

ARCHAIC, PHALLIC, AND CASTRATED: REVISITING STEPHEN KING'S *THE SHINING* THROUGH THE TROPE OF THE MONSTROUS MOTHER AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

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ABSTRACT: Stephen King's novel *The Shining* (1977) has often been considered a contemporary classic that updates the nineteenth-century ghost story and narratives of haunted houses, while it reflects latent fears about the collapse of the traditional family, and the threat to hegemonic masculinities upon the rise of feminist studies. Drawing on Barbara Creed's notion of the monstrous-feminine, it is feasible to reinterpret one of King's most iconic novels as a representation of latent male fears of the trope of the monstrous mother in its different representations. It may be thus argued that, from a male perspective, the archetype of the monstrous mother derives from patriarchal motherhood, as a male interpretation of the ancestral and primal dread toward the maternal power of life generation and destruction as well as toward the primordial role of the mother during the preoedipal and oedipal phases of development. This article offers an analysis of King's novel *The Shining* focused on the trope of the monstrous mother, as a result of patriarchal motherhood in its diverse manifestations, encompassing the archaic mother, the phallic mother, and the castrated mother.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis, patriarchal motherhood, the uncanny, the abject, the monstrous-feminine.

ARCAICA, FÁLICA Y CASTRADA: REVISITANDO *THE SHINING* [*EL RESPLANDOR*] DE STEPHEN KING A TRAVÉS DEL TROPO DE LA MADRE MONSTRUOSA Y SUS MANIFESTACIONES

RESUMEN: A menudo se ha considerado la novela *El resplandor* (1977) de Stephen King como un clásico contemporáneo que actualiza el cuento de fantasmas decimonónico y las narraciones de casas encantadas, a la par que refleja temores latentes acerca del colapso de la familia tradicional y la amenaza a las masculinidades hegemónicas ante el desarrollo de los estudios feministas. Tomando como base la noción de lo monstruoso-femenino por parte de Barbara Creed, resulta factible reinterpretar una de las novelas más icónicas de King como representación de temores masculinos latentes acerca del tropo de la madre monstruosa en sus diferentes representaciones. Por consiguiente, puede argumentarse que, desde una perspectiva masculina, el arquetipo de la madre monstruosa deriva de la maternidad patriarcal, como interpretación masculina del terror ancestral y primario hacia el poder materno de generación y destrucción de vida, así como acerca del papel primordial de la madre durante las fases de desarrollo preedípica y edípica. Este artículo ofrece un análisis de la novela de King, *El resplandor*, focalizado en el tropo de la madre monstruosa, como resultado de una maternidad patriarcal en sus diversas manifestaciones, incluyendo la madre arcaica, la madre fálica y la madre castrada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: psicoanálisis, maternidad patriarcal, lo extraño, lo abyecto, lo femenino-monstruoso.

## INTRODUCTION

In her volume on monstrous motherhood, Barbara Almond asserts that «we need mothers so badly, so deeply, that the idea of an unnatural mother is, literally, monstrous» (2010: 22). Actually, the notion of ‘the mother as monster’ constitutes the basis of one of the most primal human fears. In her seminal book on the monstrous-feminine, Barbara Creed challenges the patriarchal view that women have traditionally been portrayed as victims in horror fiction, since she argues that the epitome of the monstrous lies in the female reproductive body itself (1993: i). As Mathias Clasen argues, through horror fiction, humans resort to «make-believe that allows them to experience negative emotions at high levels of intensity within a safe context» (2017: 4). Hence, by means of fulfilling an intrinsically cathartic function, horror narratives pave the way for symbolically addressing our basest dreads, among them, the fear of the ancestral mother figure. Through the Freudian concept of the uncanny and the Kristevan notion of the abject, which symbolically disrupt the established boundaries of the self, the familiar mother turns into a source of estrangement. As Cynthia Freeland claims, feminist studies of horror fiction have mostly relied on psychoanalytic frameworks whereby women have been portrayed as castrated, or rather, as evoking male castration anxiety (2004, 743). From this perspective, Laura Mulvey (1975) establishes the analogy between the woman and the object of the look, and correspondingly, between the man and the possessor of the look. Subsequently, Linda Williams (1984) rather defends that women possess the gaze in horror, but, because of that, they become aligned with monsters, thus representing threats to patriarchy that require punishment. Besides, drawing on Julia Kristeva’s notion of maternal authority—which does not locate horror in castration anxiety, but rather, in the preoedipal stage, at which the infant struggles to create boundaries with the mother to forge its ego identity—Creed (1986) contends that not only does horror concern women as victims, but it also involves monstrous maternal women who may be castrating. Accordingly, Creed rejects the patriarchal notion that female monsters are terrifying because they are castrated, since she rather defends that the monstrous-feminine, as rooted in maternal authority, becomes deeply disturbing precisely owing to the suspicion that the mother might castrate (1993: i). This shift of paradigm, from castrated to castrating mother, may be traced along the fiction of the American master of contemporary horror, Stephen King, and his portrayal of the trope of the monstrous mother in its different manifestations. In fact, the prevalence of Creed’s precepts is displayed by means of the re-edition of her seminal essay in recently published compilations which focus on horror and gender.

