

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

A. The Supernatural and Spiritual Overtones

By overtones, the writer means that what the reader perceive upon the story will show that the supernatural and spiritual serve like the cool breeze that will help enhance the intensity of the morality values. Like a composition, the supernatural and spiritual take on as the 'additional beat' that accompanies the morality message of the story.

Readers should note that there are two plotlines involved in the narrative of *The Green Mile*. The first is the present time framework, supposedly sometime in the mid-1990's, where the elderly Paul Edgecombe wrote his past account of working as a prison guard in Cold Mountain Prison. The second, which is the chief plot of the whole story, in which the two main characters of Paul Edgecombe and John Coffey interact, happens way back in 1932, the early period of the great Depression.

In *The Green Mile*, the story begins with the account of the narrative told in flashback by the elderly Paul Edgecombe. At first glance, it seems like the existence of Paul Edgecombe in the story plays the central role to the general idea of the story. However, deeper observation would suggest that it is actually the existence of John Coffey that imposes the notion of supernaturalism and spiritualism in the story. Therefore John Coffey becomes what we may call Stephen King's vehicle to journey through the realm of supernaturalism and spiritualism.

According to the narrator, Paul Edgecombe, the story that he recounted in flashback owes its significance much to the presence of John Coffey in the E Block of Cold Mountain prison.

1932 was the year of John Coffey. The details would be in the papers, still there for anyone who cared enough to look them out—someone with more energy than one very old man whittling away at the end of his life in Georgia nursing home. That was a hot fall, I remember that; very hot, indeed... Mostly, though, it was the fall that John Coffey came to E Block, sentenced to death for the rape—murder of the Dettterick twins. (9)

The story comes to the reader in an almost whisper-like voice of the grandfather figure of Edgecombe, now resting in the nursing home in Georgia. The reflections often made by Paul over his tour of duty in Cold Mountain signifies the beginning of the flashback which eventually leads to his questioning over his own moral dilemma when carrying out the execution of John Coffey.

John Coffey was black, like most of the men who came to stay for a while in E Block before dying in Old Sparky's lap, and he stood six feet, eight inches tall. (10)

That is the reader's first impression of John Coffey's staggering physical appearance. A slight nuance of racism appears upon the fact that Coffey was black, and that this incident happened in 1932, where the black community were still in the transition period between the age of slavery and liberty, it adds a strong perception that this story is written in the framework of thinking of a white man.

In terms of attitudes, John Coffey, despite his big stature and menacing pose, appears to be full of mystery, represented by his always sullen and sad facial

expression. Sometimes the expression can even be interpreted as being that of a dumb, dimwitted person whose every act suggest a childlike impersonation. As demonstrated by the following excerpt from the conversation between Coffey and Edgecombe upon their first meeting.

"Your name is John Coffey."

"Yes, sir, boss, like the drink, only not spelled the same way."

"So you can spell, can you? Read and write?"

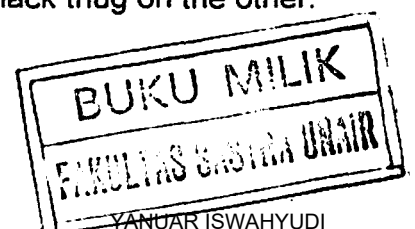
"Just my name, boss," said he, serenely. (17)

Yet, we can never really be sure of what is there really inside his mind, even as Paul himself admitted.

Coffey stood where he was a moment or two longer, as if he didn't know what to do next, then he sat down on his bunk, clasped his giant's hands between his knees, and lowered his head like a man who grieves or prays. I heard it with perfect clarity, and although I didn't know much about what he'd done then...(20)

Most of the words given by Paul in the telling of John Coffey guide the reader into making up the images how contrasting the physical attributes of Coffey with the kinds of manner he displayed both before and after his arrest.

As John Coffey was sentenced to death for his brutal crime of raping and murdering the twin little girls Cora and Kathe Detterick, it was also accounted by Paul how it came to be that John Coffey was charged with such horrendous accusation. How the search for two missing girls ended up with both the girls and the alleged killer and rapist. How contrast the view must have been with two angelic little girls, naked and dead, on one hand, and a massive black thug on the other.



