



# Rage: Stephen King's Strange Fiction becomes a Grim Reality

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:  
ENG-2024-12027188

Volume: 12

Issue: 2

Month: March

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 15.01.2024

Accepted: 19.02.2024

Published: 01.03.2024

Citation:

Rajadurai, R., et al.  
"Rage: Stephen King's  
Strange Fiction becomes  
a Grim Reality." *Shanlax  
International Journal of  
English*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2024,  
pp. 39–47.


DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/  
english.v12i2.7188](https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v12i2.7188)



This work is licensed  
under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0  
International License

**R. Rajadurai**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7867-0897>

**A. Arul**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

**J. Vignesious Stanley**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

## Abstract

*In this study, a critical analysis of one of Stephen King's most well-known novels, Rage, is taken into consideration. A psychological thriller is what you will find in Rage. There is a school shooting depicted in the novel that is based on actual incidents that took place in secondary schools throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. The psychology of school children and the conditions in which they find themselves are also discussed in this essay. The plot revolves around a troubled high school student who struggles with issues of authority and who commits murder against one of his teachers while also holding the majority of his classmates captive. While Charlie Decker is in the midst of a protracted, stressful, and exhausting warm evening, he discusses what led him to this dramatic series of acts. At the same time, he is examining the identities of his peers and asking each of them to defend their own lives. Surprisingly, this book is linked to a number of incidents involving shootings at top universities. There was one such incident that resulted in the deaths of three classmates and the injuries of five more. A teenager named Michael Carneal's closet serves as the setting for the tale. In this particular instance, Rage was responsible for the sixth high school shooting. As a result, the purpose of this research is to investigate the causes and consequences of the novel as well as the shootings that occurred in real life that are linked to it.*

**Keywords:** School Violence, College Shootout, OCD, Hostage, Teenagers, Stephen King.

## Introduction

His legends of supernatural horrors like the vampires, the wolves, the demons, and the fantasies are familiar to Stephen King. However still, King's other most potent fear is not based entirely on these imaginary expressions of fear and terror but on the true tragedies of life, such as mass gun massacres, sexual abuse, and the sometimes painful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Meanwhile, the overwhelming bulk of King's fiction is openly accessible in the commercial article and paperback edition; in the early 1990s, King refused to publish one of his crime novels: *Rage*, released under the alias Richard Bachman. King's choice was motivated by the disruptive fact that copies of the book were discovered in conjunction with a few deadly school shootings, a supposed effect on school shooters who also associated with King's typical anti-hero, Charlie Decker.

In 1977 King wrote and published his novel *Rage* as Bachman (a name he also used to publish other works, including *The Long Walk*, *Roadwork*, *The Running Man*, *Thinner*, *The Regulators*, and *Blaze*). Riding from Charlie Decker's first-person viewpoint, the book tells Decker's experience when he becomes a school gunman and uses his algebra classroom as hostages. Although *Rage* is not released anymore, only used versions of the original 1985 Bachman Books set are regularly accessible digitally, and several libraries still contain this collection, including *Rage*.

### **Fiction Became Reality**

Charlie introduces himself as an unreliable source at the opening of *Rage*, reflecting this "Two years ago. To the best of my memory, I began losing my mind at that time" (King: *Rage* 7). When he continues sharing his story, Charlie has already been suspended with a pipe wrench to assault his chemistry instructor, Mr. Carlson. He returns briefly to school, but he is actually called upon in the opening chapter to announce his dismissal and to transfer to the Greenmantle Foundation, a school for young boys fundamental changes. After the news, Charlie lit his closet on fire, picked up a pistol from his father, and eventually returns once again to his school, where he shot Mrs. Underwood, his teacher. Then Charlie takes his classroom as a prisoner and kills another instructor who goes to the room to see what is really happening. However, after the initial panic of the scenario is gone, Charlie's school mates largely rallied around him, and in Charlie's terms, they proceeded "to go on" (King: *Rage* 33), communicating with each other their obscure mysteries and worst worries as they doubt and threaten the exterior world.

