



## Narrating Psychosis in Stephen King's *It*

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**Abstract:** Stephen King's 1986 novel is a projection of social exclusion as it explores the polarising aspects of insanity, its signs and symptoms. While focussing on the aspects of psychosis, the narrative takes a dive into searching for the connections that correlate psychosis and collective memory. The novel invites a discussion on psychosis by detailing the salient, characteristic signs of hallucinations, delusions, and mental disorders. Although it has been categorised popularly as a supernatural horror for its sole reliance on the shape-shifting urban legend of Pennywise, yet remaining true to King's typical format of intermingling genres, the novel steers itself into the fertile field of psychosis. The paper engages into the core of psychotic expressions in fictional narrative by drawing upon ideas such as Jasper's noted ideas concerning delusions, Freud's theory involving the uncanny and the repression and Bion's theory of group psychology. The novel attempts at depicting Derry as the setting that acts as the nucleus that provides the suitable cocoon for the incubation of psychosis. The setting behaves as a psychic split as it is metamorphosed into a zone where violence is normalised. In this regard, the paper does what is done by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, which is to scrutinise and interpret the relatedness of trauma and repression, and its effects. The study is more than a simple projection of symptoms of psychosis in the novel. It becomes a therapeutic engagement as it details the psychological strategies of recursion, doubled timelines and polyphony while narrating the cognitive and perceptual instability of the characters.

**Keywords:** *It*, psychosis, trauma, delusion, hallucination, repression, uncanny

### Introduction: Constructing the Evil

Stephen King's *It is* a coming of age novel that tells the tale of a group of misfit children growing up and dealing with their adolescent issues in a small town, while taking up the task of eliminating the town's antagonist. The novel is often rated as a tale of horror inevitably following King's classic characterisation of a horror setting where psychologically troubled characters are juxtaposed against an ordinary setting that is haunted by a supernatural evil. Like most of King's characterisation of horror settings and characters, the novel *It* immortalises the uncanny nature of evil in King's fictionalised supernatural multiverse. However, *It* is not preoccupied with the singular task of portraying the antagonistic nature of evil. The novel attempts to sustain the metaphysical concept of evil by symbolising evil as a manifestation within the psychological framework of the characters.

The novel thrives on using Freud's concept of the uncanny by building a terrifying underworld parallel to a familiar, temperate backdrop. Evil, in fictitious Derry's milieu is a direct manifestation of the internal psychological fears, obsessions and corruption that is inherent to human nature. It is inexplicable, experiential and incapacitates an individual by driving him to the edge of psychosis. King's supernatural world is built on not making the monster appear terrifying, rather it focusses upon the reaction of the characters when thrust

into a world dominated by monstrosity. King has built the world of Derry as a dreamlike state where evil appears in different forms to the characters based on their internal trauma. Therefore, the response of the characters to the monster is analogous to the repressed trauma deep rooted in their unconscious. As the characters are propelled into a dreamlike setting, their connection with or perception of reality is disrupted by delusions and hallucinatory experiences.

The creation of a dreamlike setting is directly proportional to injection of the uncanny as the domineering aspect in the world building of the novel. The familiar, comfortable setting of a small suburban town appears mundane at the surface level, but the undercurrents of terrifying supernatural world pervades through its sewers and interconnected pipelines. *It* conjures the uncanny aspect of evil by mangling the domesticated space of the town with the terrifying undercurrents of Pennywise's underworld. The novel clearly separates the two levels, where the surface level appears idyllic and the underworld hides the terrifying crimes committed by the underworld. The two levels are fenced by a psychological barrier where the adults of the town deny the presence of any evil. The oft quoted line, "we all float down here" (King, Part 1) is characterised by the familiar tone of a nursery rhyme that traditionally sponsors innocence and an idyllic atmosphere. King makes the sing-song nature of the lines terrifying by associating the lines with the supernatural and terrifying world of Pennywise where young souls are captured in a timeless world. Fear is generated by meticulously fabricating the haunting aspect of supernatural world with the innocence stimulated by the sing-song nature of the rhyming phrase.