The black man rocked back and forth; Cora and Kathe rocked with him like dolls in the arms of a giant. The bloodstained muscles in the man's huge, bare arms flexed and relaxed, flexed and relaxed, flexed and relaxed. (38)

At this time, the story takes on a different route on exploring the other characters involved in *The Green Mile*. What matters here is that the writer focuses his analysis on the supernatural and spiritual overtones that arise from the depiction of John Coffey. Yet, it would not be so distracting to mention the sub-theme of the story where there is the appearance of two unique inmates, one 'evil' prison guard, and one little special mouse in *The Green Mile*.

Eduard Delacroix, a Cajun inmate whose presence brings internal conflicts with Percy Wetmore, an antagonist in the form of a fellow prison guard, who in turn, is very much intimidated by the arrival of a much meaner new inmate, William 'Wild Bill' Wharton.

Delacroix owns a small mouse that happens to be the object of curiosity of E Block men, both the inmates and the guards. Percy is just there to irritate everyone, even the reader, for his irking. He finds his delicious target on Delacroix's timid posture and uses every opportunity available to persecute him.

In later chapter, Coffey befriends Delacroix but secretly develops a dislike over the manners and attitudes of both Percy Wetmore and Wild Bill Wharton. The writer perceives the personification of the bad people surrounding John Coffey as the personification of those criminals crucified together with Christ in the center. The biblical resonance is not without any reason, as it actually gives a glimpse into understanding Coffey motives in conjuring up miraculous healing powers and spreading the virtues of god-like power, including bringing back the dead to life.

John Coffey must have been such an extraordinary man to have impacted the life of the few people he had the chance of changing, either for the better or the worse. He has an air of mystery that evokes a kind of spiritual embodiment, which eventually forces Paul to go back into the memory of his past and digs up his most sensitive remembrance from the past.

I guess what I'm saying is that I didn't realize how far back I'd have to go in order to tell you about John Coffey, or how long I'd have to leave him there in his cell, a man so huge his feet didn't just stick off the end of his bunk but hung down all the way to the floor. (118)

This is like the account that comes from a man who has discovered awe and fear at the same time in a kind of spiritual experience. Actually here is where the symbolism shapes up, with Coffey as the extension of God's presence, from which all of us who claim to be religious and God-fearing might experience from time to time.

I want you to see him there, looking up the ceiling of his ceiling of his cell, weeping his silent tears, or putting his arms over his face. I want you to hear him, his sighs that trembled like sobs, his occasional watery groan. These weren't the sounds of agony and regret we sometimes heard on E Block, sharp cries with splinters of remorse in them; like his wet eyes, they were somehow removed from the pain we were used to dealing with. (118-119)

Paul is compelled by his inner drive and, most probably guilt, driven by Coffey's larger than life figure, both literally and spiritually. Stephen King imbibes the 'not so normal' Coffey to the crowd in Cold Mountain Penitentiary that he

imagines as the representations of us who are sinful and who await our own final destination.

John Coffey's supernatural, or rather miraculous intermingling with the deeds of his surrounding characters, began when he saved Paul Edgecombe's bad urinary infection, which he describes as being bad, but not bad enough to put him in the hospital, yet bad enough for him to wish he would just be dead. Again, Coffey's irresistible charm might give off this rather unusual prison guard-inmate relation, for although it was the norm that no guard is allowed to come within an arm reach of any of the cells, he did just that when Coffey asked him to. The sincerity and the innocence that resonates through Coffey's voice allure Paul to come nearer.

"What do you want John Coffey?" I asked, still looking into his eyes-those sad, serene eyes.

"Just to help," he said. (183)

Then the unexpected happens, as the first account of John Coffey's miraculous healing powers is revealed.

A jolt slammed through me then, a big painless whack of something. It made me jerk on the cot and bow my back...There was no heat, no feeling of electricity, but for a moment the color seemed to jump out of everything, as if the world had been somehow squeezed and made to sweat. (183)

Here we are shown with the result of Coffey's power, as in "Then it was over. So was my urinary infection." (183)

What Paul comes across is the experience of a lifetime. The force of God walks into his life in the form of John Coffey. Not only does he walk, he cures him of his urinary infection in a manner most inexplicably, especially by reason standard.