### **Coming of Age**

As with several other works by King, especially his coming of age, the teens at *Rage* find themselves oppressed by a wave of anger towards their mature adults and the oppressive influence of their elders. Mr. Carlson and Mrs. Underwood both keep challenging their pupils when they give incorrect responses or when they struggle to deliver the correct answers. The day Charlie physically attacked Mr. Carlson, he was invited to the board by the

teacher to fix the question in front of the students. Mr. Carlson "began to make fun of me as Charlie tried to solve the problems. He was asking me if I remembered what two and two made if I'd ever heard of long division, a wonderful invention, he said, ha-ha, a regular Henny Youngman" (King: *Rage* 149). Ms. Underwood's attitude is equally antagonistic, and on the morning of Charlie's expulsion when one of his classmates attempts to frame his answer to the algebraic equation of  $a = 16$ . Billy Sawyer suggests that "a" could mean "eight plus eight," and when Underwood asks him to work harder, he fumes, "See if you add eight and eight, it means." (ibid). Even when Charlie himself is not the center of attention in this educational haranguing, it makes him painfully uncomfortable: "Shall I lend you my thesaurus? Ms. Underwood asked, alertly nodding. My stomach started to hurt, and my breakfast began shifting a little around. The grin of Mrs. Underwood reminded me of the Jaws fish" (ibid). In the classroom, adults do not support or nurture any more. As Tony Magistrale states in Stephen King's presentation: *The Second Decade: Danse Macabre to The Dark Part*:

Charlie knows about rules and authority, but he knows almost nothing of love and affection; he has been taught the necessity of self-control and repression, but not how to channel his tremendous energies into a constructive release; and while school and his parents labor to inculcate in him civilized virtues through lectures and books, the alacrity with which they employ violence undermines the sincerity of their efforts. (Magistrale 52)

### **Mental Illness**

President Denver fails to recognize Charlie, and while the counselor, Don Grace, has seen Charlie each day after Charlie assaulted Mr. Carlson, Grace is no closer to knowing who Charlie was and why he does. Captain Philbrick of the Police Department is called by the intercom to talk to Charlie, as he takes his fellow students hostage, and Philbrick is still unable to comprehend or react effectively to him. The things are almost as bad at the moment, where the mother of Charlie's coddles him and the abuse and fear in his relationship with his dad. According to Charlie, "My father hated me as long as I remember" (King: *Rage* 53).

Charlie tells traumatic tales of his experience, including his strained and violent friendship with his dad and his deeply troubled female interactions. Allowed into the dark realm of Charlie and under a mutual burden of parents and the outside world, Charlie's captives continue to tell their own tales of misery, Rage, and humiliation as it soon becomes clear that Charlie's schoolmates are in so many ways the same. In this particular circumstance, Jesse W. Nash claims, "the young person has the privilege of speaking from and speaking unchallenged" (154). In the school, the students undo the framework of the larger universe by dismantling the lines that distinguish a click from another and screaming untold facts. As Magistrale argues, "The students seem to recognize Charlie as one of their own and accept him; perhaps none of them resort to his extreme antisocial behavior, but they all understand the spirit that created the situation of hostage" ([Magistrale 53](#)). "Pig Pen," Dano says to the group that his Slovenian look is because his mother wastes all of her money on tournaments and refuses to purchase new clothing ([King: Rage 90](#)). Nice girl Sandra Cross tells her how she actually went searching for a scary stranger for casual sex: "I honestly did not know him at all. Perhaps he was one of these sex maniacs, I kept wondering. He might have a knife. He might make me take dope. Or maybe I would get pregnant. I felt like I was alive" ([King: Rage 127](#)). Hearing their accounts, watching how his classmates react to his abuse, Charlie is haunted by their ruthlessness, not his own, when he asks: "them. How do we grasp them?" ([King: Rage 31](#)). Charlie freely admitted and, to some degree, even controlled his own psychosis, but his view of the universe was unfathomably changed when he saw it mirrored on the vast majority of his pupils.

"Ted Jones, the golden guy of the classroom, stands fiercely up for the status quo in his ordeal, and in the classroom, Ted reminded all of the injustice and brutality at the heart of the Patriarchal Structure, Charlie and the King" ([Magistrale 53](#)). Whereas others engage in the experience by barring their hearts and revealing their lies, Ted declines, rather than waiting in isolation and judgment, with a sinister gaze locked on Charlie and willing to take him down at the very first hint of failure.