### Method of Study

The study uses the method of textual analysis to analyse the text closely using literary and psychological theories. It provides an alternate perspective of analysing the symptoms of psychosis rather than depending on the clinical study which presents a systematic and mechanised study of the signs and symptoms of psychosis. The present article attempts to look at psychosis as a narrative device rather than a disease which aids in the study of the psychological traumas and the behavioural traits present in the characters in the novel. Such a perspective prioritises individual experiences over generalised perspectives of the disease. The study attempts to view the socio-cultural analogies connected to psychosis and how it influences the individuals experiencing the phenomenon. The study offers a detailed presentation of the delusionary and hallucinatory experiences of the characters in a comprehensive manner and connects these experiences to the past traumas and socio-cultural anxieties of the characters. It uses causal inference to highlight the psychopathology of trauma by associating the reaction of the characters to their experiences in the past. Therefore, the present study depends on textual analysis to interpret the psychotic symptoms. It uses the psychoanalytical framework interlocked with trauma theory to identify the complex symptoms of psychosis. The conceptual framework of the study is constructed using Cathy Caruth's concept of unclaimed traumatic experiences, Judith Herman's idea of trauma's intrusion, dissociation and re-enactment along with Freud's idea of the uncanny and the repressed.

### Theoretical Framework

The study looks into the manner in which psychosis manifests itself in Stephen King's *It*, which is often overlooked as a typical King's horror thriller. King's unique portrayal of the psychopathic clown, Pennywise breaks the conventional perspective of reading the novel as a gothic supernatural tale. This paper is built upon an interdisciplinary framework where the focus is placed on understanding the psychopathology of psychosis in fiction and its close interaction with trauma studies. Sigmund Freud's ideas of the repressed and the uncanny aids in the hypothetical conceptualisation of the unconscious. The Loser's return to Derry is symbolic as it marks the return of the protagonist in an archetypal fiction. The Losers are physically shown to revisit Derry, but their memories are fragmented and lost deep in their unconscious.

Jasper's perspective of looking at delusion as an unshakable belief is employed to understand the systematic denial of Derry's adults regarding the existence of Pennywise. Pennywise symbolically represents the delusional structure of Derry as he hypnotises the town's adults to forget the traumatic disappearances of the children. Under his influence, the adults are unable to reclaim their trauma. Eugen Bleuler's theory of schizophrenia and "splitting of psychic functions" (Bleuler, 43) provides a theoretical framework to understand the fragmented minds of the characters and the disintegrated narrative style employed by King.

Further, Bleuler's theory is backed by Wilfred Bion's concept of work groups and basic assumption group to verify how the Losers use ritualised practices to narrate their traumatic testimonies.

The framework of the study also includes Cathy Caruth's concept of 'unclaimed experiences' to investigate the sensory hallucinations experienced by the Losers. The paper metrically analysis the symptoms of psychosis as reflected by the characters. The analysis helps establish that the traumatic occurrences push the Losers into a state of psychosis. Further, Judith Herman's three stage recovery model is integrated into the study to deconstruct the departure and the return of the Losers to Derry. Their path to recovery is connected to their integration with their traumatic past and the community.

### **Axes of Psychosis: Hallucination and Collective Trauma**

The novel interrogates psychosis along three interlocking axes. First, it narrates non-clinically the psychosymptoms of hallucinations, fixed and persecutory ideation and beliefs. It then, situates the psychopathology in the context of social ecology. The town's racially motivated and misogynistic history is an "unclaimed experience", a term proposed by Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience* where she attempts to define trauma and ends up contesting the connection of trauma to history by portraying the concealed points in history. She asserts that history cannot be viewed in terms of linearity as a significant part of the experience after the occurrence of an event is unaccounted by the individual or the community that undergoes the trauma. Caruth goes on to put forward the idea that response to a traumatic event may not always be immediate. In such a scenario, the individual delays his/her reaction to trauma and this Caruth identifies in her study as the "latency" or "incubation period". The trauma is repressed in the unconscious during the incubation period and it is not completely erased. The individual who has experienced trauma attempts to bypass the impact of trauma by making a departure from the event. This departure is done by disassociating oneself completely from the setting and the people who remind the individual of the trauma. The departure is both physical and psychological. The deliberate distancing enables the individual to incubate the impact of the trauma deep into the unconscious. Caruth in her study reflects that history refers largely of the departure from the traumatic event rather than talking intensively about the incubation period. This she compares with the departure of the Jews under the guidance of Moses. As a critic of trauma theory, Caruth reserves her passion into the study of the latency period rather than the departure as it is the very moment that the individual skilfully processes a traumatic event using the cognitive abilities of the mind. However, the trauma that had evaded focus for a long period is later reflected in the form of hallucinations and nightmares. Therefore, it can be ascertained that a traumatic event remains unclaimed in the unconscious and its residues are later projected by the mind in the form of psychotic symptoms. This occurs as the traumatic event is never completely analysed, registered or acknowledged by the individual.

