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Bachelor Thesis

**Influence of Stephen King's *It* on Literature and Popular Culture**

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, which I have created myself. All the literature I used is properly quoted and is listed in Works Cited.

In Prague .....

Signature .....

## **Abstract**

This bachelor's thesis intends to search for the extend of influence of Stephen King's work *It* on current popular culture (which includes film industry, music industry, Halloween costumes and other) and literature (demonstrated on topical examples). The theoretical part focuses on the life and work of the author and briefly goes over the synopsis of the novel *It*. The practical part deals with examples of influence of the book on mentioned aspects of culture (literature and popular culture). During my research I used several sources, first of all literary works, then internet articles and online videos.

**Key words:** literature, horror, culture, pop-culture, film

## **Abstrakt**

Tato bakalářská práce má za cíl prozkoumat rozsah vlivu díla *To* od Stephena Kinga na populární kulturu (a to včetně filmového průmyslu, hudebního průmyslu, kostýmy na Halloween a dalších) a literaturu (předvedeno na konkrétních příkladech). Teoretická část se zaměřuje na život a dílo autora a stručně shrnuje knihu *To*. V praktické části se zabývám příklady vlivu knihy na zmíněné aspekty kultury (literatura a populární kultura). K bádání jsem použila několik zdrojů, zaprvé literární díla, poté internetové články a videa.

**Klíčová slova:** literatura, horor, kultura, pop-kultura, film

## INDEX

Introduction

### I. THEORETICAL PART

1. Stephen King: Life and Work
  - 1.1. Personal Life
  - 1.2. Literary Works
2. *It* – the Basic Synopsis
  - 2.1. About the Book
  - 2.2. Plot and Themes of the Book
  - 2.3. Who or What is ‘It’
  - 2.4. Lay Reception of the Book
  - 2.5. Scholarly Reception of the Book

### II. PRACTICAL PART

3. King’s *It* and its Cultural Influence
  - 3.1. King’s Novel and its Literary Impact
    - 3.1.1. The Chalk Man
    - 3.1.2. Summer of Night
    - 3.1.3. Meddling Kids
    - 3.1.4. The Boys of Summer
    - 3.1.5. Conclusion of the Literary Part
  - 3.2. King’s Novel and its Impact on Popular Culture
    - 3.2.1. Acknowledged Source of Inspiration and Direct Influence
      - 3.2.1.1. Movie Adaptations
      - 3.2.1.2. Film Industry and Television – Inspirations, Homages and Parodies
      - 3.2.1.3. Music Industry
      - 3.2.1.4. Halloween Costumes
      - 3.2.1.5. Real-life Clowns
    - 3.2.2. Speculative Influence
      - 3.2.2.1. Film Industry

### 3.2.2.2. 2016 Clown Sightings

Conclusion

Works Cited

Appendices

## Introduction

My bachelor's thesis aims to examine aspects in which Stephen King's famous horror work *It* (1986) influenced literature and popular culture. At first, we will briefly characterize the author, his literary endeavors and accomplishments in the realm of popular fiction. Then we will briefly summarize the book and provide some basic information about it. After that the analytical part will be looking closer at certain pieces of literary works and analyzing the extent of the original book's influence. Lastly, the thesis will explore some aspects of popular culture such as film or music industry and will focus on how the book either impacted it or possibly influenced it. Last part of this thesis is a short conclusion.

Stephen King has always been remarkable author to me, considering not only the volume of his works, but also the high quality he managed to keep each time. After I read his novels such as *Carrie* (1974), *Pet Sematary* (1983), *Cujo* (1981), and of course, *It* (1986) I have to say I genuinely relish his stories and his use of language unlike any other author - no wonder many of his works became instant best-sellers. After I saw the movie adaptation of *It* in 2017 and subsequently revisited the work after five years, it naturally suggested itself as a topic for my bachelor thesis. Stephen King is generally perceived as a writer of popular fiction, yet it can be argued that the inclusivity of the postmodern canon has exonerated his literary legacy.

Over the years I have seen many of his movie adaptations, often times people around me were not even aware that these are based on his works, for example *The Green Mile* (1996), *Shawshank Redemption* (1982) or *The Shinning* (1977). While I personally always relished his books, I feel that in European culture he is still an undervalued author. Perhaps because is an American, he enjoys more recognition in the United States. However, I believe the year 2019 will be a successful one for Stephen King's career once again, since two major picture movies based on his books are coming out – *Pet Sematary*<sup>1</sup> and *It: Chapter Two*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In Czech Republic under the name *Řbitov zvířátek*, comes out on 14<sup>th</sup> of April

<sup>2</sup> In Czech Republic under the name *To Kapitola 2*, comes out on 5<sup>th</sup> of September

*It* is a horror story that scared millions of readers and created the craze for clowns in horror books, movies and other media. It was enjoyable to refresh this gloomy book, especially because King always makes the story multilayered, in the sense that it infuses gothic fiction with occasional humor. If we take into consideration the fact that the US tradition of gothic fiction tends to be rather austere, these comedic elements can be seen as a variation on the postmodern conflation of tragedy and comedy. While one can assume that the horror writer only writes sad endings, it is hardly ever that King ends the book on a bad note and rather always resolves the situation in a positive manner.

Horror can be perceived as very underappreciated genre, because many people (both scholars and lay readers) discredit it for its supposedly unrealistic stories. This is another reason why I decided to focus on this particular book. While genres like thriller and crime fiction have many readers and have come quite close to being considered serious genres, horror is often overlooked in this respect. Just like other genres – many horror books are of poor quality; however, I do not think it undermines the good works, such as the one this thesis is about. While many works are only skin deep, several others have layers and are not just reading for bored teenager. Horror stories often times touch on real-life issues through hyperbole. People channel their real fears through fantastic stories. One such case is *Godzilla* – the Japanese monster that appeared in movie of the same name in 1954. This enormous predator dooming all of humanity was widely understood as an expression of fear from the tension between the U.S. and Japanese during the 1950s. Another example is the rise in popularity of zombie-oriented movies and TV shows at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, which may have stemmed from the fear of terrorism (such as the one during the 11. September 2001) and the failure of government. As actress who starred in another King's adaptation *Gerald's Game* (produced by Netflix) put it: "...the horror genre is a... way to allow us to talk about a lot of very real things in a heightened way." ("Your 'Haunting of Hill House' Questions Answered by Carla Gugino.")

## I. THEORETICAL PART

### 1. Stephen King: Life and Work

#### 1.1. Personal Life

This section of the thesis goes briefly over the author's life. It relies overwhelmingly on three biographical sources: *On Writing, Memoir of a Craft* (by Stephen King), *Haunted Heart: The Life and Times of Stephen King* (by Lisa Rogak) and Stephen King's official website *StephenKing.com*.

Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine in 1947. His parents separated early on in his life and he was raised by his mother, Nellie Ruth Pillsbury King. After high school he joined the University of Maine. As a student he was fairly active, writing a column for the university newspaper (The Maine Campus) and also taking part in student politics as member of the Student Parliament. He graduated in 1970 with bachelor's degree in English. During his studies he met Tabitha Jane King (née Tabitha Jane Spruce) and they got married in 1971 and are together to this day. Tabitha is also a writer and an activist. They have three children together, Naomi King (born 1970), Joseph Hillstrom King (born 1972, better known as Joe Hill, which is his pen name) and Owen Phillip King (born 1977). During the first months of their marriage, King was unable to find a job as a teacher and therefore worked as labourer in industrial laundry, occasionally selling stories for men's magazines. In 1971 King started working as an English teacher in high school in Hampden, Maine. In his spare time, he continued writing and working on his novels. In spring of 1973 his novel *Carrie* was accepted for publishing and from then on, he was able to leave teaching a pursue career as writer full-time. This first novel predicted more incoming successful books, because in the same year he wrote *Salem's Lot*. Sadly, around this time King's mother passed away. In 1974 the Kings temporarily moved to Colorado where King wrote another novel, *The Shining* (which is set in Colorado). This book was deemed so scary by the readers to the point where some schools removed it from its libraries. This book brought King his first considerable literary success, and the publishers subsequently compelled King to write

more and more books. In 1980, the movie adaptation *The Shining* (directed by Stanley Kubrick) came out and it was a huge success. King seemed disappointed by the film's accuracy, particularly with respect to the main character (in the movie portrayed by Jack Nicholson) whom he saw as a crucial ingredient of the story. King objected that "[...] In the book, he's a guy who's struggling with his sanity and finally loses it. To me, that's a tragedy. In the movie, there's no tragedy because there's no real change." ("Stephen King on What Hollywood Owes Authors When Their Books become Films: Q&A")

If we become more irreverent with author (and American literature in general), we may claim King's affinity to alcohol is yet another thing that places him within the American gothic tradition. However, with more success and therefore more stress he just one day realized that he may like more than a healthy dose of it. As he states in the book *On Writing* "'Oh my God I am an alcoholic!' I thought to myself and in my head, there wasn't a single thought that would refuse this verdict" (King 74). At first, he excused his bad habit by telling himself that it is normal for writers to drink. He kept up his writing process despite spending the nights barely functioning. Then, in 1985, the writer tried cocaine and also became addicted. As King states "I forgot how to be clean, because I was so ashamed" (*On Writing* 75). His family helped him through these low points of his life and eventually, in early 90's he got over his addiction, still taking a toll on his health later on in life. He remembers this time as one of the darkest ones in his life. This incident did not interfere with his career and the public suspected nothing. It was only later (in his book *On Writing*) that the writer admitted this ever happened.

During this time when he was going through this immense struggle, he started to work on the novel *It*. "[...] I knew it will be long, but I had no idea *how* long." says King (Rogak 184). When he finished it, he showed the manuscript to author Michael Collings, who previously wrote biographical books about King. "He [King] told me that *It* is his life-work [...] and that it will be the last book about monsters he will ever write." says Collings (Rogak 287). As we now know, there were many more such books to come (which might be due to the readers' demand). However, it could be speculated that *It* is his best work. Whether or not the concealed addiction had any effect on the book – positive or otherwise – is up to a debate.

In 1987, after spending thousands of dollars on charity work, he and his wife decided to create their own aid organisation. They created 'Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation' that aimed to help students who cannot afford their college fees.

The 1990s were a golden age for the King family. All their children entered adulthood and eventually moved out. The author had enormous success in his work field, releasing new book every year and he kept getting new and new offers on movie adaptations of his books.

1999 was a big year for King. He wrote and subsequently published his book *On Writing*, where he shared a little bit about his early life (such as his tough childhood, but also his addiction problem) and tips and tricks on how to be a good writer. However, in June, he was hit by a van and nearly died. He had multiple fractures, concussion and a pierced lung. After surviving the accident, he had to rehabilitate for many following years.

During the early 2000s King said multiple times that he wanted to end his career and retire, but those claims always remained unfulfilled. The beginning of the century was peaceful for King and his family. His children started their careers, most of them dabbled in writing like their parents. In his lifetime, King won over 60 awards and was nominated over 70 times.

Today King lives in downtown Bangor (Maine) with his wife in a mansion that is often visited by his fans. He is still active with his writing and publishes new books regularly (his latest book called *The Institute* is coming out in September 2019).

## 1.2.Literary Works

King wrote over 200 titles and his books sold over 350 million copies. He is a writer with the highest amount of movie adaptations to his name. He is known as the "master of the horror", but apart from this genre he also writes fantasy, science fiction, thrillers and crime fiction. Usually, his book does not simply follow one genre but dips in others as well – occasional humour and romance.

He enhanced the horror genre and created his own idiosyncratic style which can even be regarded as seminal due to several aspects:

- He is a very prolific author who creates new literary works regularly and publishes them every year.
- He tries to create his works in a realistic manner, such as basing his stories in real cities or using real brands of products, which subsequently makes them easier to imagine for the reader.
- King does rely on visual description - only when it is necessary for the scene or plot - which places the visual aspect of the characters into reader's hands. As King states: "For me, visual form of the character doesn't exist. If I'm in the character I can't see myself." says King (Rogak 288). In his works *On Writing* he further comments: "[...] if I wanted to read a garment description I could always buy a J. Crew catalogue<sup>3</sup>." (King 137) – meaning he considers clothes description unnecessary, which is very apparent in *It*, where he only states what the person is wearing if it bears any significance to the story.
- He avoids long descriptions and prefers only brief ones and rather focuses on storytelling and building the tension. For example shortening the sentences or word repetition is very common in his works.
- He strives to create his characters as good-natured people. In his words, this makes the reader emotionally invest in the book and have therefore stronger response if the character encounters possibly lethal situation. As King states: "[...]to me it's all about characters. If you like the characters, you care and then the scares generally work... one of the things that I wanted to do in all of my novels is to create characters who are fundamentally decent by large and that way you[...] don't want them to wipe out, you want them to live and you want them to win." ("Stephen King Talks about the New IT Movie.").
- King includes sexual scenes in his books and in many of his works we can find the characters in intimate moments. He makes his characters regular people with needs and desires, which makes them often appear more realistic.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Crew is an American apparel company

- The author focuses on the psychology of the characters, this is either via writing their thoughts (which are put in cursive in order to be distinguishable from regular plot) or by including the character's viewpoint into the storytelling.
- King does not follow literary trends and tries to create stories with original content. For example, when his book *Gerald's Game* (this literary work features an adult woman who is cuffed to bed and unable to escape) was published in 1992, many critics called him "exemplary feminist" (Rogak 271) and fans repeatedly chastised the author and criticised the book for showing the female side of sexuality. "Loyal readers who enjoyed King's stories about murders, massacres, supernatural monsters [...] threw away this book with disgust when they found out that it's about two lovers [...]" (see above).

In the book *On Writing*, he states that there are three fundamental parts of a 'good' story:

- 1) dialogue that "through conversation makes the characters real" – therefore attention to direct and indirect speech;
- 2) description "that creates sensory realism" – as mentioned, his character description is brief and thus does not take the reader out of the story;
- 3) and storyline "that takes story from point A to point B, and from B to Z" (all 128).

And he concludes this by declaring that plot itself is not the key element, because "just like in real life - there isn't a plot" (King 128) implying that not everything needs to be lined up. I drew these observations about his literary works from his book *On Writing* and his official website [StephenKing.com](http://StephenKing.com).

