorann knows Danny's nickname is "Doc" before his mom pronounces Danny's nickname aloud (Kubrick 1980, 26:48), then we see how Flanagan's sequel makes us relate to *The Shining* differently, suggesting that Dick always knew Dan would become "Doctor Sleep." When one of Dan's elderly patients in *Doctor Sleep* says, "You're exactly where you should be" (Flanagan 2019, 39:12), it foreshadows Dan's saying, "I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be", axe in-hand, at the film's climax (Flanagan 2019, 2:21:11). The phrase radically accepts how past events shape future potential, almost like a meditative, fatalistic commonplace that "everything is as it should be [given what has happened in the past]." Flanagan's film forces viewers to relate to *The Shining* differently than they have for the past 40 years, to see the older film as part of an ongoing narrative that always contained the potential for Dan's emancipation in *Doctor Sleep*. Jack's murderous breakdown at the Overlook limited Doc's future potential by creating "debts" Dan would have to pay to both his mental stability and to others, but either way, Dan could choose which kind of "Doc" he wanted to become to reconcile these debts: either a cartoon character drawn by another man, or a doctor who heals generational trauma. Enabled by others (particularly Dick Hallorann), Dan chooses the second option and develops strategies to enact what I am calling a "reparative masculinity" that, through the medium of film, becomes immediately available to audience members.

By "reparative masculinity", I mean an interpretive stance that is keenly aware of how patrilineal inheritance continues to limit the creative potential of all humans, especially men, but also strives to "repair" a default interpretive approach in which all men and masculinities are pre-determined to be wholesale suspects. My use of "reparative" here refers to Eve Sedgwick's call for "reparative readings" as a way to heal interpretations of art that are overdetermined by suspicion and an endless search for past sources of conspiracy rather than treating and healing symptoms of suffering in the present (see Sedgwick 1997, pp. 1–37). The opposite of a "reparative reading" for Sedgwick is a "paranoid reading" that does not allow a text to speak for itself. Instead, paranoid readings set out to find the source of a conspiracy or cover-up, and this evidence is frequently not only inaccessible but also not always helpful for ameliorating present suffering. As *Doctor Sleep* demonstrates, a reparative masculinity treats symptoms rather than inaccessible sources, and I will later show this approach converses with current trends in Psychology, as the field moves from Freudian Psychology's obsession with origins to more behavioral and exposure-based therapies, like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

But while Dan uses his shine to alleviate impending death for others, *Doctor Sleep* also introduces humans who weaponize shine for self-gain. Members of "the True Knot" cult consider death a certain end and violently resist it at all costs—even if the cost involves consuming the next generation of humans. The True Knot's leader, Rose-the-Hat, does not promise immortality, but does guarantee the delayal of death by eating the canned steam (the shine of the young), which she bottles during gruesome murders. Hordes of children die so that a select few True-Knot members may live a little longer, and in this way, King speaks to the one-percenters of late-stage capitalism, burning through the resources of future generations. More disturbingly, Flanagan heightens the terror of the True Knot's insatiable greed by showing how "pain purifies steam" (2019, 1:46:10); that is, the more painful a death, the more life-sustaining steam it releases. Like some Hobbesian dream of perfect government from *Utopia*, the True Knot deliberately heightens fear and suffering

to keep themselves in power. In this way, *Doctor Sleep* is like *The Shining 2.0*; the True Knot, like the patriarchal ghosts of the Overlook, feed upon a younger generation's shine to maintain myths of permanence. While the Overlook's ghosts of *The Shining* weaponize fear to maintain gender roles in a policed, claustrophobic environment, the True-Knot members in *Doctor Sleep* are roving predators in RVs who will go anywhere to feed on the shine of children and maintain their near-immortal lineage. The end of *Doctor Sleep* performs the inevitable clash between the two groups, but both groups sustain—or even nurture—generational trauma through violence to maintain American patriarchal norms of individual profit over communal health, of male power of definition and storytelling.