This is the one moment where Coffey sheds his dumb and ignorant persona into a more active friend in need.

As it is witnessed that Coffey performs the kinds of magical powers similar to those of Christ, it is inevitable for the writer to draw a personification of Christ in the character of John Coffey. However, reader should also notice that the kind of spiritualism here is subtly embedded, meaning that it is never exposed in an open statement, or even as in a blatant reference of any religion.

The writer notes that the hermeneutics stance as proposed by Heidegger moves around within the decipherment of the Scriptures, the similarities between King's spiritual overtones in the incorporation of John Coffey in *The Green Mile* and the rites of passages underwent by Christ make possible the interpretation of *The Green Mile* as being written in the vein of Christianity. The writer thus believes that it is Stephen King's intention that he submerges the Christian spiritual overtones through some occasions in the story.

Firstly, John Coffey begins his supernatural undertaking by performing the kinds of miraculous healings similar to those performed by Christ in several occasions. Then comes the moment where John Coffey not only defeats diseases but also cheats death itself, as he brings back the one of a kind mouse Mr. Jingles to life.

Just as Christ resurrects Lazarus from his apparent death, John Coffey brings the seemingly crunched Mr. Jingles –stamped to his demise by the irritating Percy Wetmore- to the land of the living. The resemblance that the writer puts forward here is that Stephen King models his central figure in *The Green Mile* as the embodiment of Christ, as it is apparent that there is a fine line that separates the notion of supernaturalism and that of spiritualism. A man who is a believer of

supernatural things is indeed a man of high spiritual faith. This fact provides the perfect background explanation as to why King devises John Coffey as his scalpel to penetrate the zone of historical drama with the aid of supernatural and spiritual overtones.

Why is it necessary to call these factors as overtones? The writer observes that the basic content of *The Green Mile* is actually not on its 'sugar coating' supernatural and spiritual elements. Rather, it is the story of moral dilemma and loneliness. A question into the conscience that controls the way people live. The supernatural and spiritual overtones that govern the plot of *The Green Mile* are channeled through John Coffey as the sole purveyor for mystery.

In the story, the origin of John Coffey has never been fully explained. He appears out of nowhere and walks about helping people from place to place. The topic of miracles is given top priority in building Coffey's righteous acts of Good Samaritan.

"I grew up in the tradition of miracles and healings." (190). Those are the words of Paul Edgecombe. Yet, the inevitable portion of the thought here goes to King himself as the storyteller. Do we have to believe in his words? Well, we have to because we are under total control of whatever the narrator has to say about the story. But we can perceive from this utterance that the narrator is guiding us into some territory of supernaturalism and spiritualism but in actuality he is trying to take us into the discussion of the main essence of the story, which is the morality. This will be discussed in the second sub-topic of the analysis.

The vivid description of Mr. Jingles dead body before being refreshed with a new life by Coffey comes as a proof of how a terrible accident might still be no big obstruction for Coffey's power to manifest its potency.

Anyone in general would certainly be not mesmerized let alone mourn over the death of a single tiny mouse, even if the death comes as a tragic one. Yet, from this passage, we are slowly driven by Paul's words that this mouse is something special to be given a detailed attention. Made even more peculiar by the magical resurrection which is about to be performed by John Coffey.

Previously passive and silent all the way through the first half of the story, John Coffey volunteers himself to help. First off with Paul and his own bad urinary infection, which he heals instantaneously. Now he is about to do his second miraculous healing ability, only now it is a much more spectacular feat than before, bringing back a dead mouse to life. Even an expert scientist or any globally known paranormal could not claim to bring back any dead creatures to life, even the smallest kind of insect. But Coffey managed to break the rules set even by God himself. He topples the balance of the nature, albeit in a seemingly good way and with a good cause.

"Give im to me."

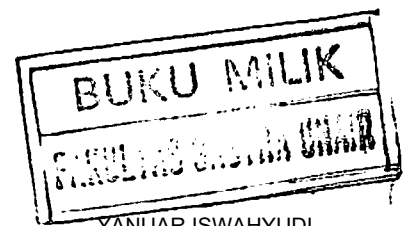
I looked up puzzled by that deep voice, at first not sure who it belonged to. I saw John Coffey. (263)

Like some voice from the sky, Coffey intervenes the tragic mishap by offering his help.