## 2. It – Basic Synopsis

### 2.1. About the Book

This book came out in 1986, but the author worked on it for several months, and during this time he was already well-known name not only in horror genre but in literature in general, especially in Europe and the U.S.

When it comes to genre of the book, it is considered both psychological horror and a coming-of-age thriller. Today this is not viewed as a novelty, however, in 1980s, this story was out of the ordinary. This literary work sparked completely new way of writing horror because it had several remarkable features:

- 1) The story is very long and complex, focuses on many characters at once, while in general, horror stories focus on one individual or one family.
- 2) The plot has nonlinear narrative and shifts in time, which means the reader has to pay close attention to the timeline of the story.
- 3) There are multiple lead characters, all which are children. Otherwise, his usual approach is one main character, typically an adult and a few side characters. This also means a considerable amount of explicit violence that happens in the story involves children, which is something horror authors generally avoided.
- 4) It introduced clown as a horror character. Before this novel, clowns were seen as non-threatening, which changed afterwards.

This work is also his longest – anywhere from one thousand to one thousand and two hundred pages. This is not a common trait amongst King's novels, since most of his works are comprised of two hundred to four hundred pages. He dedicated this book to his wife Naomi Rachel King and his two children - Owen Phillip King and Joseph Hillstrom King, which he mentions at the beginning of the book. Similarly, he dedicated most of his books to his family as well, with the dedication being written in the second or third page.

The book is written in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person narrative and the narrator is omniscient and thus reliable. King uses easily understandable language and often prefers colloquial English. He never uses nonsensical words. All his locations are either real (meaning actual towns, streets etc.) or based on real life examples. The book contains a considerable amount of dialogue, both through direct and indirect speech. Every character uses different language, the children use simpler English, unlike the adults. One specific element of this book is the main character William who stutters, increasingly in dangerous situations, which signals to the reader that the situation is tense and the characters may be suffering from some deep-seated neurosis. Some characters use slurs – usually those who King deems as morally depraved (criminals, bullies, etc.). The author likes to use subtle storytelling (prefers more implicit language

that relies on the readers understanding). The action is swift, and the descriptions are short. Here are some examples of the language King uses:

‘Stanley? Stanley? St — ‘

She looked at the tub with its blue shower curtain bunched at the far end of the stainless steel rod and forgot how to finish her husband's name. She simply stared at the tub, her face as solemn as the face of a child on her first day at school.

(King 57)

Here, in line three, is one example of King’s indirect style of language. Instead of saying “she forgot his name” the author expresses it in more curious manner. In forth line, he uses a simile, which is original one instead of using a cliché such as “She was white as a sheet.”.

‘Who was it, Don?’ Harold Gardener asked softly.

‘It was Derry,’ Don Hagarty said. ‘It was this town.’

‘And what did you do then?’

‘I ran, you dumb shit,’ Hagarty said, and burst into tears. (King 38)

Here is example of two contrasting languages. First and third direct speeches here are spoken by policemen and therefore their language is formal. The second and the last direct speech is said by a man with record of criminal activity and it is displayed by his use of profanities.

Kill you!’ George cried, and a mixture of doglike sounds came out of that fanged mouth: yips, yelps, howls. A kind of laughter. Bill could smell him now, could smell George rotting. It was a cellar-smell, squirmy, the smell of some final monster standing slumped and yellow-eyed in the corner, waiting to unzip some small boy's guts. (King 924)

Here the author paints a vivid and horrifying scene by using various techniques. The repetition of the verb 'smell' emphasizes how strongly the character could feel this element in the situation. Then he compares George to a dog – this could be in order for the reader to easily imagine the sounds and the visuals (teeth). Second line contains alliteration (yips, yelps), this could be deliberate or coincidental - it is not clear.

The book, presumably, does not contain any pictures, however, there are parts that have special visual form. This is likely in order to make the reader more interested or to explain how something looks without overanalysing it. One such example of this is on the page 58 where we can see letters IT as if written with blood. (attachment 1.)

## 2.2. Plot and Themes of the Book

The story takes place in Derry, state Maine (in fact all King's books take place in Maine) and it follows two time periods: first one from 1957-1958, when the main characters are children, and second one from 1984-1985, when the main characters are adults. The town seems very average for people who are just passing by, but people who live there know that it is much darker place than the common sight allows to admit. Many of the residents are homophobic, xenophobic or just hateful towards anyone in general. Another ugly secret hides in the sewers of Derry – mystical being called 'It' (hence the name of the book). This monster comes out every 27 years to feast on humans and their fears. Most residents are too afraid to admit that any supernatural phenomenon takes place there. The main plot of the book follows seven people who call themselves 'The Losers Club' and encounter 'It' as children and eventually defeat it as adults. There are more subplots in the book about other people from Derry who saw 'It' or were otherwise affected by it. However, neither of the movies explores these subplots in detail. The plot is slightly chaotic since it switches between the characters as adults and as children and includes many of the side character's stories, that usually have no effect on the main plot.

### 2.3. Who or What is 'It'

'It' is the main antagonist of the book. 'It' is a gender non-specific creature of unknown origin, but likely very old and has the ability to shapeshift in order to manipulate one's mind and to cause hallucinations to whoever it chooses. This creature feeds on people – either children or adults - and prefers its victims in fearful state. Consequently, 'It' makes people scared by shapeshifting into their worst fears. For each of the character the creature manifests differently, because King wanted to reach as many reader's fears as possible. This way King could draw on a variety of monsters in the story. 'It' takes form of: dead loved ones, The Werewolf (from the movie *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*), The Mummy (from movie of the same name that came out in 1932), Bruce (from the movie *Jaws*), Dracula (version from King's *Salem's Lot*), a witch (from the fairy tale 'Hansel and Gretel') and many others. Source for all of the forms of the monster can be found in the article "IT (Creature)". However, the most recognizable and common appearance of 'It' is Pennywise, the Dancing clown. King based Pennywise's appearance on looks of three clowns – Bozo the Clown, Clarabell the Clown and also Ronald McDonald (McDonald franchise's mascot). The first two are clown characters on two different television shows whose popularity peaked in the 1960's in the United States. He explicitly states he based Pennywise off of them in the book *It* on page 19 when *It*'s character Georgie describes Pennywise. Originally King wanted to make the character a troll, because the author was inspired by story called 'The Three Billy-Goats Gruff' ("Three Billy Goats Gruff."). This story is a Norwegian fairy tale and features an evil troll. Later he revisited this thought and chose a different approach: "I thought to myself, 'I'll get all of the monsters together as I possibly can; I'll get the Vampire, I'll get the Werewolf, and I'll even get the Mummy.'[...]But then I thought to myself, 'There out to be one binding, horrible, nasty, gross, creature kind of thing that you don't want to see[...]' So I thought to myself, 'What scares children more than anything else in the world?' And the answer was 'clowns'." ("Stephen King Talks Inspiration for Pennywise and More About It.").