It is notable that amid Flanagan's meticulously recreated sets from *The Shining*, he recasts any original, surviving actors of *The Shining* with actors who possess uncannily familiar faces to those from Kubrick's film, and the effect is similar to how one's memory of a person's face differs from the person's actual face. The facial disconnect (the actors *almost* look like Wendy and Jack) admits we are not inhabiting the same Overlook; the difference admits that change has occurred. Thus, as we watch Dan fulfill his nickname, we relate to his history differently, or, as psychoanalysts might say, we relate to traumatic memories in a more helpful way. In particular, the actors' "same-yet-different" faces make us contemplate the distance between 1980 and 2019 and deter us from expecting *Doctor Sleep* to repeat *The Shining*. On the boundary between "same-yet-different", Flanagan makes the space to realize that we never step in the same river twice; and on that boundary, the potential to not repeat the past, surfaces.

5. "Meet the New Boss": Untying the "True Knots" of Males and Females

Dan Torrance's disruption of his traumatic lineage is not enacted in a vacuum. Reparative masculinity, Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* suggests, is a team effort. Note, for example, how Dan's bedside care of dying men betrays the banal commonplace that "everyone dies alone." Also consider how in Kubrick's *The Shining*, Jack never smiles around his family, but Nicholson's mile-wide smile surfaces whenever he talks to male ghosts like, Lloyd the Bartender and Grady the Caretaker, or describes the Donner Party's cannibalism to Danny. If others are hurting due to their "bad" choices, Jack is pleased. Jack is not a team-player; he is an isolated man who does not rely on others (a theme Flanagan will revisit in *Usher*). As Poe would inherit it, the Gothic perspective on American individualism is one of abject, self-destructive isolation. In fact, Flanagan's Gothic celebrates the productive chaos of improvised community over control-freak individuals.

More crucially, *Doctor Sleep*'s graphic depiction of literal baby-boomer predation upon younger generations offers a road-map for how to survive and even disrupt (or correct) patterns of trauma, and the solution involves diverse interdependence. Whereas Kubrick's *The Shining* opens with a lone island, foreshadowing the weaponized isolation of Wendy and Danny in the Overlook (Kubrick 1980, 00:01), *Doctor Sleep*'s diverse cast of characters rely on each other's shine to untie the True Knot of elders.[15] One of the only Black characters in *The Shining* was chef Dick Hallorann, but *Doctor Sleep* centers upon previously marginalized people of color to help check-out of the Overlook Hotel and escape the patriarchal mind-maze.[16] Dick, Dan, and Abra Stone (a thirteen year-old Black daughter of a mixed-race marriage) beat the True Knot of boomer culture by being intentional when using their shine, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

If the aim of the Overlook's ghosts in *The Shining* was to consume those who shine (or telepathically experience others' thoughts), then this project has grown desperately hungrier by 2019 as Rose's henchman Crow-Daddy says "There used to be more steam in the world" (Flanagan 2019, 47.13). The Overlook's predation goes viral with Rose-the-Hat's RV-traveling cult. Like the gang of high-school girls who humiliate Carrie White

for menstruating at the beginning of King's (1974) novel *Carrie*, *Doctor Sleep*'s first scene involves a women acting in the interests of the patriarchy, fortifying the Overlook's maze. Consider, for example, that Flanagan's choices for costuming accentuate King's yoking Rose-the-Hat's identity to an accessory (a pork pie hat) that most viewers associate with men and "magic", or tricking others.[17] After Rose is eaten by Overlook-ghosts starving for her hoarded steam of dead children, Flanagan's framing centers upon the empty, patriarchal hat, as though it's ready for the next authority to don, regardless of gender (Flanagan 2019, 2:17:34). Consider also the masculine name of Rose's mentee, "Andi Snakebite", a teenage girl whose traumatic history of sexual abuse by men Rose manipulates to convince Andi to keep killing others in a cycle of traumatic vengeance; Rose commands Andi to "eat well. Stay young. Live long" (Flanagan 2019, 22.39.15). In short, the major villains in *Doctor Sleep* are women who have inherited the names, hats, and trappings of the patriarchy, ultimately suggesting that the Overlook, the patriarchal mind, will gladly enlist women to help patriarchy "live long" (Flanagan 2019, 2:12:36). And whereas men chase other men in *The Shining*'s frozen hedge-maze, *Doctor Sleep* ends with Rose chasing Abra in the same maze. As Rose chokes Abra in the patriarchal maze, Flanagan has Rose's monologue sound eerily like something Jack might have said, 40 years earlier: "I was just like you when I was younger. I was special—and alone. But I met someone who gave me a sense of purpose, a sense of community. And I would have given you such a gift if things would have gone differently. No? Defiant, aren't you?" (Flanagan 2019, 46:07). Rose's "community" is an unabashedly masochistic one, and it is interesting to note that Rose's RV is the "Vengeance: Touring Edition" model (Flanagan 2019, 1:41:16), driven by a cycle of revenge that even kills Andi. "Fucking men. Fucking. Men", Andi growls as she aims her rifle at Dan, seconds before Billy shoots her. Andi then shines her last words into Billy as a commandment: "Kill Yourself." Billy does so, proving that solving traumatic inheritance through vengeance results in mutual self-destruction.