As an alternative to psychoanalytic approaches, as Freeland further argues, it is also possible to interpret horror through other feminist frameworks, which analyse gender, sexuality and power relations between the sexes in representational contexts and practices, that is, through gender ideologies (2004, 751). In this respect, early approaches to King’s novels concerning the representation of the mother figure mostly ranged from highlighting her character typification to emphasizing her demonization. As a case in point, George Beahm puts forward King’s own admission that his female characters are often not rounded enough (1991, 58-9). However, as Gail Burns and Melinda Kanner claim, the fact that women in King’s horror fiction might not always arise as three-dimensional characters responds to a culturally shared patriarchal understanding of what constitutes a woman, and particularly, a mother (1990: 158). Similarly, Linda Badley also argues that King often makes use of archetypal female characterization to portray women (1996: 53). Nevertheless, as King’s fiction began to attract further scholarly attention, some studies began to revisit his novels from a gender perspective. In particular, Kathleen

Lant and Theresa Thompson (1998) draw attention to the association of women with evil, the struggle between female power and male authority, and monster imagery associated with the mother figure. Following this groundbreaking volume, more contemporary studies focused on the analysis of masculinities in some of King's novels, as Douglas Keeseey (2002) underscores male fears of ambivalent mother figures who are portrayed as both caring and castrating. Besides, more recent criticism has approached King's fiction through the disruption of binary gender roles, especially in relation to mother figures, like Steven Bruhm's analysis (2000) of the mother as a horror figure and the subsequent fear of effeminization, and Hollie Catherine McDonnell's study (2023) on ambivalent gender roles that render mother figures both protective and menacing. With the advent of aging studies, King's later novels have been analyzed revolving around the disturbing effect that the monstrous mother has on men and their aging masculinities, while the character of the aging mother arises as an older woman who becomes a source of ancestral fear.

A new trend of critical studies in King's fiction, resorting to both psychoanalytic feminist approaches, but also gender ideologies, may pave the way for revising some of King's earlier novels focusing on the approach of gender and aging with particular attention to the archetype of the monstrous-feminine as embodied by the mother figure. Following *Carrie* (1974) and *Salem's Lot* (1975), King published his third novel *The Shining* (1977), which was mostly interpreted as an allegory of the collapse of marriage and family life within the classic tradition of the ghost story. Accordingly, as Jonathan Davis claims, King's novel *The Shining* portrays « a conflict arising from the pressures and expectations of conformity to [...] the family» (1994: 93). Besides, taking into account Tony Magistrale's argument that King's fiction involves a continuation of the literary tradition of American Gothicism (2002: 100), *The Shining* arises as a contemporary adaptation of the haunted house novel in the footsteps of nineteenth-century proponents like Edgar Allan Poe and Henry James. Nonetheless, little attention has been drawn to the notion of the monstrous-feminine as embodied in the mother figures in King's classic novel *The Shining*. Bearing in mind the prominence that the Overlook Hotel acquires as a symbolic receptacle which prefigures the image of the mother's grotesque body and of the mother as other, that is, as m(other), Bruhm claims that this m(other) arises as a figure of horror, as a monstrous figure, « attempting to lure the subject back to the womb, back to the imaginary time before the ego individuation of the mirror stage, back to death» (2000: 271-2). Taking this premise as a point of departure, this article aims to revisit King's novel *The Shining* with the purpose of analyzing instances of the monstrous mother through contemporary precepts about motherhood, and of underscoring the fact that the archetype of the monstrous mother is mostly conveyed in the novel from the perspective of aging masculinities which envision her as a source of dread and a threat to their male authority.

As Abigail Palko contends, the trope of the monstrous mother is rooted in the society that constructs the maternal-child relationship instead of originating in the figure of the mother herself (2021: 11). Drawing on Adrienne Rich's ideas (1976), Palko further argues that, rather than identifying the institutional violence of patriarchal motherhood, society demonizes mothers who, being categorized as pathological, finally erupt in violence (2021: 9). Representations of the monstrous mother are thus grounded in lived experiences categorized by patriarchal motherhood, which evince that the trope of the monstrous mother is constructed by male-controlled dictates. In this respect, according to Julia Hanigsberg and Sara Ruddick, mothers are culturally utilized as scapegoats, since, by turning them into sources of horror, and subsequently utilizing laws to control and chastise them, attention is diverted from other urgent social issues (1999: x). In King's novel *The Shining*, there are a series of representations of the monstrous mother, which

are grounded in patriarchal motherhood, thus stigmatizing them and typifying them as sources of dread and horror, while subtly diverting attention from latent issues like divorce, child abuse, and economic precariousness. King's novel *The Shining* revolves around a family—comprising Jack Torrance, his wife Wendy, and their son Danny—who move to the Overlook Hotel during the winter season when Jack is accepted to work as the hotel caretaker. Given the fact that Jack is undergoing a crisis both as a father, husband and writer, his masculinity is constantly threatened by symbolic mother figures that haunt him and his family during their stay. These manifestations of the monstrous-feminine in mother figures are portrayed in King's novel through the notions of the uncanny, thus characterizing them as familiar but estranged, and of the abject, hence blurring the boundaries between endowing life and inflicting death.