## 2.4. Lay Reception of the Book

In 2017 (which means sometime after the second movie adaptation) the book was ranked among 100 best-selling titles according to The Guardian (“Bestselling Books of 2017: the Top 100.”). In the Czech Republic *It* is 44. most reader recommended book according to The Book Database<sup>4</sup> (“50 Nejvíce Doporučovaných Knih.”). If we look at the customer reviews on Amazon.com, which is a site with most ratings to this book, it has overwhelmingly positive score, which is five stars (by 73% of readers), second most common rating was four stars (14%) and only 13% of readers gave three stars or less. This percentage is made out of 4096 readers. Czech readers rated this book similarly, because if we look at the page ČBDB<sup>5</sup> the book has 92% rated by 1627 readers (“To.”). Therefore, it can be concluded that this book has good reception by majority of those who read it. According to the reader’s comments, the least liked aspect of the book is its length and overwhelming amount of characters and most liked aspect is scariness of the scenes and the storytelling. According to Wikipedia.com the book was number one bestseller in U.S. the same year it came out (1986), listed by Publishers Weekly, however this source is not reliable since there is no access to the exact source (“It (Novel).”).

It should also be noted that there was resurgence of interest in the book in 2017 after the release of the movie’s adaptation. This could be supported by Stephen King’s annual earnings from June 2017 to June 2018, which nearly doubled - from 15 million U.S. dollars to 27 million (“Annual Earnings of Stephen King from May 2010 to June 2018.”). It can be expected that after the release of the second part of the adaptation, a similar leap in earnings will happen.

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<sup>4</sup> Databáze knih (databazeknih.cz)

<sup>5</sup> Československá bibliografická databáze

## 2.5. *It* – Scholarly Reception

*It* enjoyed some critical acclaim, winning British Fantasy Award in the category ‘Best Novel’ in 1987. During the same year it was also nominated for Fantasy ‘Novel of the year’ by Locus Awards and for ‘Novel of the year’ by World Fantasy Awards. Both of these awards are flaunted on Stephen King’s official website (StephenKing.com).

## II. PRACTICAL PART

### 3. King’s *It* and its Cultural Influence

#### 3.1. King’s Novel and its Literary Impact

This section will present about certain literary works, all of them novels, that share some similarities with *It* (either the themes, plot-wise or narrative-wise). There is no known author that specifically said that they based their book off of the book in question, so my approach is to compare the works in either of the aspects and see what the results suggest. This segment therefore does not aim to include complete analysis of the books, only pinpoints parts that are comparable with *It*.

I chose four books written in English by current popular authors. These are novels that fans or journalists perceive as similar to *It*, such as in this article “10 Must-Read Authors for Stephen King Fans.” or “Popular Coming Of Age Horror Books.”, which I used as a starting point for my research.

### 3.1.1. The Chalk Man

Author: J. C. Tudor

This recent thriller, which became fairly popular, was published on January 2018. It shares some elements that made *It* a good read. Both novels are written by English speaking authors and their plot takes place in small towns. The titles of the books are the main antagonists' names in both cases, which could be merely just similar thought process shared by the authors. Apart from these two aspects, which could be purely coincidental, there are several parallels that make it seem as if the British author took certain amount of inspiration from the King's work. On the contrary, significantly different aspect is the quantity of the texts. *The Chalk Man* has around three hundred and fifty pages and *It* is over one thousand pages long. Practically this means that King had much more space to make the story more grounded, while Tudor had to pack the plot much more efficiently. Tudor never stated what books inspired her (if any), but there are some elements of the story that one may assume came from other books or works.

#### Narration and Storytelling

*The Chalk Man* follows two timelines – one happens during 1986 (which is one year after *It*'s story ends), following the characters as children and one in 2016, following the characters as adults. These timelines are therefore thirty years apart, which is close to the ones in *It*, which are 27 years apart. Both books constantly switch between the two timelines as the plot unravels. This gives the reader two unique perspectives – innocent, joyful eye of a child and more serious adult tone. While *It* is written in third person omniscient narrative, *The Chalk Man* is written first person narrative – from the perspective of the main character (and therefore not omniscient), except for the prologue, which is written in a third person narration. The children in this novel use much more slurs than in *It* and this might be due to the fact that the books were produced during different time periods.

### Themes

In both of the books, there are prevalent themes of friendship and coming-of-age. The crime and horror themes such as body horror (both of the villains disfigure their victims to induce fear). Both authors highlight the omnipresence of the villains. Common theme is also inadequate adult figures – in the sense that the adults do not really resolve any situation which leaves the main characters essentially on their own accord. In *The Chalk Man* the adults are shown in more positive manner however, especially the parents. One aspect both novels dive into is psychology of the characters. In fact, both novels fall into the category of psychological thrillers. *It's* significant difference being that it is a supernatural fiction, whereas the other novel has no supernatural elements.

### Plot

Both novels are set in a small English-speaking town. Significant similarity relates to the main characters. In *The Chalk Man* the main character is called Eddie - in *It* character of the same name is a part of the 'Losers Club'. The books also share a red-headed female character who is abused by her father (*It* – Beverly, *The Chalk Man* - Nicky), which are two very specific feature. First few pages are strikingly similar, because both books open on a murder of a child by the hand of the main antagonist, however, *The Chalk Man* only dedicates one page to this scene. Both novels therefore make very bold beginning of the book by displaying the gruesome acts. Furthermore, the Chalk man (as in the antagonist) leaves chalk drawings - hence the name - signaling that a crime is about to happen. This is comparable pattern to the other novel, since in *It* Pennywise also gives clues (red balloons, black birds etc.) before he strikes. Lastly, both of the antagonists are lurking and mystical, the main difference being the supernatural aspect of their being.

Some similarities in the language can be illustrated on the novels' texts.

Bill had a handful of rocks; all of them had a handful except Mike and Beverly, who was only holding one. Bill began to throw at Henry, not hurrying his throws, but chucking hard and with fair accuracy. The first rock missed; the second struck Henry on the shoulder. If the third had missed, Henry might have

closed with Bill and wrestled him to the ground, but it didn't miss; it struck Henry's lowered head. Henry cried out in surprised pain, looked up . . . and was hit four more times: a little billet-doux from Richie Tozier on the chest, one from Eddie that ricocheted off his shoulder blade, one from Stan Uris that struck his shin, and Beverly's one rock, which hit him in the belly. (King 619)

Anger rose up in my chest. You didn't hit girls. You didn't throw bricks at them. I forced myself to my feet and broke cover. Grabbed the heaviest missile from the ground and lobbed it up the slope as hard as I could. If it hadn't been so heavy, carried by the weight of its own momentum, if Sean hadn't been halfway down the slope and not right at the top, then I would probably have missed by a mile. Instead I heard a cry. Not a jeering cry. A scream of pain. "Fuck. My eye. Fucking hit me in the fucking eye." (Tudor 89)

This provided sample shows very similar scene, where the main characters have a fight with the school bullies – in both instances the main characters struck the main bully with some hard object. We can see while both excerpts are similar, King uses more interesting expressions, while Tudor uses fairly basic phrases. Both authors raise tension by shortening the sentences. In general, both books use a great deal of direct speech in order to convey the character's personality.

Basic information about the book can be found on Amazon.com website ("The Chalk Man: A Novel.") and the rest I found in the book itself.