With this scene, Flanagan reaches a surprising conclusion: simply changing the gender of patriarchy's leaders in *Doctor Sleep* does nothing to weaken traumatic patrilineal inheritance. Solutions must contemplate issues beyond gender, solely. But not all women in *Doctor Sleep* are Rose and Andi.

6. "Boxing" Traumatic Memories

Thirteen-year-old Abra Stone is a mindful, Black Gen-Z female who recognizes patriarchy for what it has always been: a bad magic trick. Abra ("Abracadabra") turns patriarchy's magic trick (of baiting and trapping) against itself by using herself as bait for trapping both Rose and Andi, a strategy that she learned from Dan who learned it as a child from Dick Hallorann's advice: "World's a hungry place. And the darkest things are the hungriest and they'll eat what shines. Swarm it like mosquitoes or leeches. Can't do nothing about that. What you can do is turn what they come for against them" (Flanagan 2019, 9:10).

While Kubrick's *The Shining* disposes of Dick's character, *Doctor Sleep* resurrects his centrality, having Dick speak like a cognitive behavioral therapist teaching exposure exercises and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).[18] By this, I mean that Dick does not advise Dan to revisit the past to uncover sources of his present problems like some obsolete Freudian analysand, especially because doing so has failed; after all, the bathtub corpse-woman still haunts Dan's everyday bathroom-trips. Instead, Dick prescribes "boxing", or triaging and compartmentalizing Dan's unwelcome thoughts, treating invasive trauma memories like an unwelcome party guest from which we can distance ourselves (note domestic metaphor in Psychology)[19] rather than some symptom that requires relentless interrogation until an origin is identified and then perfectly exorcised. Like a

child psychologist, Dick even uses a visual aid, presenting Danny with a physical box that Dick's grandmother gave to Dick: "I want you to know this box, inside and out. Don't just look at it, touch it. Stick your nose inside it, and see if there's a smell. . .. Because you're going build one just like it in your mind. One even more special" (Flanagan 2019, 10:13). By accepting the invasive thought's existence, but not wasting energy ruminating about its origins, CBT and ACT aim to lessen distress associated with PTSD and offer an alternative to falling down a Freudian rabbit-hole looking for sources of trauma that may be forever unreachable.[20] Danny's doctor in *The Shining* asks when "Tony", Dan's imaginary friend, first appeared, and heals nothing. Dick in *Doctor Sleep*, however, gives strategies for immediate relief, none of which search for an inscrutable origin of the trauma. Whereas Jack gives Dan a legacy of traumatic suffering, Dick (a victim of his own grandfather's abuse) inherits his grandmother's strategies for immediate psychological survival and bequeaths them to Dan. The scene is powerful since it reimagines male lineage to be one where communities of men, inspired by women, care for the next generation rather than exploit it for immediate self-gain. Indeed, Dick tells Dan how to telepathically comfort other men:

> Do you remember the first time we really talked? When I spoke up inside your head? [*Telepathically speaking*, *without moving mouth*] Made you feel good, right? Knowing you weren't alone. [*Back to moving mouth*] Someone did that for me, too. And someday, Danny Torrance, you'll teach someone else. (Flanagan 2019, 7:31)

When Dick shines into Dan's head, it makes Dan feel less alone, something Dan will pay forward by shining into the heads of elderly hospice patients. When we note that all of Dan's patients are male, we recognize that Dick and Dan are using their shine to create and nurture male communities, not "lone" male individuals. But Dick does not simply comfort the trauma-addled Dan who has, at the film's beginning, repeated Jack's similar destructive patterns; instead, Dick, speaking like a surrogate father, tasks the rest of Dan's existence with reparative masculinity: "It seems to me you grew up fine, son. But you still owe a debt. Pay it" (Flanagan 2019, 1:14:25). Whether Dan's "debt" is his taking money from an unconscious woman with a toddler (thus repeating his father's harm of children), or Dick's sacrificing his physical existence to save Dan in *The Shining*, debt nonetheless remains. So a big part of Dan's healing involves repairing the effects of his trauma-influenced, bad choices. But inherited trauma may not be resolved within one generation; it could be an on-going process that is performed not only for your own self-care but also for the next generation's freedom from inherited trauma.

Treating the symptoms of traumatic memory through radical acceptance rather than interrogating the traumatic source in a typically Freudian manner is not, however, always productive. Similar to the way that "the shining" can connect humans but also be weaponized to manipulate others' emotions, Rose-the-Hat manipulates radical acceptance to dehumanize Andi. For instance, after Andi awakes from being turned into a True Knot member, Andi asks, "Am I still human?" to which Rose responds "Do you care?" (Flanagan 2019, 36:44). Rose redirects Andi's "care"—Andi's attention—away from ethical and philosophical concerns and towards the youthful outcome of eating steam. Similarly, Dan asks Dick what happens to the Overlook spirits once Dan boxes them in his mind: "What happens in those boxes? Do they die in there?" to which Dick gives the response of a cognitive behavioral scientist: "Do you care?" (Flanagan 2019, 1:12:37). Redirecting our attention to what matters, what can be helpful, is not always a healthy strategy to break traumatic inheritance; however, shining does not always end well, either. Goal-directed values, Flanagan suggests in both villains' and heroes' use of radical acceptance, must always inform our supernatural powers of empathy.

Doctor Sleep does answer Dan's question about the fate of his boxed ghosts. In her final confrontation on the steps of Overlook, a wounded Dan below her, Rose pushes her finger into Dan's leg-wound and shines into Dan's head, luridly gulping the steam escaping Dan: "Oh, so much terror! All your life, huh? . . . Delicious." Then, Flanagan randomly flashes Dan's and our traumatic memories before us: the typewriter; the elevators' flooding bloodbath, the hostile frozen hedge-maze (Flanagan 2019, 2:16:15). In this uncanny, terrifying moment, the "you" of Rose's question could be either Dan or us. But a new icon appears amid these traditional trauma memories: Dan's boxes, followed by the Grady twins, the carpet, until finally, Rose has been baited and tricked: "What are . . . you're not alone in there, huh?! What are you hiding, huh? What's in those [boxes]? Something special, huh?" (Flanagan 2019, 2:16:40). Danny responds with an Abra-like smile, "They're not special. They're starving" (Flanagan 2019, 2:16:48) and releases the Overlook's ghosts to feed upon Rose, fulfilling Dick's earlier advice to Dan: "What you can do is turn what they come for against them." Radical acceptance and Dan's redirection of attention empties the Overlook ghosts of their previous threat and redeploys them to feed on their own kind.

7. Communities of Male Care

Dan's caring relationship with Billy Freeman, another person of color, extends these male-care communities. Running from an alcohol-fueled bender, Dan escapes to another town where he meets Billy who senses that Dan is running away from himself: "Running away from yourself, that is a pickle. You take yourself with you wherever you go" (Flanagan 2019, 24:33). Billy also takes Dan to his first Alcoholics-Anonymous meeting, and when Dan asks why Billy is being so nice, Billy responds, "I know the look" (Flanagan 2019, 26:59). Here, empathic vulnerability, not performances of dominance and strength, unites men. Billy even gets Dan to admit, "I need help" (Flanagan 2019, 31.50), a vulnerable admission that could not be more unlike a crazed Jack Nicholson roaming halls with an axe bloodied by the murder of Dick, a Black man.