The three prototypes of the monstrous mother in King's novel find resemblance in Molly Ladd Taylor and Lauri Umansky's categorization, as they argue that bad mothers fall into three groups which comprise «those who would not or could not protect their children from harm», «those who did not live in a 'traditional' nuclear family», and also «those whose children went wrong» (1998: 3). In King's novel, according to psychoanalytic premises, Danny comes across different manifestations of the monstrous-feminine as embodied in the mother figure along his transition from the preoedipal to the oedipal stage. According to Creed's theories (2021), it may be argued that, in King's novel, the monstrous mother acquires three main representations, mostly involving the archaic mother and her primeval womb of generation and destruction, the phallic mother with her castrating potential and fantasies of wholeness, and the castrated mother and her removable phallus leading the child to fear his own castration. The tripartite structure of this article is aimed at analyzing these three manifestations of the monstrous mother in King's novel *The Shining* with the purpose to expose that characters representing the monstrous mother are demonized and vilified through tenets pertaining to patriarchal motherhood.

#### THE OVERLOOK HOTEL: THE MATERNAL WOMB, THE ARCHAIC MOTHER, THE GROTESQUE BODY

As Andrew Hock-Soon Ng claims, Gothic narratives have conventionally portrayed the haunted house, not only as a setting for horror, but «as a site that actually invigorates it» (2015: 1), thus referring to the contemporary tendency whereby the ominousness of the house is not «the result of a curse or possession by an unseen, alien presence, but stems instead from its very own self; that is, the house is itself the very source of strangeness or anomaly» (2015: 2). As Rosa María Díez Cobo (2022) argues, owing to the postmodern spatial turn, which increasingly drew attention to space as a primordial element of the diegesis, the haunted house has transformed into a monstrous archetype of its own. As Díez Cobo further argues, scholars from Dale Bailey (1999) to Sylvia Ann Grider (2007) have put forward the evolving portrayal of the haunted house in horror fiction, ranging from an atmospheric setting, which is gradually endowed with a psychological dimension, to an agential and a conscious abode which ultimately turns into a living entity. In King's novel, the Overlook Hotel is clearly endowed with human features, since, from Jack Torrance's view, it is stated that «he looked up at the banks of windows» and «for the first time, he noticed how much they seemed like eyes», while «they reflected away the sun and held their own darkness within» (2011: 306). This comparison between windows and eyes symbolically evokes a subjectification of the hotel as a living entity, particularly insofar as Jack feels observed and invigilated by its haunting presence. The imposing gaze of the Overlook Hotel appears to exert its influence

on Jack, given his aging masculinity, but also on Danny, owing to the fact that he is coming of age as a male child, hence both male characters face the threat of an overlooking female gaze, which conjures the presence of the archaic mother, as the Overlook Hotel symbolizes an ancestral monstrous mother figure.

According to Creed, in her generative function, the archaic mother arises as a parthenogenic entity that gives birth to all living beings and as a pre-phallic mother who exists previous to the child's knowledge of the phallus (2021: 50-2). As Creed further claims, the archaic mother is usually conjured in both images of birth and of the primal scene, while it is often represented through womblike imagery, with long winding tunnels that lead to inner chambers (2021: 52). Similarly, in King's novel, the boiler within the bowels of the Overlook Hotel, which metaphorically keeps it alive, but also unleashes its eventual destruction, is represented in analogy with a maternal womb. As is stated, «the boiler stood on four cement blocks, a long and cylindrical metal tank, copper-jacketed and often patched—it squatted beneath a confusion of pipes and ducts which zigzagged upward into the high, cobweb-festooned basement ceiling [...] two large heating pipes came through the wall from the furnace» (2011: 20). According to Magistrale, «this 'engine' within every woman is a powerful, frightening thing—a forcefulness that baffles men because they neither fully comprehend nor trust it» (2006: 97), which corresponds with the terrifying maternal power on behalf of the male. Moreover, as an embodiment of an overwhelming monstrous drive of life generation with an entity of its own, the boiler at the Overlook Hotel, in resemblance with a maternal womb, is described stating that, «this inhuman place makes human monsters» (2011: 156), once more conjuring the petrifying image of the archaic mother.

The parallelism established between the boiler of the Overlook Hotel and the archaic mother by means of womblike imagery brings to mind Mary Russo's notion of the grotesque body, which looks like «the cavernous anatomical female body» and associates with «the archaic grotesque» (1995: 2), thus arising as both a source of the abject and of the uncanny. As regards the abject, Kristeva bases her concept on the mother-child relationship, while she endows it with a physical location, thus describing the abject as «the place where meaning collapses» (1982: 2). In King's novel, in resemblance with this maternal cavity, the Overlook Hotel is portrayed through instances that conjure the detritus and revulsion of the female grotesque body as a cave of abjection. In this respect, Dick Hallorann portrays the Overlook Hotel by referring to organic matter, stating that, «there's little pieces of those things still laying around the fingernail clippings or the boogers that somebody nasty just wiped under a chair» (2011: 95). Moreover, through his extrasensory visions, Danny Torrance perceives that, in one of the hotel rooms, «great splashes of dried blood, flecked with tiny bits of grayish-white tissue, clotted the wallpaper» (2011: 102). Besides, from a Freudian perspective, although the maternal womb is metaphorically envisioned as the former home of all human beings, thus evoking some sort of ancestral familiarity, it also evokes estrangement insofar as these memories have been repressed, which eventually associates the site of the maternal womb with the notion of the uncanny. Hence, in addition to instances of the abject maternal womb which the Overlook Hotel signifies as an embodiment of the archaic mother, this metaphorical female cavity is also associated with the uncanny, as a blending of familiarity and estrangement, and particularly as a site of repression, since Jack refers to the hotel as containing «the residues of the feelings of the people who have stayed here», even adding that «every big hotel has got its ghosts» (2011: 290). Moreover, when Danny first lays eyes on the Overlook Hotel, he recognizes it as «the place he had seen in the midst of the blizzard, the dark and booming place where some hideously familiar figure sought him down long corridors» (2011: 69), as a subtle reference to the archaic

mother, who arises as both a familiar and threatening presence on almost equal terms. Accordingly, drawing further on Russo's notion of the ancestral female cavity, the Overlook Hotel arises as a Bakhtinian carnivalesque grotesque body that is protruding, secreting and changing—in short, an embodiment of the abject—, whereas, at the same time, it is related to the bodily as a projection of an inner state—as a personification of the uncanny—. Hence, as an incarnation of the archaic maternal version of the female grotesque, the Overlook Hotel arises as an ancestral source of terror.

