



Psychological Isolation and Emotional Collapse: A Humanities Perspective on the Shining

R. Sheeba Mary

Ph.D Research Scholar, Sri Meenakshi Government Arts College for Women (A), Madurai, Tamil Nadu



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Abstract

*This paper explores the psychological and emotional effects of isolation, as depicted in Stephen King's *The Shining*. Sifting through a humanistic perspective, the research looks into what happens when people endure prolonged isolation—physical and emotional—resulting in psychic breakdown and states of a different reality. Centring its criticism around Jack, Wendy, and Danny Torrance, the study discusses how the Overlook Hotel functions as both a haunted house and a trope for trapping the mind and the heart. Jack's madness, Wendy's growing terror and panic, and Danny's psychic trauma mirror more general concerns in psychological humanities about the boundaries of the human brain faced with social disconnection. Through a consideration of literature as a terrain for psychological investigation, this article also adds to existing discussions of emotional strength and weakness and the cultural depiction of loneliness-induced suffering.*

Keywords: psychological humanities, emotional collapse, isolation and mental health

Introduction

The Shining by Stephen King is a fascinating psychological study on the nature of man and the consequences of an isolated psyche. The story takes place in the snowbound, unattainable Overlook Inn, a place that becomes both a physical and mental prison for the Torrance family. The creepy atmosphere of the hotel is an important vehicle for the destruction of Jack Torrance's sane self, and as a result, it becomes a very effective fiction that explores isolation's ability to expand underlying mental weakness into all-out madness. This article is about the humanistic perspective on isolation in *The*

Shining and how King uses the hotel and the characters' interactions to get across how isolation can utterly decimate the human soul.

The Overlook Hotel: A Character of Isolation

In *The Shining*, the Overlook Inn is not simply a setting; it serves as a character, one that encapsulates and explores the theme of confinement. The hotel's physical separation, settled in the Colorado Rockies and cut off from the rest of the world amid the cruel winter months, makes an environment of strong isolation. This geological segregation is critical as it leaves the Torrance family alone, with no quick



implies of elude or contact with the exterior world. The snow-covered streets and obstructed territory symbolise the unpreventable nature of their segregation, which relentlessly becomes mental as well as physical.

In exploring trauma, scholars Muthukannan and Sheeba Princess emphasise claustrophobia and cabin fever as elements of the Psychological Trauma in Stephen King's novel *The Shining*:

Stephen King points out, that the transformation is made by its own shapes and focuses in its craftsmanship with contemporary socio-cultural anxieties.

Thus the emotional & psychological symptoms of a person may cause due to shock, confusion, difficulty concentrating, anger, irritability, mood swings, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, self-blame, feeling disconnected or numb. It also has some symptoms physical symptoms of insomnia or nightmares, fatigue are the cause of trauma. (676).

Stephen King imbues the Overlook Hotel with a vile nearness, giving it a life of its claim. The lodging appears to have a malicious insight, capable of affecting the contemplations and activities of those who dwell inside its walls. It holds a dim history filled with savagery, killing, and frantiness, all of which contribute to its onerous air. The spirits and extraordinary strengths that frequent the lodging are appearances of its dim past, and they serve to separate the Torrance family by preying on their fears and weaknesses.

Another aspect of the story is the hotel's ability to manipulate the environment and the experience of the protagonists. As an example, a feeling of confusion and fear is intensified by the hotel's constantly changing design, ghostly figures and supernatural occurrences. These features hold the characters in a mode of terror and confusion, leaving them in a context where reality and madness become impossible to separate. Crucially, Overlook's effect on Jack Torrance highlights how it acted as a catalyst for driving him into madness, weaponising his isolation against him.

Jack Torrance: A Case Study in Emotional and Psychological Disintegration

Jack Torrance is a character whose mental delicacy is apparent from the start of *The Shining*. A writer battling with liquor abuse, outrage issues, and a history of savagery, Jack is now on the edge when he accepts the work as the winter caretaker of the Overlook Inn. The isolation forced by the hotel's inaccessible area and the duties of his modern part culminate in the conditions for his mental breakdown. In his evolutionary critique, Clasen argues that the novel explores universal internal conflicts and evolved psychological motives:

The central conflicts of Stephen King's horror novel *The Shining* are rooted in human nature and reflect evolutionarily recurrent adaptive problems—the problem of balancing conflicting evolved motives, such as motives for selfish status striving versus motives for affiliative nurturing behavior, and the problem of surviving the hostile forces of nature. (76)

As Jack gets progressively disconnected from the exterior world, he also gets more separated from his family and himself. The isolation of the Overlook worsens his existing frailties and dissatisfactions, especially his fear of disappointment as a writer and supplier. The inn, with its onerous hush and endless, purge spaces, becomes a reflection of Jack's inward turmoil. As he spends more time alone, his considerations turn darker, and the inn starts to lean on his vulnerabilities.

The unique features of the hotel are a major factor in Jack's declining mental state. The unpleasant, ambiguous sights and noises Jack encounters—like the reappearance of previous caretaker Delbert Grady and barman Lloyd—show how the hotel takes advantage of his vulnerabilities. These interactions show how the hotel may elicit Jack's strongest wants and cause him to act erratically; they go beyond simple visual depictions. Jack struggles to discern between the evil powers within the hotel and his own anxieties as the effects of the establishment gradually erode his sense of reality.



Since the hotel's influence takes his seclusion to the extreme, Jack's evolution from a man fighting his inner demons into a murderer is a slow one. The more paranoid, angry and unfocused he becomes, the further he descends into madness. With the fragile layer of civilisation stripped away, separation exposes Jack's repressed violent and destructive tendencies. Jack ceases to exist in any recognisable form, just a pawn in the hotel's twisted game once he submits himself entirely to its influence.