In the much-known story of a high-school shoot, Ted is the anticipated hero, the man who battles against the beast to save the day. Ted is, therefore, the symbolic representation of the adult world, which these children have all become hated even if they are joining" (ibid). Ted has a lot of his own secrets and guilt, but he struggles to share them in the classroom, despite this apparently unassailable front. At the end of the day, his fellow students turn toward him, crash upon them, whenever they strike, laugh and spit upon him, rub the ink in his hair as a final humiliation, and a visible indicator of Ted as an alien, another, removed from the neighborhood safety party. After they leave the building, Ted and Charlie are both taken to psychiatric premises, Ted has made his painful experience catatonic, and Charlie has considered himself unacceptable for justice.

In the last chapter of the novel, in his bedroom alone, Charlie is still haunted by his fellow classmates, reluctant to open the high school yearbook that his mother sent him, and he is confident that he will be able to trust that there will be no blasts on her hands as soon as I can. "No pen. No ink. Maybe I would be absolutely sure of that next week" ([King: Rage 170](#)).

Charlie has adapted to a different understanding of a school shooter and a hostage-taker in his day, but he was left mentally unpunished and harmed by it even more than he was early on. And the end of the book is anticlimactic, with its epistolary inclusion of court and medical documents that transcribe and shed no light. Rage presents a wealth of ways to address disturbing current concerns, including school shootings broadly and more focused conversations of alternative reasons and solutions to this brutality, and ultimately, King's decision to draw Rage out of print.

### **Real Connections with School Shootings**

The school shooting in modern American culture has been all too common: Moses Lake, Washington, in 1996. Kentucky, West Paducah in 1997. 1999 Columbine High School. In 2007, Virginia Tech. Newtown, Connecticut, 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School. In 2014, Marysville, Washington. In each scenario, one or more unstable teenagers or young adults took firearms to school and converted the students into them with disastrous consequences.

According to a Niraj Chokshi report, in the two years after the violence at Sandy Hook Elementary School, 74 school shootings took place. School shootings in American culture have been disturbingly popular.

In 2002, the Secret Service, along with the Department of Education, analyzed 37 school shootings involving 41 shooters between 1974 and 2000 to detect major trends among shooters. Following their study, they published a survey known as the “Safe School Initiative.” They found that events of a school shooting are “rarely impulsive acts” rather than “typically conceived and designed in advance.” Dave Cullen’s report on his book *Columbine* supports this pattern, saying that “their attack was planned by a stunning 93 percent in advance” (Cullen 322). Interviews after the shootings revealed that in most situations, at least one adult was concerned about the gunman and that fellow students often believed or knew the shooter’s motives, but they did not say the adult. The Secret Service Safe School program and many other experts in crime psychology believe that school shootings have no specific profile. However, these shooters share several similar traits, including “narcissism, depression, low self-esteem, and a fascination with violence.” In his discussion of the Secret Service and the FBI manuals, Cullen points out all the latter school shootings shared precisely one feature: 100 percent male. There was a mistake (Since the study, a few have been female). No other trait reaches 50%, not even near, aside from personal experience. Attackers from all levels come from all cultures. The majority came from solid families and two guardians. Much of them had no record or history of abuse.

There are a vast number of catalysts that have been believed to lead to school shootings, including the fascination with American culture and the inflammation of aggression, also expressed in popular culture, as for example, the music of Marilyn Manson and the video game *Doom* is addressed as potential contributing factors to *Columbine* shootings. Like other kinds of the popular culture of aggression, King’s *Rage* has been taken into school shooting in several disturbing respects, with many similarities between the book and real-life shooters. In 1988, in San Gabriel, Calif., Jeff Cox kept his English class as a hostage. Cox said he has the definition of *Rage*

in part ([King: Guns](#)). Dustin Pierce took his World History class hostage in 1989 in Jackson, Kentucky; as the recovery negotiator Bob Stephens said later, Pierce read and could be *Rage*-inspired ([King: Guns](#)). In 1993 Scott Pennington fired his English tutor, Deanna McDavid, and Marvin Hicks, a school keeper, into his classroom and let them go a couple of times. He was thinking of the strained friendship between Pennington and his father and colleagues, the United States. Jerry Buckley’s *News and World Report* states, “Perhaps Pennington must have felt like he knows Decker. Perhaps also a moment. Barry Loukaitis, a Frontier Middle School gunman at Moses Lake, Washington in 1996, asked his fellow schoolmates, “Is this beating hell out of algebra? “While he took them hostage, a line which echoes the *Rage* of Charlie (Johnson). Following a 1997 school shooting in West Paducah, Kentucky, a copy of the novel of King has discovered on Michael Carneal’s (“Bogeyboys”) school shooter’s locker. Although the influence of *Rage* is evident in these situations, the essence of that influence is much more difficult to express.