Given its characterization as a grotesque maternal body, the Overlook Hotel comprises traits in accordance with the portrayal of the different typologies of the monstrous archaic mother that Creed identifies as phallic and castrated joined in one single figure (2021: 57). As Creed explains, «the archaic mother is represented in two distinct ways: the gapping and cannibalistic bird's mouth», which stands for «the all-devouring womb of the archaic mother», and «the blackness of extinction», which implies a «return to the mother/womb» as «a desire for non-differentiation» (2021: 58). In the course of his familiarization with the intricacies of the Overlook Hotel, Danny realizes that the place is redolent with phallic and castrating symbols that appear to be endowed with a life of their own. As he notices, «it was the fire extinguisher on the wall [...] which stood open and waiting like a mouthful of gold teeth» (2011: 103), while he catches sight of a hose that «slithered rapidly along the carpet after him like a rattlesnake moving swiftly» and that «it was coming for him» (2011: 190). As an incarnation of the archaic mother, the hotel acquires phallic as well as castrating features that become increasingly threatening, thus reverting back to psychoanalytic interpretations of developmental stages in which the child envisions the mother as a phallic body. Conversely, though, the Overlook Hotel is also depicted as an absorbing womblike entity that gives rise to the terror of self-disintegration owing to its psychoanalytic castrated bleeding wound, which involves a metaphorical return to the all-engulfing mother. As Magistrale claims, the Overlook Hotel thus radiates a feminine allure that mesmerizes and terrifies, while it also arises as a parasitic organism that increasingly grows more powerful (1988: 67), as phallic and castrated at the same time.

The characterization of the archaic mother as a terrifying primal entity also calls to mind the powerful and decrepit figure of the crone, as an archetype that Barbara Walker portrays as an «all-powerful Mother, who embodied the fearful potential for rejection, abandonment, death» (1985: 12). As an antique hotel which has hosted innumerable guests and has witnessed execrable acts committed in its rooms ranging from suicides to violent murders, the Overlook Hotel personifies the destructive influence of the archaic mother, who threatens to destroy the beings to whom she has given birth throughout the years. As Walker further claims, in ancient times, it was the crone who was in rule, although it was as a result of a male concern that this archaic mother was eventually deprived of her dreadful power to destroy (1985: 13). In this respect, the Overlook Hotel embodies the threatening return of the crone as a repressed mother figure who, in her representation as both phallic and all-engulfing, compels the subject to a regression to the maternal womb that gives life, but is also deadly annihilating, since, in addition to her manifest phallic dimension, her absorbing womb even proves to be more disturbing.

Finally, in its portrayal as a personification of the archaic mother as a grotesque cavernous body, the Overlook Hotel also reverts back to the Platonic notion of the *khora*, which consists of a space with maternal overtones, as it resembles a womb, in which the forms are received from the intelligible realm, where they were originally held, and are copied and shaped into the transitory forms prevailing in the sensible realm. Following Derridean precepts (1995), the notion of the *khora* arises as the interval between the intelligible and the sensible, through which everything passes, but nothing remains, thus

being characterized as neither present nor absent, neither living nor dead. Being traditionally approached as complying with the gothic trope of the haunted house, the Overlook Hotel thus exemplifies the Derridean concept of hauntology (1994), since it sustains the spectral remnants that persist from the cultural past. As an embodiment of the haunting archaic mother, male individuals are haunted by the spectral presence of the mother who threatens to absorb them in order to ensure her ancestral phallic nature. From a psychoanalytic perspective, given her abject and uncanny configuration, the archaic mother menaces to rise from its separate and repressed condition in order to oblige male subjects to engage in a regressive development. As the Overlook Hotel stands for a metaphorical *khora* with maternal overtones, it addresses the shift from the semiotic to the symbolic realms, as the child moves from the preoedipal to the oedipal phase.