The novel in focus works on Freud's concept of the repressed. Sigmund Freud in his seminal work *Moses and Monotheism* explains in detail the departure of Jews from Egypt under the guidance of Moses. Freud goes on to claim that Moses freed the Jews from slavery to ensure the survival of Monotheism. The children in the novel leave Derry to overcome their traumatic encounter with Pennywise. Their departure from Derry can be compared to the departure of Jews as reflected upon by Freud. The departure of the children from Derry was necessary to ensure the survival of their sanity and the end of the painful memories of the murders of the town's young children. Freud reveals in *Moses and Monotheism* that the Jews killed Moses after their departure from Egypt and are haunted by this guilt. Similarly, the Losers are anguished by a sense of profound guilt that is induced by the traumatic events in their childhood. Bill is tormented by survivor's guilt. Beverley is traumatised by the guilt of shame endured by the survivor of abuse. Her sexual encounter with the members of the Losers club after their first encounter with Pennywise in the sewer becomes a moment that makes each member feel intense guilt. They all attempt to bury the event deep into their unconscious. Ben feels guilt for his inability to profess his love for Beverley and claim that he was the writer of the love letters. Similarly, Eddie feels guilt for his weakness and inability to stop his mother from infantilising him. Richie regrets his inability to accept his love for Eddie and his sexual orientation. Mike is feels remorse for being the one responsible for calling the Losers back to Derry and being responsible for their deaths. Stan is traumatised by the guilt of facing It again and this drives him to commit suicide.

Freud shows a connection between the trauma and repressed memories in *Moses and Monotheism*. He speculates that Moses was killed by the Jews because of his extreme austerity, strict reverence and compulsion to force his followers to follow an abstract religious philosophy.

The trauma induced event can be understood as an event that has been felt with a high emotional and physical intensity and due to the violent nature of the event, it has been buried deep into the unconscious. Although the memory of the traumatic event has been repressed to provide a sense of false relief to the individual, a mere object or an event can retrace the event back to the individual's unconscious. Therefore, a sense of uncanny is connected to the moment where a strange incident can make the familiar traumatic event resurface. The trauma caused in the past is restored into the consciousness of the individual in a new sense, while retaining the familiar pain associated with it. This is resurgence of trauma becomes an uncanny realisation for the individual.

Third, the novel's nonlinear plot focuses on repetitions, changing circumstances and responses that are triggered by the uncanny experiences provides a comprehensive scope for metabolising the disturbances into a nonlinear plot structure to produce suspense. The character of Pennywise is not reduced to a mere trope of madness. Using him, King quite adeptly shows the slow intrusion of psychosis within the character of the murderous clown and the town's people. *It* portrays the collective psychosis of the entire town as the trauma of a selected generation of the town is closely connected to those moments in the history of the town where Pennywise emerges from the underground sewer. The trauma of the town's people goes through an "incubation period" after the sudden deaths of a few town's children. The hallucinations and the re-emergence of Pennywise are the symptomatic stages of PTSD. Judith Herman in her path breaking work on trauma works on the lines of Caruth by arguably visualising trauma in a social context. She provides a broader political frame in the manner in which she dissects the psychological consequences connected to traumatic events in an individual's life.