### **Stephen King’s Address to this Links**

In his keynote speech, *The Bogeyboys*, which he delivered at the Vermont Library Conference in 1999, King addressed this topic. With respect to the topic of school burning, King begins his speech with the reflection: “If children die on a highway, it is tragic, but not national news, in the case of massacres or other rampage-type crime that takes the lives of children and young adults. However, when the bogeyman hits. That’s different” (*Bogeyboys*). In his address, King begins to discuss many factors leading to teenage violence and school shootings, including the amphitheater of fake violence” (*ibid*). King claims, however, that popular culture is a comparatively limited proportion of these factors and that it is the daily life of these young people, at home and in the classroom, which needs to be studied and discussed more closely, saying that:

Bogeyboys do not win foot-races, get kissed by the Homecoming Queen, or garner blue ribbons. They are profoundly inarticulate and don’t date much . . . At home, they stay in their rooms. If pressed, the parents of bogey boys will often

admit that they were afraid of these children long before they broke out and committed their acts of violence. If they add that they can't say exactly why they were afraid, no one need be surprised; these parents, often bright, non abusive, and community-active, are rarely skilled at communication within the family.... Bogey boys make few friends, and those they do make are often as crazy and balefully confused as they are. ("Bogeyboys")

King's multifaceted exploration of the subject in his speech indicates that more than ten years later, after the Sandy Hook Primary School shootings, he will grow a claim further in his ebook *Guns*, that there is no single solution and no magic bullet that can deter any potential school shooting. Rather, there is a dynamic mixture of triggers, from person to relational, to social and cultural. This wide variety of causes and their complex and sometimes explosive combinations have to be taken into account to consider and efficiently react to youth abuse and school shootings.

As he wanted to pull *Rage* from the press, King said there is no definitive confirmation that although Michael Carneal, a Kentucky boy who shot three of his fellow students dead when they were praying at school, read my book, *Rage*, the reports after that stated that a copy of the novel had been discovered in his locker. I believe he probably did it" ("Bogeyboys"). King added, "I begged my editor to take the blasted thing off print and without a confirmed clear causal link. They were in agreement" ("Bogeyboys"). King also reflected on the publication of *Rage* in his introduction to *Blaze*, Bachman's most recent and hopefully final novel, which mentioned that *Rage* is "now out of print and good" (King: *Blaze*). King eventually explored it in his Kindle Single ebook, *Guns*, in 2013, which analyzed the epidemic of gun abuse, the massacres at the schools, and our cultural reactions after the shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. "My book did not split or transform Cox, Pierce, Carneal, and Loukaitis into murderers, but they noticed something in my book that appealed to them because they were shattered. But I saw *Rage* as an engine possible, which is why I took it out of sale" (King: *Guns*). "Is it really so odd to see a soul brother

in the fictitious Charlie Decker when he wonders about these shooters? However, it does not imply we forgive them or offer them plans to convey their animosity and paranoia. Charlie would have left" (ibid). King had every right to dismiss those links, to deny every association between his book and this abuse, and to begin publishing *Rage*, secured by the freedom of expression provided in the First Amendment. However, upset by these partnerships, King did what the statute could not require and decided to censor himself.

King's option poses a variety of questionable topics for consideration, including the weighing of freedom of speech vs. the common interest, the difference between connection and shame, and whether readers comply with the pragmatic decision of King to pull *Rage* from publication or whether this decision is actually successful in preserving the book – which is still accessible in libraries and in PDF's.

The association between mass media and incidents of abuse, if any, is also heatedly discussed. Will it desensitize audiences of abuse by viewing violent films or television? Will music lyrics that romanticize gun violence render fans more inclined than if they did not listen to that song to go and kill someone? Or does it imply that reading King's *Rage* can render a student a shooter who sees this type of violence as acceptable? And there are reasons for a causal connection between cause and effect-some of which King uses "The Bogeyboys" to speak-in the case of school shoots; the decision is essentially that of the attacker. Possibly with a degree of free will and regulation of one's own actions (despite health defense), these are behavior that school shootings premeditate, prepare and opt to execute. Although we should not limit the discussion to a mere axiom, such as "popular culture made it happen to me," King admits that there are certain grey areas. As it reflects, 'a novel like *Rage* may serve as an amplifier of an unpleasant mind' ('Bogeyboys'), an effect that is theoretically harmful, though not explicitly causal. In terms of the ties between the shooting of schools and mainstream media, there is hardly a straightforward black-and-white problem. Instead, what we have is a broad, evolving, and situational gray field.