#### BEWARE OF THE PREOEDIPAL MOTHER: ORAL-SADISTIC, PHALLIC, OTHER

In King's novel, the image of the threatening archaic mother, as represented by the Overlook Hotel, coexists with the more recognizable, but not for that less fearful, figure of the preoedipal mother, who finds diverse representations as the plot unfolds. According to Creed, this figure conjures the monstrous-feminine through two depictions, which comprise the oral-sadistic mother and the phallic mother (2021: 60). Insofar as the mother attempts to reabsorb the child whom she once nurtured, while the child must face the fears of being separated from the mother, but also the threat of annihilation resulting from the reincorporation into the mother, this monstrous female figure acquires her identity as an oral-sadistic creature. In King's novel, Wendy recollects her own mother's possessive and dominant ways, which conditioned her as a child and later on as a mother. Besides, inasmuch as the child believes that, at the preoedipal stage, the mother is in possession of a phallus, she also stands for the figure of the phallic mother. Nonetheless, the child's horror at the sight of the mother's genitalia proves that castration is feasible, and that dread must be thwarted through a fetish object—the construction of the mother as (m)other—with which the missing phallus or the gaping womb may be replaced. In King's novel, Danny's terrifying encounter with the dead lady in the bathtub in room 217 not only implies the otherization of the mother, but also her phallicization, insofar as she resembles the mythical Medusa, whose phallic features make up for her castrated condition. From the mother's perspective, the fear of castration, which metaphorically involves her realization that her child no longer depends on her, is counteracted by the will to fetishize the child and overprotect him as an attempt to continue to possess the phallus in her child's eyes and hold on to an active role upon entering the symbolic stage. Accordingly, Wendy's active role mostly contrasts with Jack's decadent ways, particularly owing to his inaction as a writer and his alcoholism, thus allowing Wendy to acquire a more dominant role than Jack and exert a deeper influence on their son.

As Kristeva argues, the child first comes across the maternal authority, which involves the primal mapping of the body during the semiotic phase, and contrasts with the paternal laws prevailing in the phallic phase that involve the entrance into the symbolic through the acquisition of language. Consequently, the mapping of the body implies the exertion of the maternal authority without guilt, whereas, within the domain of the symbolic, where the paternal laws predominate, feelings of shame and guilt come into play. In the horror genre, revolting and gruesome images related to the body expose the fragility of the symbolic and of the paternal authority, while they underscore the repressed filthy body, which reverts back to the monstrous mother. In King's novel, Danny often comes across ghastly images that recur within the Overlook Hotel and conjure the repressed figure of the monstrous mother. As Kristeva further explains,

different categories of polluting objects relate directly to the mother, such as the menstrual, which menaces the subject from within, and the excremental, which threatens identity from the outside (1982: 71). In King's novel, when Danny falls into one of his extrasensory trances as a result of his shining gift, he feels threatened from within, and as his mother Wendy claims, «that's more frightening than having a stranger creeping around the halls [...] you can move away from a stranger—you can't move away from yourself» (2011: 293). Besides, when Danny is able to stare at the horrifying images of decrepit and grotesque bodies that populate the Overlook Hotel, these abject representations often give way to the presence of the excremental, as indicative of a threat from the outside, since it is stated that, as Danny gazes at one of these images, «his urine broke, spilling effortlessly out of him» (2011: 239). Accordingly, these polluting objects denote the subject's fear to sink inexorably into the monstrous mother, characterized as both oral-sadistic and phallic.

In her role as a mother, Wendy often fears the haunting presence of her own maternal parent and the possibility that she may eventually acquire her mother's possessive and dominant ways, which are redolent with the qualities characterizing the oral-sadistic mother, insofar as she threatens to annihilate the subject's own self through incorporation. As Jack and Wendy consider divorce, he compares his wife with her mother, and even Wendy admits to herself that «she carried part of her mother with her always, for good or bad» (2011: 268). On a series of occasions, Wendy finds herself recollecting her mother's low opinions about her husband Jack, and the time when Danny was a baby, and Wendy's mother often reprimanded her for the inappropriate way in which she would hold him, thus leading Wendy to feel insecure and discredit herself about her capacities to be a good mother. Consequently, as Danny comes of age, Wendy finds herself pondering on the fact that «someday her child would be a stranger to her, and she would be a stranger to him... but not as strange as her own mother had become to her» (2011: 134). Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's notion of the individual's reluctance to identify herself with the older woman, stating that «within me it is the Other—that is to say the person I am for the outsider—who is old and that Other is myself» (1972: 284), Kathleen Woodward claims that, for women, «growing older is presented in terms of the uncanny shock of recognition of one's aging as one is transformed into one's mother» (1999: 158). Hence, despite Wendy's estrangement from her own mother, as she grows older, she gradually recognizes traces of her mother's demeanor in herself, particularly as Wendy grows increasingly concerned about Danny's health. Similarly, Wendy believes that her mother became increasingly controlling and domineering as a result of the death of Wendy's sister, Aileen, in a car accident. In order to avoid being disempowered as a mother after the loss of her daughter, Wendy's mother attempted to hold on to her phallic power by fetishizing other loved ones, such as her grandson Danny, as a result of female fetishism whereby she might retain her female authority. Subsequently, the older woman as an embodiment of the phallic mother also becomes one of Danny's most terrifying dreads, which he must face in one of the rooms of the Overlook Hotel.

During the preoedipal stage, the mother becomes the exclusive love object of the child, whereas the father is not yet considered a rival, since the mother is also assumed to be equally phallic. In King's novel, owing to Jack's gradual disempowerment as a father, Wendy adopts the parental role almost exclusively on her own. However, Wendy's own ghosts, as she fears she is adopting her mother's possessive ways as she grows older, also haunt Danny, as is evinced through the horrifying presence of the older woman in the bathtub, who arises as both a source of the uncanny and of the abject. As Jack suggests, «the walking dead woman» responds to «a symbol for dead emotions, dead lives, that just won't give up and go away... but because she's a subconscious figure, she's also *him*» (2011: 292), as Danny is permanently haunted by the figure of the monstrous mother.