### **Denial, Delusion, and the Return of the Repressed**

The adults of Derry refuses to accept the claims and accounts of horror narrated by the children. The communal denial of the adults is suggestive of the repressed trauma. Their organised denial of the existence of the Pennywise is internalised into their system. The children are able to see the horror and the fear that looms in Derry. Their knowledge of the unknown and the unseen reversal the hierarchical system of knowledge acquisition and transmission. The knowledge of the children is fragile, yet corroborates with the occurrences in the town. Jasper Karl in *General Psychopathology* differentiates delusion from a mere error in judgement by determining that an individual experiencing delusion accepts that delusional reality with utmost certainty. Again, Jasper presents delusion as a resistant force that squashes counter-arguments.

It holds a strong correspondence with Eugen Bleuler's concept of schizophrenia as it foregrounds his study of splitting of psychic functions. The split occurs at various levels throughout the novel as the split is not pertained to the mere personalities of the characters. The characters appear in the novel in two different phases of their lives, namely in their childhood and adulthood. The slit acts as a unifying force as their fear for Pennywise transcends their physical appearance and growth. Derry acts as the uncanny that had hidden their fears and had camouflaged them. Pennywise acts on these camouflaged fears of the children and the uncanny. The children's encounter with Pennywise in their adulthood reveals the resurfacing of their childhood trauma and fears.

The children after their departure from Derry have built their successful lives by repressing their childhood traumatic experiences. Bill has no recounting memories of Georgie after he leaves Derry and becomes a novelist. His writing is a mechanism with which he blocks the memory of his brother's untimely death. Similarly, Beverly becomes a fashion designer and has redesigned the memories of her abusive father. Ben has become a successful architect, Eddie is a chauffeur, Richie is a radio DJ and Mike is the only one Loser who never left Derry and has become a librarian. Mike is Derry's librarian and also the keeper of the traumatic memories that the Losers experienced as children. He stages the prodigal return of the members of Losers' Club to Derry by informing them about the reappearance of It. Even as adults, the Losers feel an immeasurable anxiety when their repressed memories resurface. Mike's call is an example of the uncanny as his familiar voice brings back the repressed memories of the past. The familiar pain of Derry is instantly juxtaposed into their current place that they reside.

The return of the Losers is a symbolical journey as they are compelled to acknowledge their repressed trauma in order to truly defeat It. It can be deduced that Pennywise is more than the figure who haunts Derry's underground chambers. King's portrayal of the clown and the events show that Pennywise is a strategized subjective fear that has been injected into the Loser's unconsciousness. Freud puts forward the argument that the long suspension of the repressed into the unconscious transforms its essence. It is never truly destroyed or overcome but, takes on an unrecognisable form. "The repressed, though pushed away, retains its power and strives to assert itself in psychic life" (Freud 147).

### Psychic Splitting and the Compulsion to Return

Upon their return, the Losers appear delusional and display a split consciousness. As the novel progresses towards its climax, it is revealed that the Losers can defeat It if they are able to recover their repressed memories and integrate their split consciousness. The Losers are shown to be in a confused state through most parts of the novel as they are unable to accept their childhood fear and justify their encounter with a supernatural antagonist. Their identity splits as they forcefully attempt to forget their encounter with It. Therefore, when they reencounter It as adults, they are not capable of accepting the uncanny in its true essence.

King attempts to show the physical manifestation of fear in his characters after their reencounter with Pennywise. The psychological fear of the losers are violently represented in the physical form. Bill violently vomits as his repressed fears resurfaces both psychologically and physically.

According to Bleuler, when an individual suffers from schizophrenia the psychic functions are disrupted. This happens as the thoughts, emotions and perception of the individual undergoing schizophrenia are disjointed which blurs the perception of reality. Each Loser suffers from a psychic split of their own as their individual fears connected to their traumatic past are placed deep into their unconscious. *It* connects to these individual fears of Losers and their connection to *It* is different as their fears and their perceptions are different. The fragmented identities of the Losers highlights that psychosis is connected to trauma. The characters' delusory visions and hallucinations echo that "in schizophrenia the normal associative threads are split, leading to thought processes which no longer correspond with reality" (Bleuler 43). The inability of the Losers to integrate their childhood selves with their adult selves reflect their disjointed psyche and schizophrenic disruption of unity.