At Dan's first AA-meeting, Billy introduces Dan to Dr. John Dalton, the man who eventually guides Dan to fulfill his role as "Doc." Flanagan then cuts to Dalton's office (Flanagan 2019, 34:15), which viewers immediately recognize Stuart Ullman's pink-walled office in Kubrick's *The Shining*, where Ullman interviewed Jack to become caretaker. Again, Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* rewrites a community of male care over a scene that, 40 years-ago, was a scene where the masculine-named Ullman ("All-man") sat before a US Flag, recited the duties of caretaking the Overlook Hotel, and smiled while telling a sugar-coated vignette of Grady's murdering his wife and children. Flanagan injects male care into a setting that formerly exuded threat. Flanagan's reparative scenes like this enable Dan's new relationship to his father's memory, a relationship also made possible by Dan's empathizing with his father's alcoholism:

The only way I got to know [my dad], was when I went dark . . . when I drank to dull the, or uh, whenever I wanted to break someone's face, 'cause the drinking and the temper and the anger, those things in me were his. And they were all I could know of him. But now, well, now I get know him a little different, 'cause he also stood in a room like this once, wanting to get well for me and my mom. And he held the chip in his hand and the chip said five months, and on that day, he . . . before it all . . . well, on that day, all he wanted in the world was to stand where I'm standing now. And here I am. So thank you for us both, I guess. This is for Jack Torrance (Flanagan 2019, 41.38).

Note "where I'm standing now"; the verb "standing" repeatedly appears during moments, like Ullman's office, where Flanagan rewrites our relationship to *The Shining*'s most traumatic scenes. For example, Abra and Dan confront Rose-the-Hat on the famous Overlook stairs, where Rose leans over Jack's rusting typewriter, literally taking Jack's place

at the throne of male-storytelling (Flanagan 2019, 2:08:30). Dan tells Rose, "You should be afraid… Because you don't know where you're standing" (Flanagan 2019, 2:09:00), warning her of the traumatic power her father wielded, 40 years ago, from that same position (Flanagan 2019, 2:09:55). Later, after half-succumbing to the Overlook's ghosts and standing in room 237 where Jack faced his most repressed fears, Dan carries his father's axe, threatening Abra, who just smiles. Dan asks Abra why she's smiling, and Abra responds, "Because you don't know where you're standing" (Flanagan 2019, 2:20:06), addressing the Overlook as "you" and referring to its control of Dan's body. Abra's next comment crystallizes Flanagan's domestic metaphor: "You're the hotel. But he's [Dan's] still in there" (Flanagan 2019, 2:20:34), making the space for Dan to contemplate the distance between his inherited trauma and his reaction to that trauma. Abra reaches out and grasps Dan's bloodied wrist—not the axe. By doing so, Abra de-escalates the violence by privileging human connection over possessing Dan's weapon. Flanagan freezes on the still of a Black female teenager's hand reaching past the bloody weapon to hold Dan's white, bloody wrist (Flanagan 2019, 2:21:00), and Dan drops the axe. Dan again says, "I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be" (Flanagan 2019, 2:21:11), and then burns down the Overlook to clear the runway for Abra's generation. Throughout the film, "standing" therefore acquires figurative connotations of how Dan is "resisting" or "rewriting" a new masculinity built on radical acceptance and care.