Since the older woman attempts to hold on to her phallic role for longer than it is her due, her body erects as a fetishized phallic object that tries to conceal her truly castrated condition. As is portrayed in King's novel, «the woman in the tub had been dead for a long time», although attention is drawn to manifold phallic elements, such as «her gas-filled belly», her eyes that are «glassy and huge, like marbles», her breasts which look like «punching bags», and her «outstretched hands» that resemble «crab claws» (2011: 240). Accordingly, despite the fact that it is repeatedly emphasized that she had been dead for a long time, her features are nevertheless described as bloated and stiff, hence evoking the phallus and her condition as a phallic mother. Moreover, inasmuch as during the preoedipal phase, the oral and the anal acquire particular prominence, upon gazing at the dead woman's body, Danny especially catches sight of «her purple lips pulled back in a grimace» and «her pubic hair» (2011: 240). Besides, as Joseph Reino claims, although the sexually immature Danny sees a dead woman, and focuses on her body parts, such as her lolling breasts and her pubic hair (1988: 41), the horror he experiences bears resemblance with the child's contemplation of the primal scene, hence arising as a source of the uncanny, insofar as it is familiar, but remains repressed. Nonetheless, the description of the lady in the bathtub from Danny's perspective mostly complies with the notion of the abject, since it comprises the three features that Creed assigns to abjection, involving biological bodily functions, the law border, and the corpse (2021: 40-1). As the dead woman rises from the bathtub, her dripping body conjures bodily fluids, which ultimately trigger Danny's compulsion to urinate as a result of unbearable horror. Besides, as the dead woman's identity is finally revealed, it is disclosed that she was a guest at the hotel who was having an affair with a much younger man, who finally deserted her, thus leading her to commit suicide. The older woman was, thus, disloyal to her husband and infringed the moral laws by having intercourse with a man who could be her grandson in terms of age. Likewise, by entering this room, Danny also disrupts the established rules that disallow him from gaining access to forbidden places in the hotel. Finally, the dead woman literally embodies the corpse, while she intends to end Danny's life, hence also threatening to turn him into a dead body. Accordingly, as a source of the abject—and thus, as an embodiment of bodily fluids, the infringement of the law border, and the corpse—the older woman forces Danny to face an experience of abjection on behalf of the monstrous phallic mother.

As personifications of the monstrous-feminine in the mother figure, Wendy's mother arises as an oral-sadistic mother, insofar as she threatens to disintegrate Wendy's self-identity as she grows older. Nonetheless, Wendy's mother also presents features pertaining to the phallic mother, as she seeks to extend her maternal power fetishizing other loved objects to make up for the metaphorical loss of her phallus after the tragic loss of her child. Besides, at an imaginary level, the dead woman, whom Danny encounters, also arises as a phallic mother, and this categorization is evinced through the portrayal of her stiff and swollen body. However, the lady in the bathtub also complies with the typification of an oral-sadistic mother, owing to her oral and anal features, but also to her threatening intention to annihilate and reabsorb the child, hence relinquishing to release her hold and preventing him from taking his place in the symbolic domain during the oedipal stage. In particular, drawing on Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler argues that «the oedipal scenario depends on [...] the resistance to identification with masculine feminization and feminine phallicization» (1993: 97), until the child reaches the resolution of the complex and moves from the imaginary to the symbolic. Owing to Jack's incompetence to fulfil his paternal role, which contrasts with the overwhelming power of diverse monstrous mothers, Danny struggles to advance onto the symbolic phase along his developmental process as a child.

## ENTERING THE SYMBOLIC: CASTRATED FEMALE, PATRIARCHAL MOTHERHOOD, AND HAUNTING EMASCULATION

According to Lacan's mirror stage (2006), the child fantasizes with the visual image of his body in the mirror, which gives way to the structure of otherness that both alienates and validates his self, ultimately concluding with an eventual process of individuation. In King's novel, at this stage, Danny's self remains fragmented, which is explicitly depicted through the pervasive presence of his invisible friend, Tony, as a personification of his double that stands for a mirror other and forestalls his integrated self as an adult, thus, acting both as protection and anticipation of his disappearance following Otto Rank's precepts. As is stated, «looking at Tony was like looking into a magic mirror and seeing himself in ten years [...] as if Tony—as if the Daniel Anthony Torrance that would someday be—was a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion» (2011: 466). As the child advances onto the symbolic, the figure of the father acquires more prominence, whereas the phallic maternal figure is eventually exposed as the castrated mother. Most critical readings of Wendy as a character in King's novel highlight her early powerlessness as a mother, as is the case with Jackie Eller's interpretation (1990), which underpins the fact that Wendy scarcely acts out of her own volition, thus arising as a prototype of the castrated woman. Aware of her lack of power at this stage, in the novel, Wendy admits that, «she was feeling jealous of the closeness between her husband and her son» (2011: 97), which leads her to confess that «that was too close to the way her mother might have felt» (2011: 97), thus realizing that she had been sharing with her mother her phallic and castrating quality, which Wendy disavows. Accordingly, during the phallic or oedipal stage, boys are alleged to experience castration anxiety and girls are supposed to undergo penis envy, while they both face the dynamics of the Oedipus complex, which eventually comprises the two alternative repressed wishes of murdering the same-sex parent and possessing the different-sex parent.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the paternal law prevails within the sphere of the symbolic, in King's novel, Jack's male influence is constantly challenged owing to the overwhelming presence of the monstrous mother haunting the Overlook Hotel, which constantly brings to the fore Jack's male vulnerability. Upon contemplating the imposing Overlook Hotel, Jack gains insight into his weakness and the malignant influence that this embodiment of the monstrous-feminine is already exerting on him, thus declaring that «it wasn't Danny who was the weak link, it was him» (2011: 306). Besides, Jack's authority as a father is undermined owing to his alcoholism, his creative block as a writer, and his increasing detachment from his wife and son owing to his imminent psychic collapse. Moreover, Wendy highlights Jack's aging masculinity, particularly noticing his pitiful and high-pitched voice, which «reminded her chillingly of the screams that sometimes rose in the geriatrics ward of the hospital where she had worked summers as a high school kid» (2011: 456). In this respect, Steven Bruhm puts forward the figurative «male anxiety of effeminization» (2000: 273) that is befalling Jack, since he is gradually being deprived of his male authority as a father and husband. According to Stephen Davenport, it is out of Jack's progressive collapse that his masculinity is ultimately jeopardized and undermined (2000: 312). Jack thus undergoes a figurative process of emasculation, which involves that the Overlook Hotel—as an embodiment of the archaic mother—might take possession of him, after failing to take control of Danny. Owing to his male vulnerability, it is Jack who falls prey to the machinations of the ancestral monstrous mother, who deprives him further of his masculinity, while she figuratively endows him with a female phallus as indicative of patriarchal motherhood.