Derry is a landscape that projects a psychic split where the peaceful, easeful small town atmosphere at the surface hides the sinister, violent underworld in its sewage drains. The Losers are entrusted with the mission to unearth and integrate the underworld and the surface world of Derry. The promise that they made as children transforms into their code which is used to re-establish their link with their past trauma, an event which they had repressed in their unconscious. Their unconscious is connected to the collective unconsciousness of the town. Their collective vow is a compulsive decision rooted in trauma and is not a free-willed conscious decision. Despite showing psychosomatic symptoms, Bill tries to convince himself and his friends saying, "We made a promise... we swore it. We swore it in blood. And we're going to keep it." (King 606) Their oath is a "repetition compulsion" in Freud's words where the compulsion to return is stronger than their logical, rational conscious to avoid pain and violence. King writes, "They remembered only that they had promised to return, and that they must. The rest was darkness." (*It* 59)

The plot and the recovery of The Losers demand that they face It again to recover their fragmented past memories and integrate their dysfunctional identities. Their journey demands their commitment to revisit their site of trauma and complete the memory loop that had been abandoned in the past. The Losers reclaim their past trauma by calling It by its name, which is Pennywise. This process makes them confront the uncanny and reduce its effect as they have claimed the traumatic experiences of the past. This can be read in terms of what Freud terms as "working through". In this process the unconscious is directly confronted and brought into the conscious, thereby erasing its psychological effects. (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 153) The buried traumas are brought to the conscious by using the Freud's method of the "talking cure" where the individual undergoing suffering due to a trauma induced event in the past is made to speak freely on anything that comes to their mind, without censorship. The unconscious conflicts of the Losers are brought to the conscious so that healing can be initiated

## The Psychic Landscape of Derry

The novel attempts to show that hallucinations are not false perceptions but are meaningful conversations that are conveyed in a sensory way. Beverly and Bill hears sounds coming from the sewage drains, Eddie witnesses a leper at the house on Neibolt Street, Ben sees a mummy at the canal. Each sensor image of the Losers is a way of communicating to the children the unregistered truth of the Derry community. The historical evidences of violence, disease and sexual abuse are reflected in the form of hallucinations that are meaningful way to communicate past collective trauma of the small town and its inhabitants.

Delusions in *It* are not tied to only the individual characters or the community. Delusion festers into the atmospheric parameter in the novel. In *It*, psychosis comes in repeated patterns and it often is connected to temporality and simultaneity. The two summers of 1958 and 1985 are braided together by the return of the collective psychosis of the town's people and the atmosphere of the town. The summers of the two years are connected by the common thread of blood, horror and murder of the children. The town's people are delusional as they believe that nothing is wrong in the town despite the number of missing children, deaths of children or blood stained bathroom floors. Their indifference despite the alarming evidences compels the Losers to be bonded due to fear and search for security. The Losers suffer a delusion of their own where they witness sensory hallucinations. They share and testify their hallucinations as facts that are experimentally corrigible. King reverses the pathological evidences by providing the ability and the power to rationalise and testify to the children rather than the town's adults.

Further, the Losers' temporary amnesia of their first encounter with *It* is representative of the effect of repression. Their return to Derry is not simply a geographical relocation rather, it is an initiation into mnemonic depths where speech is splintered and repeated. Bill develops a stutter to deal with the traumatic encounter with *It*, his inability to deal with his brother's death and his survivor's guilt. The repetition in Bill's speech acts as therapy and enables him to navigate to the process of "working through" in a Freudian sense. For Freud, repression is timeless as it "behaves as if it were present" (Freud, "Repression"). In the novel, King depicts the past traumatic event in the lives of the Losers as a mnemonic rule that continues its presence in the Losers' present.

## Healing the Unconscious through Memory Work and Trauma Resolution

The departure and return of the members of the Loser's Club to Derry reiterates Judith Herman's three stage recovery model, namely establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. Herman summarizes, "The fundamental stages of recovery are establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community" (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 1). This defends King's characters inability to leave Derry psychologically as the trauma is embedded in their memories and collective consciousness. The resolution of the trauma can only be initialised through ritual, narrative, and communal reintegration.