The Impact of Isolation on Wendy and Danny Torrance

While the most famous example of the ill effects of isolation in *The Shining* is Jack Torrance's descent into madness, Wendy and Danny Torrance suffer from the Overlook, too. At first, Wendy sees the hotel as an opportunity for a fresh start, where Jack can focus on his writing and they might even repair their relationship, caught in tatters. However, as Jack progressively becomes more unreliable, Wendy fears for her and her son's safety.

Wendy is doubly isolated, emotionally within her marriage, physically on the premises of the motel. As Jack's writing goes nowhere and his interest in the hotel fades, Wendy and Danny continue to hang around the premises, eventually coming under evil influence. Because she is so isolated emotionally, this instinctual fear knows no boundaries.

Danny's supernatural power, "the shining," becomes a metaphor for an acute psychological sensitivity. His time at the Overlook exposes him to emotional and psychic injury for which he is not mature enough. Inarticulate with all that he has heard and isolated amidst his own family, Danny is a figure of neuro-emotional distress. His mute anguish epitomizes the way in which children are absorbing ecological toxicity and family breakdown. In the psychological humanities, Danny is a fascinating mirror for the hardship of empathy, muted trauma and the loneliness of genius. His supernatural gifts, referred to as "the shining," isolate him from others who are incapable of comprehending or sharing his

experience. The connection Danny develops with the hotel's otherworldly residents makes him aware of the unhallowed hallways. He knows too much and can't explain to his parents after he sees ghastly images from the hotel's history and feels its malevolent force. Scholar Ya-huei Wang shows how Danny's anxieties symbolically mirror individual growth:

In his individualization process, Danny has to go through the anxieties often seen in fairytales, such as separation anxieties, authoritarian anxieties, Oedipal rivalry anxieties, and sexual anxieties, in order to acquire his autonomy. The Overlook Hotel becomes symbolic of collective human evil, being charged with evil spirits. (112)

Danny is all the more isolated because he has to face these frightening situations largely by himself. He has this mental bridge to the hotel, and he can feel that his father is in trouble since Jack is currently the hotel, but he's just a child and naïve to do anything about it. The burden of this knowledge keeps driving Danny further away from his parents — particularly from Jack, whose menace only increases as the story unfolds. To be alone is also a weakness and an invitation for Danny's development as he faces the horrors of the motel with a strength and courage all his own.

Isolation as a Catalyst for Violence

King depicts isolation not only as a physical state but as a mental one, a psychic trigger that corrodes rationality, incites dread, and untethers emotion. Jack's violent tendencies are triggered and sculpted by the emotional blankness of the Overlook Hotel; Wendy and Danny react with psychological defensiveness and terror. The novel is about how the severance of significant social and emotional attachment can sabotage the psyche's defences against paranoia, delusion and violence. This is in line with the central anxieties in the emotional and psychological humanities concerning the vulnerability of the human condition under chronic exposures of disconnection. The book explores the



idea that the natural evil in the hearts of man cannot be repressed without the civilising influence of others, and that when stripped of the order, rules and morals of society, life as we know it falls apart. Perhaps the clearest instance of functioning as a trigger for violence is the case of Jack Torrance, who goes from being a belligerent author and a father into a murderous psychopath.

The solitude that Jack experiences as a result of the hotel's manipulation of him into becoming a weapon exacerbates his intense rage and dissatisfaction. Because of the violent past of his family, Jack's violent instincts are heightened at the Overlook Hotel and directed towards them. Ghosts and otherworldly forces within the hotel force Jack to give in to his violent impulses, which causes him to commit horrible acts he never would have considered doing in a more secure and encouraging environment.

The way the hotel preys upon Jack's anxieties and insecurities and turns them into a murderous fury is stark evidence of its control over him. Jack becomes increasingly otherworldly the more isolated he becomes, until he's completely disconnected from his morality altogether. At the peak of his madness induced by being alone, Jack tries to murder Wendy and Danny in what might be considered the most violent act of violence. Jack isn't the only one with an affinity towards violence; there is a sense of foreboding and catastrophic violence that, throughout the tenure of the hotel, seems undeniably imminent.

Though Wendy and Danny are not as violent as Jack, their exclusion makes them open to violence. Danny, too, is witness to the trauma of violence that comes through his father's volatility just as much as the gruesome apparitions he is subjected to via his own psychic powers.

As King shows in *The Shining*, though, social conventions and moral principles that suppress homicidal inclinations can be stripped away through isolation. Instinctive, violent behaviour begins to assert itself out of the isolation felt by the Torrance family, and as a result, cognition and self-determination break down. By revealing the frailty of the human mind and the potential for destruction

when deprived of society and others, it also graphically portrays how isolation can breed violence.

Conclusion

The Shining by Stephen King delves deep into how psychological isolation and emotional detachment can slowly drive the human mind into a maniacal chaos. In the disintegration of Jack Torrance, the book makes a visceral argument for the degree to which two kinds of solitude, one environmental and the other psychological, can exacerbate lurking weaknesses, which in turn can lead to madness and violence. More than just a haunted place, the Overlook Hotel stands metaphorically for a mind-prison where reality and delusion dissolve into each other. While Wendy and Danny also suffer states of emotional dislocation and psychic stress, King drives home the vulnerability of the human mind when disconnected from relational support and social ballast. In the end, *The Shining* is a reminder that the most terrifying horror isn't supernatural; instead, it's a quiet, internal disintegration that isolation can set off — making the maniacal monsters inside us far scarier than any we can imagine.

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