Accordingly, being aware that Jack no longer acts as her husband on account of the fact that he is being possessed by some monstrous mother, Wendy informs Danny that, «it wasn't your daddy trying to hurt me [...] *the Overlook has gotten into your daddy*» (2011: 411). Paradoxically, though, it is when Jack acts under the monstrous-feminine influence of this patriarchal mother that he appears to revert to the violent extremes of hegemonic masculinities. In fact, according to Walker, in ancestral times, the godly figure of the crone was negated and her power was ultimately usurped by males as patriarchal dictates took over matriarchy (1985: 13). As he falls under the spell of this patriarchal mother, Jack undergoes a regression to his own childhood, when he witnessed his father abusing his mother, thus remembering «the Sunday dinner when his father had caned his mother at the table» (2011: 422), and conceding that, even though he had been horrified at the time, «twenty years later, he could finally appreciate Daddy's wisdom» (2011: 422). Besides, Jack is teased by one of the ghosts inhabiting the hotel, Delbert Grady, who plainly retorts to Jack that «a man who cannot guide the courses of his own wife and son can hardly be expected to guide himself» (2011: 390). Hence, after undertaking a gradual process of emasculation, once he is being haunted by the patriarchal mother, Jack regresses into an apparent dominant masculinity in an attempt to retain his male authority. Jack thus displays a violent and controlling masculinity to make up for his previous process of emasculation, which urges him to accuse his family of challenging his male supremacy. Nonetheless, it is precisely this deceptive priapic quality that the patriarchal mother bestows upon Jack which will lead him to his annihilation.

As Jack gains in some sort of female phallic power under the influence of the patriarchal motherhood, conversely, Wendy often stands for the embodiment of the castrated mother. Before arriving at the hotel, back at home, Wendy had to bear «the sympathetic looks from other faculty wives» (2011: 55), and after her arrival, her gradual detachment from her son and husband makes her feel powerless, particularly when she compares herself with her mother's dominating personality and possessive ways. Correspondingly, as a figurative embodiment of the castrated mother, Wendy conjures fears of castration which even lead Jack to consider murdering his wife in order to appease his dread, as he perceives her as a frightening female threat that challenges his male authority. Nonetheless, Jack appears to remain oblivious to the pervasive presence of the patriarchal mother who is actually exerting control over him. Insofar as he remains under the influence of this monstrous mother, Jack's emasculated condition is counteracted by being in possession of a roque mallet whose phallic shape arises as a fetishized priapic object that makes up for his figurative loss of the phallus and his deprivation of male power. Analogously, as an embodiment of the castrated mother from a male perspective, Wendy resorts to a razor blade in order to defend herself from Jack's violence, thus figuratively playing the role of the *vagina dentata* or castrating wound in order to deprive him of his phallic fetish. Nonetheless, unaware that it is the patriarchal mother who has endowed Jack with his apparent dominating masculinity, he is eventually destroyed by this same fetishized object with a phallic shape, which deprives Jack of his subjectivity and turns him into another fetishized object in itself at the disposal of the patriarchal mother. As is explained, «its hands closed around the mallet again [...] it reversed the handle, aiming the hard side of the roque mallet at its own face [...] then the mallet began to rise and descend, destroying the last of Jack Torrance's image» (2011: 476). Accordingly, it is owing to his own fetishized phallic object—which Jack aims to use as a weapon to assert his male authority—that he is ultimately defeated by effect of the haunting patriarchal mother that has taken possession of him.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Danny completes his Oedipus complex when his father figure is destroyed, and thus, Danny is enabled to possess the mother figure on

his own. After reaching this phase, Danny also leaves behind his double, Tony, with whom he coexisted during the mirror stage, thus attaining some sort of integration of the self as he comes of age. Nonetheless, although the oedipal stage comes to an end and Danny must enter the domain of the symbolic—which is characterized by the entrance into language, the acceptance of social dictates, and the acquiescence of the name-of-the-father involving the law—insofar as Danny still retains his shining gift as a remnant of the narcissistic phase and as an alternative sort of language, the imaginary realm continues to exert influence on him and reverts him back to the feminine domain of the mother.