The first fundamental stage, which is establishing safety is a requisite for any memory work. "No other therapeutic work should even be attempted until a reasonable degree of safety has been achieved." (*Trauma and Recovery* 112) The Losers attempt to seek safety by leaving Derry in a bid to reduce their proximity to the source of trauma. The deliberate distancing from the source of fear by the Losers provide them with a false sense of security. Their safety is temporary as they rely on dissociation and forgetting. Mike's call acts as a break in the narrative as his call disrupts the fragile and illusionary secure exile of the Losers. Bill notes, "I remembered Derry, but only because that was where he was calling from" (King *It* 58) The Losers reaffirm their oaths and believes that it is their social responsibility to return to Derry. Herman suggests that safety should be established before the initiation of memory work. The Losers' reaffirmation of their vows is their mechanism of re-establishing a secure base, founded in loyalty and mutual trust, before they begin to excavate their lost memories.

The second phase comprising of remembrance and mourning is central to Herman's recovery model. This stage involves the "reconstructing the trauma story," where there is a deliberate attempt to reconstruct the trauma narrative by transforming and accepting the fragmented, hidden or denied memories and give it the form of a coherent testimony. (*Trauma and Recovery* 124–25) King presents a symbolic reconstruction of the memories of the Losers' after their return to Derry. The Losers use collective forms of testimonies to remember

and mourn their traumatic losses. They invent rites to share such as their meeting at the Barrens, their shared recounting of night terrors, and the myth-making ceremonies like the ritual of child and the blood promise. The Losers give structure to the fragmented narrative of terror. Their testimonies, in Herman's perspective are cognitive exercises that transform memories of shame into powerful testimonies.

The third stage of reconnection relay the re-engagement of individual with the social world with a renewed agency. "From her newly created safe base she can now venture forth...[and] recover some of her aspirations." (*Trauma and Recovery* 140) The re-integration of the Losers is observed in the novel in two ways. The Losers integrate into the Derry community by venturing and claiming the spaces in the underground sewers and removing the old festering wounds of the adults by making them recognise their own trauma. The second integration is the Loser recognising their authentic self and integrating their fragmented identities caused by past traumas. The monumental lines "We are going home" (*It*, 677-78) echo the reconnection of the Losers with their hometown and the community ideas and ideals. The Losers' final confrontation with Pennywise and their recollection of the traumatic memories of their childhood and their eventual integration into their adult life reiterates Herman's concept of healing of trauma that culminates in restored relationship and renewed social purpose. The Losers regain their lost innocence due to the fragmentation in their memories caused by their encounter with Pennywise. They exhibit a new sense of belonging to the community and to their own individual self while embodying the memory of loss. "Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery." (*Trauma and Recovery* 140)

### Psychotopography and Collective Psychosis in Derry

Derry is burdened by a long discourse of violence which includes homophobic attack on Adrian Mellon in 1985, the burning down of the Black Spot nightclub for stationed black soldiers by a white supremacist group in 1930 or the vigilante justice carried out by a mob that kills the criminals who belonged to the Bradley gang in 1929. These violent surges in the town's history are not a mere part of the narrative dressing up that sets up the violent and horror laden atmosphere of Derry to become a breeding ground for the monster. These events are analogous to psychologically dysfunctional symptoms displayed by the people of the town who disown their own aggression and project it on the monster, and themselves occupy a delusional innocence. The result is the periodical massacres by *It*. Therefore, the novel is able to justify the infiltration of literature in clinical studies of psychosis, and the process through which literature names and solicits psychosis.

Psychosis is not solely depicted as a clinical disorder of thought but, a disorder in space. The terrain of Derry is a honeycombed structure connecting pipes and drains to sewage tunnels and bathrooms. The integrated network of sewage pipelines is affixed to the fear that circulates among the Losers. The foreclosed topography of the town with diverting tunnels, clogged culverts and broken pipes that burst blood and water into bathrooms is connected to the circulating repressed trauma that engulfs the psyche of the inhabitants. King's psychotopography of Derry is correlative to Bion's theory of the container. Derry serves as the narrative container with Pennywise feeding upon the unresolved trauma and unprocessed memories of its inhabitants. Pennywise becomes a symbol of psychosis as he is at once anyone and no one. The shape defying monster while the Losers' signify both the vulnerability of psychotic collapse and restoration of psychological equilibrium.