"Give im to me, Mr. Edgecombe! While there's still time!"

Then I remembered what he'd done for me, and understood. (263)

The stir of doubt is apparent as this is supposed to be an impossible task to accomplish. The mouse, virtually dead, is in no way going to runaround The Green Mile any more. Or it seems to be.



Coffey put his mouth between two of his fingers and inhaled sharply. For a moment everything hung suspended. Then he raised his head away from his hands and I saw the face of a man who looked desperately sick, or in terrible pain. (264)

This refers to the amount of energy it takes for John Coffey to conjure up his power and how much it costs him. It is suggested in the text that every time Coffey has used his power, he experiences this same agony and pain and more.

Coffey made that choking, gagging sound again, then turned his head to one side like a man that has coughed up a wad of phlegm and means to spit it out. Instead, he exhaled a cloud of black insects-I think they were insects, and the others said the same, but to this day I am not sure-from his mouth and nose. They boiled around him in a dark cloud that temporarily obscured his features...(265)

The supernatural happenings happen only after the arrival of John Coffey in The Green Mile. It has been perfectly fine-at least by a Death Row standard-in the E Block until John Coffey comes and leaves a mark with everything he does so far.

As it is apparent in the case of Stephen King's work where there is always a mysterious force playing around the otherwise mundane lives of the ordinary people which populate the work. Either the force is a manifestation of good or evil, it always leaves a larger than life impression on the reader. There is always the notion that the origin of this force is always kept shrouded in secrecy and a state of unresolved puzzle. It is up to the reader to imagine himself or herself where the force comes from or what is actually the true nature of it.

In the case of The Green Mile, the force that manifests in the form of John Coffey may possibly be Stephen King's imaginings of God's touches on life. How in

such a place as a penitentiary, there is still hope for spiritual enlightening. King however still retains his trademark use of the supernatural incident as in the case of ghosts whose voices can be heard by Coffey alone. This happens when John Coffey is being smuggled out of the cell in order to cure the wife of the sick warden. Upon passing the room where the electric chair, Old Sparky, lies, John Coffey utters the things which he senses in the room.

And the he said something in a low and dreaming voice. It wasn't me he was speaking to, it wasn't any of us, but I have still never forgotten it.

"They're still in there. Pieces of them, still in there. I hear them screaming." (384)

By them he means the many convicts who have previously been executed on the lap of the Old Sparky. Whether this means that there are really the ghosts of those convicts in there or not, the text imposes the overtones of supernaturalism. Although not as clear as that in a low-level ghost story, the passage has been aimed to suggest the air of supernatural taste in there.

The third act done by John Coffey is to heal Melinda Moores, the wife of warden Hal Moores, who is ailing for an incurable brain tumor. Even to this day, treating tumor has always been a risky and tricky process, let alone when it was performed way back in 1932, the time period when this story is supposed to happen. And we are not just talking about a medical curative treatment here, we are in the context of explaining a miracle, as it may be called, for John Coffey is a black man of uneducated background, not especially of medical knowledge the level of a cancer specialist. Yet, he does so in his usual extract-the-disease-then-spit-it-out-in-

the-form-of-bugs manner, the way he has done before with Paul's urinary infection and Mr. Jingles's death.

Closer he bent, and closer still. For a moment his huge face stopped less than two inches from hers. He raised one hand off to the side, fingers splayed, as if telling something to wait...just wait...and then he lowered his face again. His broad, smooth lips pressed against hers and forced them open. (p. 408)

It seems that John Coffey has somehow managed to master his craft of miraculous healing through some undisclosed repetitions that he knows exactly what to do about his powers and what to make of his ability to the benefit of the ailing people he has helped. Once again, reader is left with his imaginings as to how Coffey, a seemingly dumbfounded and stray black giant with no clear background and purpose, is able to pull off all these articulated acts of healing.

Outside the wind gusted hard enough to give the house a second shake-and that was strange, you know, because until then there had been no wind to speak of at all.