### 3.1.2. Summer of Night

Author: Dan Simmons

This coming-of-age horror fiction was originally published in 1991 and therefore is a bit older than the other works mentioned in this section. The author of the book is American, and his works are often set up in Elm Haven, U.S. – which unlike King's set up – Maine - is fictional.

### Narration and Storytelling

The story is written in a third-person narration and the narrator is omniscient. The reader can see what the characters are thinking, and their thoughts are in cursive letters, which is *It*'s style to a point. However, the plot is linear, unlike *It*. The storytelling has two points of view – from child's perspective and adult's. The book tries to focus on the psychology of the characters. What is major difference is that Simmons uses much more physical description – what the characters look like – while King focuses on their backstories, their gestures etc.

### Themes

Major observable theme (at which the name itself also hints) is the contrast between carelessness of childhood (especially during summertime) and lurking evil in the darkness. Prevalent theme in the book is also growing up - the children are pushed to figure out the situation themselves and with this comes the realization that some of the adults are evil themselves. In this story, the “bad” adults are the school staff, but in *It* those are the parents of the characters for the most part.

### Plot

The main characters - children - form a group and experience the perks of friendship. The book uses sudden and unexplained disappearance of a child to initiate the start of the conflict in the story, which is similar to *It*, where the main character's brother disappears at the beginning (in reality is eaten by *It*). The group is ultimately the only one that can defeat the evil that taints their town. Both books use a creepy gothic building to set the mood of the story and push the plot – Simmons uses the school building and King uses the old house on the Neibolt Street, where ‘It’ lives.

Here is an excerpt from the book.

A dark shape appeared in the gloom of doorway and the class, still lined up alphabetically to receive their cards, took a collective breath. It was Dr. Roon, the principal, his dark, pin-striped suit and slicked-back hair blending with the darkness on the landing behind him so that his thin face seemed to float there,

disembodied and disapproving. Dale looked at the man's pink skin and thought, not for the first time: *Like the skin of newborn rat.* (Simmons 13)

'Hi, Richie,' Bev said, and when she turned toward him he saw a purple-blackish bruise on her right cheek, like the shadow of a crow's wing. He was again struck by her good looks . . . only it occurred to him now that she might actually be beautiful... Perhaps it was the bruise that allowed him to see the possibility of her beauty — an essential contrast, a particular flaw which first drew attention to itself and then somehow denned the rest: the gray-blue eyes, the naturally red lips, the creamy unblemished child's skin. There was a tiny spray of freckles across her nose. (King 312)

These two segments of the books were selected because both of them contain a description. Simmons focuses on how exactly the child perceives the principal and we can get a good visual picture of him from his description. King's description is also fitting but leaves more to the imagination (we get only somewhat a picture of how Beverly looks like), however, both explicate well what the eye of a child sees when they are either stunned by a creepy man or a beautiful person.

All the information about this book can be found on book archive Goodreads "Summer of Night." and the rest I found in the book.

### 3.1.3. Meddling Kids

Author: Edgar Cantero

This horror-comedy fiction came out in 2017. Its author is of Spanish origin, but writes mostly in English.

#### Narration and Storytelling

This novel has two timelines – 1977 and then fifteen years later (1990). The book, however, does not switch from one to the other, because the previous events are

only remembered retrospectively by the characters in the present (which in this book is the year 1990), the narrator is omniscient. In *It* the characters also sometimes share their memories of the past events, however, that is not the main device to convey the story, rather it is the altering between the storylines as mentioned. The main characters meet again to face their past and finally solve the case, which is finding out about the monster of the Sleepy Lake and then defeating it (similarly as the children in *It* have to defeat Pennywise). Both books are littered with direct speech.

### Themes

Both books are considered horror with occasional humorous relief, however, *It* definitely contains less comedic elements, since it is aimed at older audience. One theme that is prevalent in the novel is play on nostalgia, only different one here than in *It* - King's first timeline takes place during the 1950s so that the readers in the 1980s – when the book originally came out - can rejoice their younger years, while in this novel, the plot takes place in 1970s and 1990s, therefore today's readers can through this book their childhood. The other most obvious theme is friendship and coming of age.

### Plot

The story is set up in Blyton, Oregon which is located in north of the U.S. just like Maine. The main characters are children (during the first timeline) and they call themselves 'Blyton Summer Detective Club', which is more positive than the self-deprecating the 'Losers Club'. One of the characters commits suicide when they are adults – in *Meddling Kids* it is Peter and in *It* it is Stanley, however their reason for such action is different. After the main characters grew apart the past comes back to haunt them, and they have to stand together for the last time to defeat the evil that lurks in their hometown. The antagonist of this book is also of supernatural origin - an evil demonic being.

Here are two excerpts from the books with similar situations where the main characters are fighting against the antagonists.

The penultimate monster still clambered on top of her, missing four out of six limbs, digging its nails into her right arm, snapping its teeth at her turned cheek.

She kicked it aside; it bounced back. She ordered her arm to swing the sword at him, and the arm came up empty-handed. The saber was lost... She breathed in the last feast of oxygen before death and injected it into her right arm, then clutched Uncle Emmet's shotgun, brought it home, and rammed the barrel into the creature's mouth. Deep down into its gullet where oxygen is unknown. (Cantero 318)

It had somehow squatted on Its rear legs. Its front legs pawed the air just over Bill's head. And Stan Uris, forced to approach, compelled to approach in spite of every instinct in his mind and body, saw that Bill was staring up at It, his blue eyes fixed on Its inhuman orange ones, eyes from which that awful corpse-light spilled. Stan stopped, understanding that the Ritual of Chüd — whatever that was — had begun. (King 936)

Both scenes contain fitting description of the horrid situation. We see the characters in conditions where they have to sacrifice themselves for the group. In these parts of the novels there is no time or place to put either thoughts of the characters or direct speech, simply both the authors focus on depicting the situation as it happens without distractions.

Some basic information about this novel can be found on book archive 'World Without End' ("Meddling Kids.") and the rest can be found in the book itself.

### 3.1.4. The Boys of Summer

Author: Richard Cox

This book is likened to *It*, such as in this article "The Boys of Summer is Darker Edgier Stranger Things." It was published in 2016 and falls into the category of supernatural thrillers. This book makes direct allusion to King when the characters talk about his book *The Dead Zone* or when the character of Johnathan talks about his career and says: "I'm no Stephen King, but I think I write well." (Cox 217).

### Narration and Storytelling

There are two plot lines – one in 1983 and one in 2008. Once again, one presents the characters when they are children and the second one later, when they grew up. This book also does not switch between the two and the plot is linear with third person omniscient narration. Cox uses the same device as King, where he inserts fabricated documents such as the one at the beginning of the book – which is a fictional report of the tornado that starts the events in the novel. King did not use this technique in *It*, however, he used it in *Carrie* or in *Cujo*. Both authors try to use attention-grabbing language with their interesting expressions (see excerpt below).

### Themes

Just as in *It* and *The Summer of Night* we can observe the contrast between idleness and carelessness of childhood – symbolized by the summer, since summer is often associated with free time, fun outdoor activities and, of course, a vacation (therefore lack of responsibilities) and lurking evil that forces its way into the characters' lives. Then, of course, the typical ones which are friendship and coming of age.