## Causes of School Shootings

Reading and addressing Rage's crucial issues offers an opportunity to address a wide variety of mitigating factors, including weapons regulation, school protection, mental wellbeing, the possible ties between mass media and crime, and current masculine crises.

King addresses three main topics surrounding gun safety in his *Kindle Single Guns*, which most definitely are: lengthy background inspections with extended processing times, the restriction on clips that run for ten days, and a restriction on so-called "assault guns like the Bushmaster and the AR-15" (King: *Guns*). While these arms protection initiatives may do some good to tackle abuse, this is in other respects quite little since "weapons are already out there and most of them are bought, sold and transported illegally" (King: *Guns*). Any measure of gun regulation directed at restricting the selling and ownership of firearms is, by definition, confined to all who obtain such weapons by lawful means. The Columbine shooters, Harris and Klebold, were less than 18 years old before they could purchase their weapons legitimately so they could persuade a buddy to go to the gun show and serve as the buyer (Cullen 90). The Adam Lanza guns he brought to Sandy Hook Elementary School were bought lawfully by his mother, part of a broader contemporary pattern in which "School shootings in the U.S. during the second years since the massacre in Newtown, Conn., often included taking a child's weapon from home and using it as an argument" (Copeland). King's own Charlie Decker had no ethical barrier when carrying the firearm to class, merely extracting from the desk drawer of his father the unsecured and neglected gun (King: *Rage 27*).

This suggests that, regardless of how successfully adopted and executed, any enhanced gun safety measure would undoubtedly fall short of the target of getting the guns out of the hands of possibly violent school shootings.

Another potential solution to school violence is better protection, such as the usage of security guards or the availability of firearms to teachers. Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association, in the press conference just after the shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, claimed that "five years earlier, after

the disaster of Virginia Tech, when I said we would bring armed protection in every classroom, the media called me nuts. But what if last Friday Adam Lanza began shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School with trained, equipped safety?" (quoted in "NRA discourse"). Following the Newtown shooting, many States suggested this alternative, and South Dakota introduced a bill in 2013, which authorized workers to bear firearms on school grounds. South Dakota Rep. Scott Craig claimed that the knowledge that an armed volunteer is in a school could disincentivize an assailant, particularly in isolated rural schools which may be far from police intervention". At the end of 2013, a weapons security officer was on duty at Colorado's Arapahoe High School, which proved successful in mitigating the harm the shooter could cause. Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robison concluded that the involvement of the guard "was absolutely critical that we had no more deaths and injuries" (qt. in Knickerbocker). As Brad Knickerbocker says "The entire episode — from the moment the shooter walked into the school to his shot — lasted just one minute and 20 seconds" (Knickerbocker). It is probably the presence and response of the military guard that confronted the shooter that brought such a swift conclusion. Such defense could theoretically offer a frontline for persons who try to access school to conduct a crime, but this presumes adequate preparation and credentials and appropriate responses from every weapons employee or budgetary consent, in the case of armed guards.

Social disorder is another critical problem in schools when it comes to gun abuse. "Any real solution that is intended to prevent future mass fire must focus less on the weapon, and more on what drives people to collect this weapon and commit the in discriminate killing," says Alan Richarz, of the Christian Science Monitor. The avoidance of potential mass shootings, in particular, needs a strong understanding of the latent, frequently unaddressed, mental disorder, and social alienation of America." Several school shooters have been reported as mental health sufferers—whether recently diagnosed or in the midst of the abuse. Dr. Dwayne Fuselier, for example, posthumously diagnosed psychopathy in Columbine shooter Eric Harris. As Cullen states,