John Coffey pulled away from her, and I saw that her face had smoothed out. The right side of her mouth no longer drooped. Her eyes had regained their normal shape, and she looked ten years younger. (409-410)

The sense of otherworldly force can be felt here as things such as a mysterious screaming and the hard wind that comes out of nowhere help create the supernatural feel to the process undergone by Coffey and Melinda Moores.

This time around Coffey does not cough up the myriads of black bugs he usually releases on finishing his ritual. Instead, he seems to choke on the disease that he has extracted for himself.

He landed on his knees and hung his head over, coughing like a man in the last stages of TB.

I thought, *Now the bugs. He's going to cough them out, and what a lot there'll be this time.*

But he didn't. He only went on coughing in deep retching barks, hardly finding time between fits to snatch in the next breath of air. His dark, chocolatey skin was graying out. (410)

As the story unfolds, it turns out that Coffey intentionally keeps whatever he has inhaled before from the bower of Melinda Moores for a secret purpose of his own.

In previous parts of the story, it is told that there are two 'good' convicts who the reader can sympathize with, John Coffey and the timid Frenchman Eduard Delacroix, whose mouse pet, Mr. Jingles, has been rescued from death by Coffey. The 'bad' characters which reader would tend to hate are the irritatingly self-centered prison guard Percy Wetmore, who hates Delacroix more than anything in the world, and William "Wild Bill" Wharton, a convict who is bad to the bone and does any kind of mischievous acts based solely on his personal pleasure. In later chapters, it is exposed that it is actually Wild Bill who raped and killed the Detterick twins, a crime which is then being accused to John Coffey.

Upon returning to his cell, John Coffey reveals the secret plan he has been keeping. He grabs the unwittingly arrogant Percy Wetmore and exhaled the bugs he keeps from Melinda and pours them into Percy's mouth.

Percy screamed, the sound muffled as it had been through the tape, and made another effort to pull back. For an instant their lips came apart a little, and I saw the black, swirling tide that was flowing out of John Coffey and into Percy Wetmore. What wasn't going into him through his quivering mouth was flowing in by way of his nostrils. (447-448)

After the incident, instead of dying of cancer, Percy becomes a mentally troubled man, shooting Wild Bill Wharton who is asleep in his cell to his death. Therefore, John Coffey managed to punish two people which he considers 'bad'.

"John Coffey called him a bad man."

"Yep. Said the same thing about Percy once, too. Maybe more than once. I can't remember exactly when, but I know he did." (460)

John Coffey later gives a vision to Paul that it was Wild Bill Wharton who, while working for the Detterick family, kidnapped, raped then murdered the two dead girls. He gives his account to Paul what he knows about the Detterick twins and William Wharton.

Why didn't they scream, John? He hurt them enough to make them bleed, their parents were right upstairs, so why didn't they scream?"

John looked at me from his haunted eyes. "He say to the one, 'If you make noise, it's your sister I kill, not you.' He say that same to the other. You see?"

"Yes," I whispered, and I could see it. The Detterick porch in the dark. Wharton leaning over them like a ghoul. One of them had maybe started to cry out, so Wharton had hit her and she had bled from the nose. That's where most of it had come from.

"He kill them with they love," John said. "They love for each other. You see how it was?"

I nodded, incapable of speech. (493-494)

These revealing speeches of John Coffey really give the insight into the minds and the reasons behind Coffey's thinking and conduct. He is aware of love and thus willing to go through so much to pain and selfless undertaking to do whatever he is capable of to secure it and restore it if needed. All the supernatural and spiritual elixir would be meaningless for Coffey without the love that underlines them all.

B. The Moral Values

Without a doubt, all the narrative given in the flashback owes much of its existence to the narrator Paul Edgecombe. First of all, there has to be some kind of audience to whom Paul must have been addressing all these details and trips down his memory lane. According to the concept proposed by the narratologist Gerald Prince, the audience in question is called the narratee. The ideal target audience that the author aims to collect here is what the text will try to grasp and involve in its moral contents.

It is hard not to mistake Paul Edgecombe as the personification of King himself. As it is often the case, an author might himself participate within the contained world of his own imagination. The author becomes the character in that every word, thought, opinion, or feeling is to be grasped in a single integrated unity. In the case of *The Green Mile*, it is never a question of who is really the narrator and who is the narratee. Rather, we are invited to extract the moral values as according to our own interpretative creativity.