Insofar as Danny's father figure has vanished, but Danny cannot take responsibility for it, since it was the patriarchal mother who defeated the father figure as a rival, at the symbolic phase, Danny is still haunted by narcissistic images that reflect back the monstrous mother as holding the castrating gaze and menacing to extend her influence beyond the domain of the imaginary. Drawing on Lacan's notion of the gaze (1977), which is closer to the domain of the real, an uncanny feeling results from the fact that the object of one's glance looks back at the subject out of its own will, thus arguing that the threatening sensation of being gazed at by the object of the look conjures castration anxiety and reverts back to the sense of lack characterizing the imaginary order. Accordingly, the male desire for mastering the gaze is challenged by a haunting sense of castration, which evokes the phallic mother of the imaginary order and the ever-threatening reality of the monstrous mother over whom the male individual projects his narcissistic fantasies. In defiance of the symbolic, the monstrous mother resists representation, and in so doing, she mostly inhabits the realm of the real, remaining pre-imaginary and pre-symbolic. Besides, having to raise Danny on her own, in coalescence with Dick Halloran, Wendy is categorized as an unnatural mother by patriarchal precepts of motherhood, thus also joining the genealogy of monstrous mothers portrayed in the novel. In this respect, Wendy embraces the discourses of maternal deviancy that critics like Najoua Stambouli argue that have traditionally been associated with images of the mother «who breaks away from the model of the ideal nuclear family» (2020: 99), as Wendy takes sole responsibility for taking care of her son. As legacy of a patriarchal sort of motherhood, Danny is prevented from completely entering the symbolic, while Wendy is chastised for taking parental care on her own as a mother.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of manifestations of the monstrous-feminine as embodied in the mother figure—thus comprising instances of the archaic, the phallic, and the castrated mother, which pervade one of King's most iconic novels—paves the way not only for identifying the trope of the monstrous mother in King's fiction, but also for categorizing her different representations, particularly as manifested in these three categories. The archaic mother, as origin of all life, is envisioned as a powerful and destructive female entity that is intrinsically related to the natural elements that orchestrate the life and death of her children. Besides, it triggers primal male fears associated with the female and her generative function. The phallic mother, who is associated with the oral and anal phases of development, turns into a dominating mother figure who fetishizes her lack of phallus by means of taking possession of her children. Finally, the castrated mother triggers horrifying images of castration on behalf of the male, which also unleash the ancestral dread of emasculation and disempowerment.

Following Creed's theories of the monstrous-feminine, this tripartite manifestation of the monstrous mother is deeply grounded in representations of the Freudian notion of the uncanny, which blends familiarity and estrangement. The archaic

mother brings to mind the embodiment of the ancestral mother figure and her limitless power, which has been repressed and usurped by men. In King's novel, the Overlook Hotel turns into a transfiguration of the ancestral womb and the grotesque body of the archaic mother. Moreover, the phallic mother personifies the familiar figure of the mother, who was believed to be in possession of the phallus, thus being associated with domination and control, and evoking early memories of dependency. In *The Shining*, characters feel haunted by the presence of the phallic female who threatens the integrity of their selves, as is shown by Wendy's memories of her possessive mother and the rise of the dead woman who menaces to fulfil her castrating intentions with Danny. Likewise, the castrated woman leads the male characters to recollect repressed fears about their own castration and conjure images of horror as a result of her bleeding wound. In King's novel, victimized women as a result of physical and psychological abuse—as is the case with Jack's mother, but also with Wendy—reflect the male dread of disempowerment, as Jack holds on to hegemonic masculinities to conceal his own fears of emasculation. Besides, in addition to the notion of the uncanny, these three manifestations of the monstrous mother also evince the concept of abjection, as they blur boundaries in relation to the body, the law, and death. As an embodiment of the archaic mother, the rooms and corridors within the Overlook Hotel resemble the maternal body and its intention of extending both its nurturing and destructive power. Furthermore, the dead lady rises from the bathtub as a phallic mother intending to retain her female authority on the growing child, thus defying established moral standards of maternity. Finally, Wendy as a victimized woman, illustrative of the castrated mother, eventually feels compelled to defy patriarchal dictates in order to defend her son from external and internal threats, hence leaving behind her figurative castrated condition and defeating instances of patriarchal motherhood.

Insofar as King argues that «horror appeals to us because it says, in a symbolic way, things we would be afraid to say out straight» (2000: 47), and that in its allegorical dimension, horror reflects the fears that haunt the collective unconscious, it may be claimed that the depiction of the monstrous-feminine in King's fiction evinces the pervasive fear of the monstrous mother on behalf of the male psyche, thus arising as a cultural archetype and a literary trope in horror fiction. Accordingly, drawing on Palko's premises (2021), the trope of the monstrous mother and its different manifestations arise from patriarchal motherhood, and thus, they respond to androcentric constructs of maternity that evince the latent male fears toward the monstrous-feminine embodied by the mother figure. After struggling with different representations of the monstrous mother, Danny embraces his individuation in King's novel in the company of his mother Wendy and Dick Halloran, although the presence of the monstrous-feminine remains latent, particularly through Danny's shining gift, as a remnant of the influence of the monstrous mother, as she extends her tentacles beyond the Lacanian phases of the imaginary, the symbolic and even the real.

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