### Plot

This is a coming-of-age story along with horror and thriller elements. It is set up in Wichita Falls, which is a real city in the U.S. just like Maine. The novel follows five boys, that form sort of a club and call themselves 'The Boys of Summer' – reminiscent of the 'The Losers Club'. The plot is character driven just as *It* – it relies on the dialogue and the psychology. We see them first as children and then later as adults. Their hometown has a dark secret and subsequently supernatural elements are a prevalent plot point. The main characters reunite after twenty-five years (close to *It*'s twenty-seven).

Here are two samples from the books:

But would anyone ever want their memories served up so perfectly? The most vivid image she could recall from that time was drawing a white slip of paper from a red wicker basket and discovering Jonathan's name written on it...but if

Alicia were able to access a video file of that scene, watch their encounter rendered in the merciless authenticity of pixels... (Cox 302)

The memory came — the memory behind the birds — but it was vague and disconnected. Perhaps this one always would be. She had — Her thoughts broke off as she realized that Eddie comes to her first, because he is the most frightened. He comes to her not as her friend of that summer, or as her brief lover now, but the way he would have come to his mother only three or four years ago, to be comforted; he doesn't draw back from her smooth nakedness and, at first, she doubts if he even feels it. (King 962)

We can see that both authors use interesting expressions to convey the message – such as “merciless authenticity” or “smooth nakedness”. Both King and Cox strive to avoid basic collocations, which makes the book more interesting for the reader.

Any formal information can be found on Amazon.com (“The Boys of Summer: A Novel.”) the rest of the findings are from the book.

### 3.1.5. Conclusion of The Literary Part

Four distinctive novels were compared to *It* in three chosen literary categories – narration and storytelling, themes and plot.

In the first category, all books proved to have evident amount of similarities with the book in question – most notably the fact that all of them have two timelines, one always showing the characters as children and second one as adults. *The Chalk Man* is the only book which switches between the timelines however. The three other books on the other hand use third person omniscient narrator, which is present in *It* as well.

When it comes to themes, quite common ones seem to be bonding and friendship, coming-of-age and nature – which is ever-present in all of the books. Essential theme in all of them is the contrast between the naïve and warm-hearted childhood and the lurking evil forces spoiling their daily lives – in some of these books it is displayed by

the contrast between the summer and the monster (such as in the novels *Summer of Night* and *Meddling Kids*).

Plot-wise, each book contains something specifically different that could be likened to *It*, nevertheless all stories are about facing the past and therefore are leading up to the finale where the characters find the solution and by which they defeat their fears. Each one of the literary works in question also features some antagonist or evil force, which might be likened to Pennywise in some aspects – such as demonic origin (this is the case in *Meddling Kids*) or giving clues before killing (such as *The Chalk Man*). Every one of these books with the exception of *The Chalk Man* contain supernatural elements.

All of the novels showed vastly similar portrayal of what is essentially “ideal childhood” – bike riding after school, fights with bullies (which never resolves in lethal injury), wandering in nature (mostly forests, but also near lakes or rivers) and local, usually small-scale adventures. All of this is peppered with nostalgic tone. This portrayal is very old-fashioned one from today’s perspective, since it involves no electronic devices or social media.

When choosing the texts that are included in each section, I focused on either similar situation in the two books compared or on descriptive parts.

It can be concluded that all of the four novels indicate certain common characteristics as the literary work *It*.

### 3.2. King’s novel and its impact on popular culture

This section will focus on cultural part of *It*’s impact. Firstly, I will look at works that were certainly inspired by the novel and in the last section I will take a look on works where the impact is debatable.

### 3.2.1. Acknowledged source of inspiration and direct influence

#### 3.2.1.1. Movie Industry – adaptations

Over 50 King's books were adapted into movies or television series. While some of them were made into successful works, such as *Green Mile* or *The Shining*, others were critically and quality-wise unsuccessful - especially recently, with movies like *Gerald's Game* or *The Dark Tower*, which had fairly low rating. The book was adapted twice - once in 1990 as a short television series simply titled *It* (directed by Tommy Lee Wallace) and more recently in 2017 as film of the same name with a large Hollywood production (directed by Andy Muschietti). The newer one is supposed to have sequel to in 2019, called *It: Second Chapter* (covering the second part of the novel).

The older series does not hold up in terms of eeriness or production quality. From today's perspective, the TV series is more silly than scary and some iconic scenes (the sewer scene at the beginning for example) are considered rather funny than horrifying, which is probably how King would intend it. In terms of viewers evaluation, this adaptation is the poorer one, gaining very average 61% on ČSFD, but doing slightly better on IMDb with 6,9 stars. On Rotten Tomatoes the rating is 63% by the viewers and only 56% by critics. Despite the passable ratings, this series created one of the most recognisable looks of horror movie character of the last century - Tim Curry's portrayal of Pennywise. The movie follows the original main story, however, omits the side characters.

The latest movie based on *It* critically falls into the category of better adaptations, in fact some critics speculate that it is the best Stephen King movie adaptation in recent years ("Stephen King's *It* Scares Off *The Exorcist* To Become Highest-Grossing Horror Ever."), since newest adaptations of King's books were fairly unsuccessful – 2014's *A Good Marriage* or 2017's *Gerald's Game* and *The Dark Tower*, which were not well-received. On IMDb this movie is rated 7,4 stars and on ČSFD it is rated 74% (therefore it has the exact same rating). On Rotten Tomatoes the critics' rated it 85% and the audience rated it 84%, concluding that this movie was universally liked. Currently, the trailer for this movie has almost 52 million views on Youtube.com. On the opening weekend it grossed over 327 million dollars in US and over 690 million dollars

worldwide, making it by far the highest grossing adaptation of Stephen King's book and also breaking a 44-year-old record of highest grossing horror movie of all time set by the movie *The Exorcist* ("Stephen King's *It* Scares Off *The Exorcist* To Become Highest-Grossing Horror Ever."). Considering that this film was made with only 35-million-dollar budget, it was economically a good move by Warner Brothers studios and as Business Insider says: "it was a hit internationally, where horrors usually don't do as strong." ("The 10 highest-grossing movies of 2017 that ruled the box office.") The movie notably sparked new wave of interest in the book as previously mentioned in the 'Lay Reception of the Book' part. Stephen King himself actually approved of this movie saying "I had hopes, but I was not prepared for how good it really was. It's something different and at the same time it's something that the audiences are gonna relate to...I'm sure that my fans will enjoy the movie." as he stated in an interview ("Stephen King Talks about the New *IT* Movie.").

### 3.2.1.2. Film Industry and Television – Inspirations, Homages and Parodies

This section will discuss movies, television series and other television media that took direct inspiration from *It*.

One of such works is the Netflix's TV series *Stranger Things* (2016-still going), which became widely popular the year it came out. It seems to be heavily inspired by 1980's Stephen King and lot of this inspiration comes from the book *It*. This series was created by Ross Duffer and Matt Duffer and when Stephen King saw it, he commented: "Watching *Stranger Things* is (like) watching Stephen King's greatest hits" ("The Influence of Stephen King on Popular Culture."). The first hint of it is in the logo – the use of the red on dark background and the font of the letters is eerily similar to old covers of *It* (attachment 2. and 3.). The plot has many references to *It* – starting with the main group of characters who are young boys and one girl, just like in the novel. One of the characters is played by Finn Wolfhard, who also stars in the 2017's *It* adaptation. Other nod to the original is one of the characters, Joyce Byers (portrayed by Winona Ryder) who asks her son Will (portrayed by Noah Schnapp) if he is afraid of clowns.