Paul Edgecombe wrote the account of what he had experienced more than sixty years in the past in a vividly detailed account and accurate remembrance, quite impressively unusual for a man whose age has reached 104, according to the book.

Yet, we are not about to debate the logic and plausibility of this story, rather we will try to dissect the moral values embedded inside the whole narrative that Paul tries to deliver to his naratee, us, the reader.

The story takes on the two-plotline frameworks, the past and the present. The past, where the main storyline takes place, is the center of the writer's analysis, because that is where the incidents which affect Paul in his later life take place. The present serves more as a reflective phase where we see Paul draws out his own understanding towards the past.

It is known that Paul has begun telling, or writing, his diary about his experience working as a prison guard in Cold Mountain Penitentiary after he has resorted to a nursing home in Georgia. And he is willing to go through all these troubles because of one thing, John Coffey.

1932 was the year of John Coffey. The details would be in the papers, still there for anyone who cared enough to look them out-someone with more energy than one very old man whittling away the end of his life in a Georgia nursing home...It was the fall of Delacroix, the little half-bald Frenchman with the mouse, the one that came in the summer and did that cute trick with the spool. Mostly, though, it was the fall that John Coffey came to E Block, sentenced to death for the rape-murder of the Detterick twins. (9)

Paul's words become the guide that will lead us to determine the moral values. As he looks back into the past, he begins to unravel the burden and guilt that has long been placed on his shoulder. The necessity to channel these feelings and to once again relive the memory of the Green Mile and John Coffey drives Paul to reflect on those years of working in the Mile, especially 1932, where the John Coffey experience takes place.

You know murderers, even if they finish up as old lady librarians in dozey little towns. At least you do if you've spent as much time minding murderers as I did. There was only one time I ever had a question about the nature of my job. That, I reckon, is why I'm writing this. (6)

This passage gives a glimpse into the background of the writing of all this diary stuff for Paul Edgecombe, and to sum it up he goes behind the name of the Green Mile for everything that has happened from the days of John Coffey up until his nestling in the Georgia nursing home. The fact that Paul owes much of his writing to the interaction that happened years before between him and John Coffey is illustrated with the many painstaking details and portrayals of John Coffey that he has to do in the retelling of his past experience.

Paul recalls over and over again the one fact that he cannot simply wipe off of his mind, that John Coffey is one innocent man, sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit.

He said something then in his strange, almost-Southern voice. I heard it with perfect clarity, and although I didn't know much about what he'd done then-you don't need to know about what a man's done in order to feed him and groom him until it's time for him to pay off what he owes-it still gave me a chill.

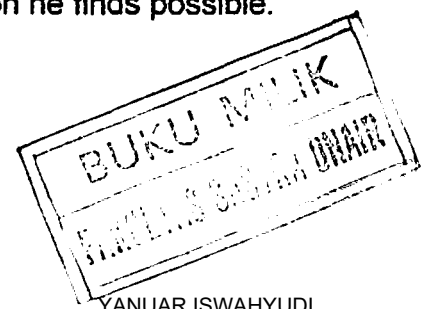
"I couldn't help it, boss," he said. I tried to take it back, but it was too late." (20)

Is there any more to this story than the moral values that are based on the connection between John Coffey and Paul Edgecombe? Yes, certainly. The answer lies in the fact that the prime cause of this story is the relationship built between Paul Edgecombe and John Coffey which becomes the source of account for the other narratives.

John Coffey came to E Block and the Green Mile in October of that year, condemned for the murder of the nine-year-old Detterick twins. That's my major landmark, and if I keep it in view, I should do just fine. William "Wild Bill" Wharton came after Coffey; Delacroix came before. So did the mouse, the one Brutus Howell-Brutal, to his friends-called Steamboat Willy and Delacroix ended up calling Mr. Jingles. (81)

The writer sees that whatever happens to the rest of the characters is present to further illustrate what goes on inside Paul's mind after the incident in 1932. The bad death of Eduard Delacroix on the electric chair, the shooting of Wild Bill Wharton by Percy Wetmore, the stomping of the mouse Mr. Jingles are all secondary to what actually happens between Paul Edgecombe and John Coffey.