“Any insane murderer has a popular use called a psychopath, but in psychiatry, the term refers to a specific mental condition” (187) with typical characteristic aspects, like “charming, insane, crafty, manipulative, funny and egocentric, with terrible lack of compassion” (239). A Yale study from Adam Lanza University, the Newtown attacker, showed that Lanza had before shooting ‘no treatment for psychiatric and physical conditions such as anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, and was deprived of recommended medicine and services” (Cowan). If all psychiatric disorders were known and adequately treated, abuse may possibly in these two situations have been avoided. Yet, an emphasis on mental wellbeing may still theoretically increase the stigma connected with a mental disorder and may discourage people from speaking out and finding support. This is especially serious in terms of the lack of a clear correlation between mental disorder and aggression towards others. Jessica Rosenberg states in her article “Mass Shootings and Mental Health Policy” in *The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, “a broad body of research shows that violence by people living with severe mental health, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, is rare and only accounts for approximately 5 percent of violent acts” (109). The detection and reaction of possible shooters can also help to recognize and resolve a cause and effect connection between mental disorder and school shootings but may also threaten and marginalize already-stigmatized communities whilst the low-level linkages between mental illness and violence have no general impact on the reduction of school shootings and other common forms of shooting.

Another issue that specifically influences King’s decision to derive Rage from publishing is the possible and often debated association between mass entertainment and aggression, which was addressed in the 1920s ([International Communication Association](#)). In *Avoid Teaching Our Children to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV Movie & Video Game Abuse*, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman and Gloria DeGaetano claim that “the root cause is a relentless diet of violence our children watch on television, in film, or in the video games that they play — only sitting on their screens and in digital

form. This constant exposure to open, violent pictures that make murder, robbery, and torture sensational are neither benevolent nor cathartic” (2-3). Rather, Grossman and DeGaetano claim that this continuous reference to aggressive mainstream pictures “makes children accept killing” (3). In discussing the similarities between popular media violence – particularly video games – and real world violence, David Bauder states, “Violence in video games always seems more and more realistic,” notes Brad Bushman, a Communications and Psychology Professor at Ohio State University.

Bushman published a research he claimed found that an individual three days in a row played violent video games was more offensive and abusive than people not playing” (Bauder). However, as often as King recognizes Rage as an “accelerator” rather than a source of the school shooting, involvement in violent mass entertainment is probably dealt with more productively as a result than a clear cause of actual crime. Slate’s Geeta Dayal, writing on Adam Lanza, suggests that Lanza’s involvement with mainstream media – the computer games he played, the movies he viewed, the music which he listened to – might have been signs of alienation, but they have not been the root cause of his aggressive actions.

Finally, since school shooters were almost entirely young males, some scholars were discussing current men’s crises and questioning what made young men more inclined than their female peers to fix abuse problems. As Gilbert states, the documentary “explore[s] what it means to be a man in our society and the extremes of masculinity imposed on our men and babies,” produced by Wendi Gilbert, Jennifer Siebel Newsom and Miss Representation.org the 2015 documentary *The Mask You Live in*, which is addressed in the paper “The Newtown Shooting and Why We Must Redefine Masculinity.” It also reveals how the American culture strengthens the strict code of behavior of boys inhibiting their capacity to empathize, diminishes their emotional maturity, restricts their perception of achievement and often, contributes to severe violence.” According to Douglas Kellner, a popular masculinity scholar, “there is a dominant social connection amongst males” A mask or façade of violent assertiveness which covers vulnerabilities.” Nevertheless, this culturally mandated

and constantly enhanced success of men is unsustainable and may have catastrophic effects, as Kellner continues, when the problem erupts in bursts of aggression and social murder and men Rage in highly violent ways such as government murder, serial and mass shootings, school, and office shoots” (ibid.). As young men and boys feel, that their masculinity relies instead of their willingness to publicly cope with these problems, on their ability to control and conceal their feelings, this suppression will contribute to disruptive behaviour, both internally and externally, which suggests a strong need to rethink and to rewrite the concept of being a person” in our contemporary community.

Turning from possible triggers to solutions to this abuse, the public conversation around school shoots must also be considered. King released *Guns* as a Kindle Single ebook a little more than a month after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. As the editor sums up *Guns*, “In an essay to rationally challenge the debate, Stephen King puts forward his thinking about gun violence in America” (“*Guns*”). *Guns* is a thoughtful and complex reflection on weapon violence, addressing a wide variety of factors, from arms control and mental health to violence in people’s cultures. King was able to publish *Guns* promptly in order to be able to participate in the conversation immediately following the shootings of Sandy Hook. Disappear slowly through the legislative swamp” (King: *Guns*), but overlooked before the next disaster. Whilst possible triggers and reactions remain hotly contested, the undisputed fact is that violent incidents continue to take place with alarming regularity, often with innocent lives trapped in the crossfire.