Although Danny physically dies after burning down the Overlook, Flanagan's film has prepared us to reinterpret death's boundary as permeable and uncertain. In fact, in the final scene, Abra shines with the dead Dan, knowing that he's "okay" (Flanagan 2019, 2:24:20). When Abra asks if there are more Roses, Dan replies, "The world's a hungry place, a dark place. Maybe there's more of them, or things like them, or worse, but there are more people like you, too. People who stand" (Flanagan 2019, 2:24:29). Dan not only gives Abra the advice Dick once gave to Dan, but Abra teaches Dan about standing up to what we cannot ignore. And "standing up to what we cannot ignore" may be the most concise goal of most Gothic texts created since the eighteenth century.[21]

8. Empathy and "The Shine": Conclusions

When we remember that "shining" allows Dick, Dan, Rose, and Abra to inhabit each other's heads and look through another person's eyes, when we watch Rose extract and then hoard the shine of children to feed her ability to inhabit other minds and brainwash them, when we hear that "[t]here used to be more steam in the world" (Flanagan 2019, 47.13), *Doctor Sleep* reveals that "to shine" has, for 40 years, been a metaphor for "to empathize"; specifically, a power to empathize with others so deeply that you can either ease their suffering (Doc Dan) or weaponize their thoughts to destroy them so you can consume their generationally allotted resources for your own health (Rose and the True Knot). Through the lens of Gothic tradition and only after Flanagan's film in 2019, *The Shining* resembles one bookend in a 40-year project of strengthening empathy—and, in a classic Gothic reminder of the darkened margins, warn us of how our empathy can be weaponized by others against our best interests. How appropriate that Gothic fiction refuses certainty when a reader's motives and values enter the picture.

Similar to Carrie White, Dan has been made to feel ashamed of his empathic telepathy precisely because it can expose patriarchy's self-absorbed, hidden motives. In the middle of *Doctor Sleep*, Dan instructs the justice-seeking Abra to hide her shine: "Abra, go home. Don't chase these people. Don't aggravate them. Find anything … to stop that shine of yours…. Keep your head down; stay safe" (Flanagan 2019, 1:10:49). Note that Dan, via domestic metaphor ("go home"), instructs Abra to comply with patriarchy psychology, but Abra rejects Dan's trauma-damaged advice. Instead, Abra commits to stopping the True

Knot's predation of children. In the final moments of the film, a ghostly Dan shines with Abra, performing humble, apologetic self-correction: "I was wrong. Shine on, Abra Stone" (Flanagan 2019, 2:24:29). Flanagan's reparative masculinity foregrounds self-correcting men who apologize when wrong.

Amid rebellious smiles and big-band music from the 1920s, Flanagan recasts Kubrick's end to *The Shining* as a 40-year project of reparative masculinity, concluding with radical acceptance of traumatic heritage and bequeathing a lineage of care not just to white men, but to any human in need of healing. From Dick Hallorann, to Dan Torrance, to Abra Stone, the duty to communally shine passes from a Black elderly male, to a white middle-aged male, to a Black Gen-Z female. And none of them could have survived without the other. As shown above, Abra, in particular, has routinely contributed three strategies to help dismiss patriarchy's haunting omnipresence in quotidian life: strategic justice, humble psychological care, and subversive laughter.

Lest we leave *Doctor* Sleep mistaking it to be a Puritan morality tale, we should recall that Abra and Dan's "standing" against the True Knot is a type of violent vengeance, begot from the deaths of their own parents, and Abra particularly delights as she says "I hope it hurts" several times while watching True Knot members die. Although King's novel ends on Dan's warning Abra of her anger (King *Doctor Sleep* 2013, p. 627), Flanagan's *Doctor Sleep* lets Abra's vengefulness hang in the air, and while this explains why the bathtub-corpse haunts the background of the film's final frame. Flanagan's lineage of shine tries to manage traumatic inheritance without redistributing suffering in the name of righteous justice, because doing so would commit the same revenge-fantasy that drives the Overlook's ghosts: make others hurt more than you. But Abra Stone does inflict suffering on the True Knot (or, people who kill to avoid suffering), enacting a Gothic reckoning of which Shakespeare warned: "These violent delights have violent ends" (Shakespeare 2000, Romeo and Juliet, 2.6.9). Smiling as she closes the bathroom door, consciously boxing herself in the room with the bathtub-corpse, Abra begins her fourteenth year on the planet, forever tasked with constant vigilance against Jack Torrance's ghosts, boxing them to avoid violent engagement with—and thus consumption by—their cycle of vengeance. Like most psychological therapy, Flanagan's Gothic lineage does not promise certain healing or permanent cure; it simply tries to make the next generation suffer less.