The present time framework in which Paul writes the whole story contained in the novel brings two additional characters to the spotlight, Elaine Connelly, Paul's close friend in the Georgia nursing home and to whom Paul tells all this account about the Green Mile for the first time, and Brad Dolan, one of the nursing home attendants who keeps nagging on Paul in whatever occasion he finds possible.



Paul thinks of Georgia Pines nursing home as a place where danger takes on another shape, a subtler yet similarly deadening in the end. It is a place best described as the waiting room for the old and the worn-out for bereavement.

I've seen a lot of people slide into senility since I came here, and sometimes they do more than slide-sometimes they go down with the speed of a crash-diving submarine. They came here mostly all right-dim-eyed and welded to the cane, maybe a little loose in the bladder, but otherwise okay-and then something happens to them. (249-250)

He inadvertently begins to think of it sort of like the Green Mile in a more disguised form, suited to make your death comes off as soft as possible. Paul sees this fact as one of the contributing factors as to why he has to write his diary. He refuses to be submitted to death without some kind of struggle for his own sanity and to just surrender to the frailty of old age.

I also have a body, wasted and grotesque, though it may now be, and I exercise it as much as I can. It was hard at first-old fogies like me aren't much shakes when it comes to exercise just for the sake of exercise-but it's easier now that there is a purpose to my walks. (250-251)

A trip down the memory lane for a guilty feeling is more like it for Paul Edgecombe, as he now considers his job as a prison guard a dirty job. Conscience takes the form of doubts for Paul over his job as a prison guard. Even writing it seems to him like a tremendous forceful inclination in which he has to dig up old wounds and eventually brings him face to face again with the ghosts of his past. Yet it also serves as the redemption that Paul can give to pay for his helplessness to save John Coffey from the electric chair.

Writing is a special and rather terrifying form of remembrance, I've discovered-there is a totality to it that seems almost like rape...I believe that the combination of pencil and memory creates a kind of practical magic, and magic is dangerous. As a man who knew John Coffey and saw what he could do-to mice and to men-I feel very qualified to say that.

Magic is dangerous. (336)

By this, of course, he means that everything would probably have been much easier had it not been for the coming of John Coffey into his life. John Coffey helps many but at the same time also complicates every normal procedure brought upon every other convict before.

When it has been discovered that John Coffey is indeed innocent, everyone on Paul's side agrees to find any way possible to prevent him from sitting on the Old Sparky's lap. Yet, no one finds any way. They are all still locked on the course to kill him in the name of law. Religiousness, despite its eventual failure to prevent the wrong execution of John Coffey is apparent in the last moments before Coffey is to be electrocuted. A good moral dilemma relating with religiousness ensues here as Brutus "Brutal" Howell, Paul's second-hand man in E Block, finely phrases it.

"I done a few things in my life that I'm not proud of, but this is the first time I ever felt really actually in danger of hell."

I looked at him to make sure he wasn't joking. I didn't think he was.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we're fixing to kill a gift of God," he said. "One that never did any harm to us, or to anyone else. What am I going to say if I end up

standing in front of God the Father Almighty and He asks me to explain why I did it? That it was my job? My job?" (488)

There is a nice confrontation where John Coffey himself insist on going to his execution. Paul finds out how tiresome it must be for a person as gifted and 'holy' as Coffey to go on from day to day watching the sins and the corruption that goes inside everyone. Coffey, thus, agrees to sacrifice himself for the betterment of the situation. This altruism is the biggest moral value that can be grasped from Coffey.

"You and Mr. Howell and the other bosses been good to me," John Coffey said. "I know you been worryin, but you ought to quit on it now. Because I want to go, boss."...(491)

In viewing the last moment of John Coffey, Paul bears in mind these words of Coffey, "*That's how it is, I thought. Every day. All over the world. That darkness. All over the world.*" (495)

The crime and the everlasting evil goes on in this world. That's what John Coffey has to say and what Paul grabs and keeps for his remembrance of the ugliness of the world that he sees. With guilt perpetually haunting him, Paul preserves Coffey in another form, in memory as well as in his writing. What he learnt from his experience from John Coffey can be seen as both a curse and a blessing.