Another one is mention of moving to Maine (which is where the novel takes place, but then again, so do all King's novels)

Two movies paid homages to the book. One of them is *Cabin in the Woods* which is a dark comedy from 2012 (directed by Drew Goddard). In this film, clown, eerily similar to Pennywise, appeared for few scenes ("Cabin in the Woods: Connections."). Another homage appeared in the horror-parody film *Scary Movie II.*, where in the final scene of the movie, the character of Shorty hides in room that has "It" written on the wall.

After the success of 2017's *It* movie remake, few TV parodies appeared in American television media, usually in form of short sketches. One such sketch called *The IT Department* parodying *It* was featured in 'The Late-Night Show with James Corden' and was subsequently uploaded on Youtube.com with currently 9.6 million views ("The IT Department."). The video starring popular TV show host James Corden (playing Pennywise) relies on double meaning of the word IT – as the name of the book and also abbreviation of information technology.

Another popular American late-night television show 'Saturday Night Live' (SNL for short) also made such parody, but this time they used iconic sewer scene in the beginning of the book – a scene where Georgie chases his paper boat and then encounters Pennywise. The sketch made fun of current American politics, making Pennywise into Kellyanne Conway<sup>6</sup> lookalike and Georgie into Anderson Cooper<sup>7</sup>. This sketch called *Kellywise* ("Kellywise – SNL.") has currently over 13,5 million views on Youtube.com. Both of these sketches include visual version of Pennywise that closer to the one from 2017's movie.

### 3.2.1.3. Music Industry

The popular book also influenced music industry, although certainly not in such scale as the film industry or literature.

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<sup>6</sup> who is current American political consultant and Counselor for the President in the administration of U.S. president Donald Trump, in the sketch played by actress Kate McKinnon

<sup>7</sup> who is an American journalist and a TV personality, in the sketch played by actor Alex Moffat

One American punk rock band took very straight inspiration from the book and named themselves Pennywise. They formed in 1988 in Bay, Los Angeles and are still active to this day, recently releasing their 12<sup>th</sup> album. Their first album (released in 1991) was also called Pennywise. Apart from the name they do not have much in common with the clown, neither their image nor their merchandise is topical to *It*. My source was their biography on Epitaph Records website (“Pennywise – Bio.”). There are more music artists who named themselves after the character – Italian singer “Penny Wise DYT” (who released 6 songs to this date) and Russian rapper “Paennywise”, (who only released one song). I found them both on Genius.com.

There are two songs named Pennywise. First and more recent one is a song by Dutch hardcore DJ Angerfist (15,4 million views on Youtube.com), which was released on May 2018 and has horror clown themed music video (“Angerfist – Pennywise (official video).”). Second one is from Josh A and Jake Hill which has no music video, only a visual cover featuring famous sewer scene from *It*. The song’s audio has 1,8 million views on Youtube.com (“Josh A & Jake Hill – PENNYWISE.”).

The word “Pennywise” as well as references to the novel can be also found in variety of lyrics – such as:

**Try It by Jay Critch** – line “Pennywise rapper, you clowns ain't doing it for me” with no reference to the novel other than the character

**Midnight Burial by Army of the Pharaohs** – line “Drag you kids to the underground like I’m Pennywise”, which is obvious reference to the fact that *It* drags its victims to the underground sewer system

**BLACK BALLOONS by Denzel Curry** – this song directly references the book, first in the chorus “Hot pink, Valentine red. Black balloons over my head. Let it float...” and then in the verse “What’s said from Pennywise, I guess we all float.”, which is an allusion to the part of the book where *It*’s victims see red balloons when *It* is near. The part of the line where it mentions floating is also from the book, when *It* says the famous line “You’ll float too.”

All these lyrics can be found on Genius.com website.

#### 3.2.1.4. Halloween Costumes

As it goes for many other popular horror characters, 'It', specifically its Pennywise form is fairly common amongst Halloween costumes. For example, Amazon.com sells a variety of such costumes and its accessories, varying on the prices. Both Tim Curry's and Bill Skarsgard's versions are popular. Second character from the book that is common amongst Halloween party-goers is Georgie (*It's* first victim that is mentioned in the book) and again Georgie's costume is available on sites such as Amazon.com or HalloweenCostumes.com.

Along with costumes goes makeup and *It* influenced makeup artist community and beauty influencers, who create makeup tutorials (especially on Youtube.com), where Halloween videos are common. After the success of 2017's *It* movie, many Pennywise makeup tutorials were uploaded on Youtube.com and also Instagram.com, where the visual of the clown was altered (in order to look more pleasing and aesthetic). The videos were most popular before and during Halloween. Most popular Halloween makeup tutorials of the clown have millions of views on Youtube.com, most viewed being tutorial by Jorge Raminez Fotografo with 20 million views ("IT PENNYWISE//MAKEUP.") and second most viewed is by ini vindy with 13 million views ("Pennywise IT Makeup Tutorial 2017 by Inivindy."). In U.S. many American beauty influencers followed this trend and also made Pennywise tutorial such as James Charles with 2,8 million views ("IT PENNYWISE GLAM HALLOWEEN MAKEUP TUTORIAL.").

#### 3.2.1.5. Real-life Clowns

Another industry which was - and still is to this day - heavily influenced by the book are real-life clowns – aka clown performers. This industry seems to be less mainstream than film or literature (and today surely less common), however this group is worth mentioning, simply because the effect of the novel on their lives was immense. In the 1986, when the book was released, clowns were no longer seen as friendly and many clowns actually either had fewer money or lost their jobs altogether, since people

started to associate them with the book and its antagonist Pennywise. In the 2017, when the movie came out and scared new wave of viewers and readers, similar situation happened, and the clowns complained. “For a community already struggling to combat perceptions of clowns as scary rather than fun, the emergence of Pennywise, the movie’s child-killing clown villain, played by Swedish actor Bill Skarsgard is truly the stuff of nightmares” says The Guardian („No Laughing Matter: Clowns Brace for Impact of Stephen King’s *It*.”). As soon as King received negative messages from the clowns in 2017, detesting him for writing the book, he shared his feelings about the situation on Twitter: “[...] kids have always been scared of clowns. Don’t kill the messenger for the message.” („No Laughing Matter: Clowns Brace for Impact of Stephen King’s *It*.”).

### 3.2.2. Speculative Influence

#### 3.2.2.1. Film Industry

One speculative effect of the novel might be that evil clown characters as main villains of horror movies became much more common. These movies, which are listed below, never explicitly declared that *It* would be their source of inspiration. However, since the novel was one of the most influential horror works involving clowns, certain amount of influence could be speculated.