## Conclusion

Rage has been out of print for more than 15 years now. Reflecting on the links between school fire prevention and Rage, King says: “I pulled the trigger on that specific piece of work until I realized what had happened. I took Rage back and did it with relief instead of remorse” (“Bogeyboys”). Though the scope of these challenges is much too much to establish a causal relationship of cause and effect between Rage and shootings at school, King chose the right decision, fulfilling what he perceived as a moral responsibility. As King writes in *Guns*: “I did not take Rage out of publication because the

legislation needed it under the First Amendment I was covered, and the law may not mandate it. I pulled it because it would damage people in my judgment and rendered it the responsible thing” (King: *Guns*). While he does not regret his decision to pull Rage from print, he makes it plain that he does not regret publishing it, contrary to media claims. While King still believes the right option to pull Rage from publication and is satisfied with his decision to pull it out, he says, “However with real regret I pulled it. The book tells disagreeable facts, and someone who does not regret tossing a cover over the truth is a jerk without conscience.” (King: *Guns*)

High school shootings may have been influenced by Charlie Decker, but an especially important distinctive aspect of such cases is the contrast between fiction and reality: although Rage’s students forge strong ties with Charlie transformed by their time with him in their classroom, no one of these emulative examples reveals the camaraderie and coveted anti-heroic status. Buckley states, In the story, Decker, a high school senior, kills two teachers and then takes classmates as a hostage while trying to convince them he is a hero. Decker receives acceptance in the novel. Scott Pennington will not work in House 108. Never again.

## References

- Bauder, David. “Violent Movies, TV Shows & Games Questioned after Sandy Hook Shooting.” *The Huffington Post*, 2012.
- Buckley, Jerry. “The Tragedy in Room 108.” *U.S. News & World Report*, 1993..
- Burger, Alissa. *Teaching Stephen King: Horror, the Supernatural, and New Approaches to Literature*. Springer, 2016.
- Chokshi, Niraj. “Fight over School Shooting List underscores Difficulty in Quantifying Gun Violence.” *The Washington Post*, 2014.
- Copeland, Larry. “Report: School Shootings often Involve Guns from Home.” *USA Today*, 2014.
- Cowan, Alison Leigh. “Adam Lanza’s Mental Problems ‘Completely Untreated’ before Newtown Shootings, Report Says.” *The New York Times*, 2014.
- Cullen, Dave. *Columbine*. Riverrun, 2019.



- Dayal, Geeta. "Blaming Pop Culture for Gun Violence is Just a Distraction." *Slate*, 2012.
- Gilbert, Wendi, and MissRepresentation.org. "The Newtown Shooting and Why We must Redefine Masculinity." *The Representation Project*, 2012.
- Grossman, Dave, and Gloria DeGaetano. *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence*. Harmony, 2014.
- International Communication Association. "No Link between Movie, Video Game Violence and Societal Violence? More Violent Video Game Consumption, Less Youth Violence: Study." *Science Daily*, 2014.
- Katz, Jackson, and Douglas Kellner. "A Conversation between Jackson Katz and Douglas Kellner on Guns, Masculinities, and School Shootings." *Fast Capitalism*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008.
- King, Stephen. "Rage." *The Bachman Books: Four Early Novels by Stephen King*. New American Library, 1986.
- King, Stephen. *Guns*. Amazon. Philtrum Press, 2013.
- King, Stephen. "Foreword." *Blaze: A Novel*. Pocket Books, 2008.
- King, Stephen. "The Bogeyboys." *HorrorKing.com*. 1999.
- Knickerbocker, Brad. "Colorado School Shooting: Armed Guards the Answer?." *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2013.
- Magistrale, Tony. *Stephen King: The Second Decade, Danse Macabre to The Dark Half*. Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- Nash, Jesse W. "Postmodern Gothic: Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1997, pp. 151-60.
- Richarz, Allan. "Sandy Hook: Mental Health, Not Gun Control, is the Answer to Mass Shootings." *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2012.
- Rosenberg, Jessica. "Mass Shootings and Mental Health Policy." *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2014, pp. 107-21.
- Toronto Star. "NRA Speech on the Newtown Shootings: Wayne LaPierre's Most Controversial Quotes." *TheStar.com*. 2012.

### Author Details

**Dr. R. Rajadurai**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** rajadurai.r@velhightech.com

**Dr. A. Arul**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** arul.a@velhightech.com

**Dr. J. Vignesious Stanley**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vel Tech High Tech Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** Vignesious.j@velhightech.com