Doctor Sleep participates in the Gothic's almost 250-year-old project of nurturing and seeding doubt to innovate solutions and warn us of self-destructive lineages. In the end, the pleasure some viewers get from Flanagan's Gothic films may involve the disturbing comfort we receive in realizing that the feelings of social and political chaos characterizing "these difficult times" were always already there during the Enlightenment, during a time when the Gothic fiction tried to point a way beyond certainty. Flanagan's films recover that path, hand us a workbook, and bid us to follow them into an uncertain, productive future.

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Notes

[1] Literary New Historicists, in particular, see the revival of past literary genres serving the imaginative political needs of a specific historical moment, especially Michael McKeon (2002) *The Origins of the English Novel: 1660–1740*. Satire, for example, was not as popular to the discipline-obsessed British Victorians as it was to eighteenth-century "Scriblerians," such as Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and John Gay, and one might argue that satire's diminution was at odds with the Victorians' fevered policy-making and over-zealous "earnestness" (Oscar Wilde's term for Victorian reasoning) necessary to maintain its imperial

conquests—a task most Victorians neither wanted to see satirically ridiculed or destabilized. The politics and government of some historical moments neither wish to "laugh at themselves" nor acknowledge their blind-spots, since to do might be perceived as admitting mistakes, fallibility, and uncertainty. After 9/11 in America, satire was not valued as much as before, and some publishers might argue that satire has never regained its earlier commercial popularity since then. It is tempting to ask whether some literary traditions of the past should just stay there. But the Gothic was also purely an eighteenth-century innovation as well.

[2] Consider also how Flanagan's *Fall of the House of Usher* populates Poe's white Usher family with family members who destabilize the traditional identity categories of race, sexuality, and gender. Nothing is righteously nailed down in Flanagan, and his work continually upends Enlightenment tools (such as the certain empirical truths that new eighteenth-century technologies like science, encyclopedias, and Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) advertised) for categorizing (and therefore limiting) humans within boundaries. Even the justice-seeking "villain" of Flanagan's *Usher* (Verna) shape-shifts into no less than eight different professional identities (and even an animal) over eight episodes.

[3] E.J. Clery's "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction" offers a solid summary of Gothic "Romance" as a reaction against eighteenth-century realist debates about "probability": "Walpole accused modern fiction of being too probable . . .. The chief enemy of fancy in his view was Samuel Richardson . . . whose narrative practices had been raised to the level of absolute moral prescription by Samuel Johnson in a well-known essay in the journal *The Rambler* (No. 4)" (Walpole 2001, p. 23).

[4] See Katarzyna Więckowska's calling this fiction an "open secret" maintained by Gothic fiction (Więckowska 2012, p. 113).

[5] In the 40 years between *The Shining* and *Doctor Sleep*, images and lines from Kubrick's film have experienced a cultural permanence, surfacing in everything from *The Simpsons* to Halloween costumes, and most recently, as endless online memes. Screen-shots from *The Shining* circulate like ruminations, almost approximating the intrusive thoughts and traumatic memories that five-year-old Danny Torrance experiences in Kubrick's film.

[6] Alex uncannily mimics the audience's exact position; that is, we watch a violent movie in which Alex watches a violent movie.

[7] For a concise critical history of King's and Kubrick's *The Shining*, see (Hand 2020, pp. 91–92). Hand's chapter also narrates (and is a solid encyclopedia of) the afterlives of Kubrick's *The Shining* in popular culture.

[8] Jack repeatedly talks about how he is comfortable in the Overlook; how he never wishes to leave; how he "fell in love with it right away. When I came up here for my interview; it was as though I'd been before . . . It was almost as though I knew what was going to be around every corner" (Kubrick *The Shining* 1980, 37:06).