King's *It* is a classic study of psychosis told in a social form through the small town of Derry and its inhabitants. Pennywise is a borrowed dramatic manifestation of the cultural and social lexicons of clowns, mummies, lepers and werewolves. Pennywise is shown to feed on fear of its victims, Fear, in the novel, is presented as an interpretive frame and not a mere affect. Pennywise's voice is seductive as it projects, displaces and condenses the internal fears and manoeuvres of the psyche.

Clinical literatures on psychosis emphasise that required stabilising others and environments in the narrative is conducive for containing psychic disturbances. In "Experiences in Groups", Wilfred Bion puts forward two groups, 'the work group' and the 'basic assumption group'. Bion argues that the work group has a clear rational consciousness and works for the realisation of goals while the basic assumption group gets diverted from the task and is swayed by an emotional state of fight or flight. "The work group understands that particular use of symbols which is involved in communication; the basic-assumption group does not." (*Experiences in Groups*, 186) The work group enables individuals to process anxieties and process feelings. "A working group has a clear idea of its tasks and is able to test rationally whether it is accomplishing them. ... This work group

atmosphere may be interrupted by basic assumption states in which primitive drives and reactions prevent the group from maintaining its task-relevant activities.” In his essay, “The Psycho-Analytic Study of Thinking” highlights how the mind develops its own apparatus to think. Bion argues that the work group mode enables individuals to process their raw emotions and experiences, which he refers to as beta, to mentally consumable thoughts and images.

Bill ability to overcome his stutter, Beverly acquiring a commanding voice to question abuse and patriarchy, or Eddie getting a control of his asthma, which is bodily manifestation of psychosomatic fear, are a result of the impact of the Losers acting as a work group. The Losers’ oath, naming ritual of *It* to bring the repressed fears to the forefront and the blood pact, and homecoming as adults are registered in the narrative as therapeutic contracts. Also, these monumental events in the journey of the coming of age Losers are not simply arcs of therapeutic clichés, they are carefully registered narrative labours that epitomises the clinical essentiality of narrative in psychological healing, a intentional venture of narrative into the lines of medical humanities. Contrast to the children, Derry’s adults repress evidence of horror and behave, in Bion’s language, as basic assumption groups that operate without conscious task, purpose, or thought. The Losers’ group provides a holding environment where trauma can be named, witnessed, shared, and thereby dissolving psychic disturbances.

## Conclusion

Besides a complex, meditative and concrete plot, *It* is a technically envisioned piece of work that relies on indirect discourse to enable the readers to navigate through the shifting interiorities of the plot such as sudden gaps in the temporal narrative, influx of memory jolts and paratexts that include newspaper clippings and police files. These entities used skilfully by the writer provide a pseudo-documentary structure to the plot that is a classical echo of clinical notes. This style of narrative provides an atmosphere of unsettlement to the readers who experience the similar perpetual uncertainty and instability as the characters in the novel, thus allowing the readers to be empathetic to the unfolding events of the narrative, and not act as mere voyeurs. King structures the narrative in a manner that reduces the scope of diagnosing the characters as the narrative unfolds encapsulating their psychological issues. The novel distracts the readers from adopting a pathological gaze as the hallucinatory visions, voices and beliefs are dealt with seriousness in the grand narrative of the novel and not as clinical symptoms. The traumatic and horrifying events presented in the novel are treated as testimonies, thus switching conveniently to Freud’s principle of the ‘talking cure’.

*It* pathologizes horror without minimising the supernatural elements connected to the archetypal figure of the monster. By previewing *It* from a psychosis framework, it can be deduced that the novel attempts to comprehend how monstrosity functions in the individual and collective conscience and the unconscious. The novel dramatizes psychosis as a part of the ordinary life. The narrative of the novel is structured to work on the psychic process of memorial, denial and repetition. The risk of flattening the impact of the supernatural by adopting a singular focus on the symptoms of psychosis exists, but King negates this possibility by introducing polyphonies into his text. The novel is at once a coming of age novel, a horror tale concerning monsters and monstrosity, and a psychological thriller that distributes the effect and functioning of psychopathology into the discourse.

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