While there is plenty of movies with killer clowns they are usually on the worse ends, quality-wise (by both lay reception and critics). Most of these movies came out around 2000-2010, which is when popularity of this type of horror peaked. The subcategory for these works is in majority so-called slasher horror, which is the most easily marketable and mainstream type of horror. However, *It* is more character based and therefore psychological. Below I listed some examples of movies that could be very likely inspired by the novel, specific parts that might have taken inspiration from *It* are in the short description. The movies are in chronological order:

*Clownhouse* (1989) – Average rated movie (5,7 stars on IMDb) about youngsters who are chased by evil clown, who somewhat resembles Pennywise (red hair on the side).

*The Clown at Midnight* (1999) – Again an average rated horror (5,6 stars on IMDb) with clown that is visually very similar to the *It*'s clown. The main characters are again teenagers, this time there is seven of them (exactly like in *It*).

*Hellbreeder* (2004) – This lowly rated movie (2,4 stars on IMDb) seems to be heavily inspired by *It*. The clown who is a main villain looks very similar to *It*'s clown and his victim is a child with a red balloon (exactly like Georgie in *It*).

*Gingerclown* (2012) – Very low rated horror movie (40% on ČSFD and 3,3 stars on IMDb), includes group of young people and clown visually resembling Pennywise.

*Clown* (2014) – Quite recent horror flick that includes demonic clown which resembles Pennywise. It has mediocre score on ČSFD.cz (61%) and on IMDb too (5,7 stars).

In all of these movies the main villains resemble Pennywise (red hair on the sides, pale face, rugged clown clothing etc.), but none of the creators ever explicitly stated that they took any inspiration from the book, as far as their commentary on the movies is concerned.

Another work that one may speculate could be inspired by the book is popular American TV series *American Horror Story* (2011-still going), which featured evil clowns in two of their series – fourth and seventh. Both times as regular humans only disguised as clowns, never as supernatural beings like Pennywise. This show has many directors as each episode is directed by different person. None of them specifically said that they drew inspiration from *It*. In the fourth season there was a killer-clown character, called Twisty. In the seventh season there is a cult of people dressed as clowns that torture people.

### 3.2.2.2. 2016 Clown Sightings

During the second half of 2016 there were several incidents of similar nature – folks in clown costumes standing around schools and forests, presumably in order to scare passers-by. People, whose identities were never public - most likely teenagers - bought clown masks and clown costumes and showed up at random places all over

United States, Canada and United Kingdom. These so-called “clown sightings” happened from around August to December of 2016. Some people on social media speculated this to be linked to the marketing of *It* (which was never confirmed). While some were very sceptical that these clowns could be dangerous and called these incidents harmless pranks or simply kids that want to have fun, many others were very afraid of the clowns, especially parents of the children whose schools were affected by this incident. There had been no reports of any violence connected to these sightings, however some people were arrested for frightening the public. This strange phenomenon died down soon after and was never explained. There are still many videos and photos of these costumed people online. Main source of information for this paragraph can be found in the article “The 2016 clown panic: 10 questions asked and answered.”

## Conclusion

In the theoretical part both the author and the work were presented. Stephen King's life was summarized in a brief biography to give a context and background information. Then we looked at his literary works in general perspective where his writing techniques were discussed with the reference of his book *On Writing*. After this, the book *It* was introduced along its themes, plot, main characters, main antagonist and narrative technique.

The practical part then focused on comparing these elements to works of literature and aspects of popular culture. Firstly, we focused on four selected novels, that bear some resemblance to *It*'s themes, plot, narrative structure and other. The aim of this part was to put forward if the works were rather influenced by the original book. All of them seem to report some resemblance to the original novel as they were all published after *It* and have similar elements to some extent. *The Chalk Man* is the first one on the list and likely bears the most resemblance to the novel in question – similar themes, almost exact narrative structure and similar plot elements. After this, we discussed the novel *Summer of Night*, which has similar storytelling style (focus on psychology, child perspective, third person narrator etc.) and themes (childhood disrupted by evil forces, coming-of-age and so on) and some plot elements (a missing child initiates the conflict). Then, we took a closer look at the *Meddling Kids*, which is a detective story rather than horror, however it contains similarities such as plot elements (the characters have to face and resolve their past, suicide of one of the characters etc.). Last book that appeared on the list was *The Boys of Summer*. Some fans liken it to *It* and the book made an allusion to Stephen King in it. This novel also has two timelines, contains supernatural elements and taps into themes of childhood and coming of age. To summarize, all these works share some common elements with *It* – they follow a group of boys or mostly boys, have similar themes, the supernatural element is present and lastly plot always resolves in defeating evil and “saving the day”.

Second section of the practical part, which is concerned with the book's impact on popular culture, was divided into two parts – acknowledged source of inspiration and a speculative one. This is because some of the works specifically list *It* as their inspiration or at least pay homage to it and some are up to debate whether or not they were

impacted by the novel. The segments of the popular culture were chosen according to their significance.

The part with acknowledged source of inspiration focused on movie adaptations, film industry (concerning TV media, TV shows and movies that are not an adaptation), music industry, Halloween costumes and clown industry. We introduced the two adaptations, one from 1990 and the other, more recent, from 2017. The first movie's significance is establishing Pennywise as a character in television media and not just in the literary realm. The second one's accomplishment is being the highest grossing horror film of all times and earning a good score from the viewers. Then we moved along to the book's influence on television media, where we discussed the popular television series *Stranger Things* and its likely inspiration by Stephen King and the book in question as well. Then, the two late-night television shows that created sketches parodying *It* were presented and lastly, two movies that made an homage to the novel were pointed out (these movies were *Cabin in the Woods* and *Scary Movie II*). Moving along to the music industry – the findings propose that the book had little impact on it, since there are only few artists that took any inspiration from the book. The data in section Halloween costumes also suggest that the book had some amount of influence as there is variety of costumes (inspired by *It*'s story) available on websites that sell these products for this popular worldwide holiday. Only influence that could be deemed objectively as negative is the last section concerning clown industry. Clowns were negatively impacted each time any work concerning *It* came out (first the book and then the movies) as they lost their jobs or had fewer job opportunities.

The speculative source of inspiration section concerned the film industry and the 2016 clown sightings. The movies listed in there include all antagonist that could be compared to Pennywise - the main villain of *It* – visually, by their supernatural nature (or sometimes the lack of) and by their role in the story – that is killer/evil clowns, which could be applied to all of them. The incident that is listed as last, which is the 2016 clown sightings, is an interesting phenomenon that needed to be mentioned since, while its impact may not be massive, it was still a plenty discussed topic on social media and in various articles.

The hypothesis that Stephen King's literary legacy, particularly "It", has had a significant impact on some part of our modern-day culture proved correct. This is based

on the multiple observable events and cultural artefacts that bear the mark of direct or indirect influence of the novel.

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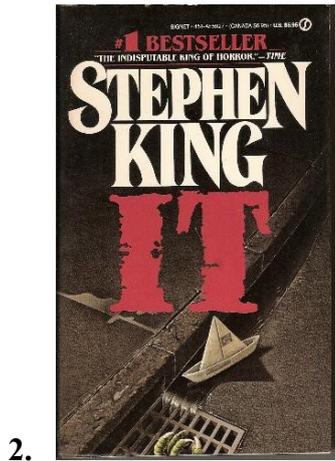
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## Appendices



3.