[9] We should note that the male privilege of narrating and interpreting reality is policed so intensely Kubrick's film, that of all the possible accidents that trigger Jack's violent rage, it is Danny's "messing up" of Jack's manuscript after a day of Jack's teaching that ignites the alcohol-abusing father to physically beat his son.

[10] By "perform" here I mean that Wendy has tried to flawlessly fulfill and even exceed the socially assigned expectations of her labor as a wife; that is, she has gone through the labor of birthing Danny as well as performed more "masculine" labor, such as managing the Overlook's boilers and wrestling open the industrially-sized cans of fruit-cocktail in the hotel's kitchen. Compared to Jack's fulfillment of his socially assigned expectations of labor (such as economically providing for his family), Wendy outperforms Jack.

[11] See Elizabeth Jean Hornbeck's 2016 essay "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?: Domestic Violence in *The Shining*" in *Feminist Studies* for her attempt to refocus public dialogue on how Kubrick's *The Shining* is "a horror story because it explores the horror of family violence" (Hornbeck 2016, p. 719). Hornbeck's states, "the main point of the film" is "America's culture of violence implicitly sanctions violence within the family" (Hornbeck 2016, p. 696).

[12] Kubrick extends King's domestic metaphor into the collapsing, claustrophobic spaces of the Torrance's apartment, then the smaller bedroom, the tiny bathroom window separated by the "Redrum" door.

[13] In many ways, end-of-life care is a holy grail of modern medicine, which tends to focus on extending life, not attending to end-of-life as, itself, a stage of existence.

[14] On our deathbeds, we might finally be "open-minded" (or, as Emily Dickinson (1960) famously wrote, triumphantly "finished knowing" [No. 280, ln 20]).

[15] Given King's tendency for puns in *The Shining*, we might note that our saying "True Knot" aloud makes the phrase indistinguishable from "True Not", and this suggests that the elders' group has always been contradictory and unstable—a fact that the film might convey more effectively than the novel since a film's audience never silently reads "True Knot" on a page; rather, they repeatedly hear the contradiction each time the group' name is spoken aloud.

[16] We might remember that Jack and Delbert Grady use racial slurs to dehumanize Dick Hallorann in the ballroom's blood-red male restroom (the most "men only" setting of the film).

[17] Note that Rose-the-Hat's character-name is rarely used without the accessory; she is "Rose-the-Hat" and rarely "Rose", which suggests she has no selfhood or individual identity beyond her carrying and curating patriarchal psychology into the future, until another dons the hat.

[18] According to Thomas R. Lynch's *Skills Training Manual for Radically Open Dialectical Behavior Therapy*, "Radical Acceptance is letting go of fighting reality and is the way to suffering that cannot be tolerated into pain that can be tolerated" (Lynch 2018, p. 64).

[19] The "uninvited party guest" metaphor is commonplace in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help patients radically accept emotional pain's existence, without giving it the so much intensive attention that the emotion consumes the patient's awareness of the pain.

[20] Peter A. Levine's *Waking the Tiger: Healing from Trauma* might put Dick's "boxing" this way: "The healing of trauma is a natural process that can be accessed through an inner awareness of the body. It does not require years of psychological therapy, or that memories be repeatedly dredged up and expunged from the unconscious. We will see that the endless search for and retrieval of so-called 'traumatic memories' can often interfere with the organism's innate wisdom to heal" (Levine 1997, sct. 1.3; location 666/4735). Dick's "boxing" is also similar to how exposure skills in Acceptance and Commitment therapy teaches patients to watch emotions rise and fall, rather than avoiding them or inhabiting them "and to accept rather than resist the ebb or flow of your feelings" (McKay et al. 2020, p. 123).

[21] See Jerome Hogle's argument for why the Gothic remains relevant: "The Gothic Has lasted as it has because its symbolic mechanisms, particularly its haunting and frightening specters, have permitted us to cast many anomalies in our modern conditions, even as these change, over onto antiquated or at least haunted spaces and highly anomalous creatures. This way our contradictions can be confronted by, yet removed from us into, the seemingly unreal, the alien, the ancient, and the grotesque" (Hogle 2002, p. 6).

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