C. The Effects of the Supernatural and Spiritual Overtones to the Moral Values Contained within the Story

Sometimes it is often the case that a writer experiments with different kinds of storytelling style, technique, or genre to flex his creative muscles in order to give a fresh intake to his reader. The establishment of any writer's specialty towards

certain genre is sometimes the biggest obstacle as well as the hardest challenge to overcome. He is propelled to try to play in other pools so as to prove that no matter what genre he is writing, he can still prove his writing skills. This is the foremost reason why certain writers like to jump about different kinds of storytelling or narratives or genres. They want to expand their skills and creativity just like professionals.

In the movie section of the *Yahoo* internet site (www.yahoo.com), Stephen King explains why he wrote *The Green Mile* the way he wrote it. He said that in looking back on the novel's success, King admits that the story "was very difficult for me to write." Two years before he actually began composing the novel in 1995, he had outlined a story involving the electric chair and a black inmate named Luke Coffey, a magician whose secret powers could possibly be used to make himself disappear before walking the Mile.

King changed his conception of the magician character and his "idea for a story became *The Green Mile*. I just hoped I wouldn't run out of inspiration before it was done. In a lot of ways, dealing with John Coffey was a difficult thing to do. Here is a man on Death Row who may be innocent, who is able to help some of his fellow captives. That was the basic idea of the story."

Once King began to write, he chose to release his new novel in serial form. Inspired by literary giant Charles Dickens, who published many of his works in this manner, King relates, "I always loved story told in episodes. It is a format I first encountered in the *Saturday Evening Post*." (2)

So, with the conception like this, *The Green Mile* was built on the foundation of supernatural theme but eventually evolved into something more "moralist" and "psychological". In previous sub chapters of the analysis, the writer has pointed out

that the supernatural and spiritual overtones found in the book stem out of the characterization of John Coffey. As King himself admits, the story of *The Green Mile* is ignited by John Coffey but as he writes the words down, he finds that there are more than meets the in the story. He finds in it the chance to explore the notion of guilt, conscience, religiousness, redemption, and sacrifice imposed at the very center of the story.

The presence of John Coffey gives access to the depiction of supernatural and spiritual overtones amalgamated into the moral values mentioned above. In the novel we see many times through the narrative of Paul Edgecombe, how whenever John Coffey stands in the spotlight of the narrative, the impression that the reader gets is like a solemn account of the presence of a god-like figure, mysterious yet emitting a kind of celestial aura to those who behold him.

He kept looking around as if to make out where he was. Maybe even who he was. My first thought was that he looked like a black Samson...only after Delilah had shaved him smooth as her faithless little hand and taken all the fun out of him. (11)

Comparison between Coffey and any biblical figure may, at first, seem like a subtle religion propaganda, but that is not the case here. As it is pointed out that Coffey himself has no religion in particular, as if to advertise that God is universal, that virtue is in no way restricted to the confinement of a religion.

"Now, what about a preacher? Someone you could say a little prayer with, night after next? It comforts a man, I've seen that many times. I could get in touch with Reverend Schuster, he's the man who came when Del-"



"Don't want no preacher," John said. "You been good to me, boss. You can say a prayer, if you want. That'd be all right. I could get kneebound with you a bit I guess." (490)

Approaching the day of John Coffey's execution, Paul finds within himself that he starts to merge his own mind into that of John Coffey. He sees the pain, the burden, the darkness, and the ugliness of the world as John Coffey envisions it. Here we see how through the uncanny visions of John Coffey, Paul starts to see the world through his deepest moral consideration, how he finds a mutual path between him and Coffey, and that path should end because of their different positions. Paul, limited by his own responsibility as a man of law enforcement capability, yet he becomes helpless to help Coffey, who he knows is innocent, because there is just no logical explanation or concrete proof as to what could possibly be done to free Coffey from his criminal charge. An irony of the situation is created in that the truth must give way to the very own system that addresses itself as being the tool of justice.

The supernatural depictions in the book such as the resurrection of Mr. Jingles, the mouse, the healing powers of John Coffey's hands, as demonstrated through the instantaneous healing Paul of his urinary infection and Melinda Moores of her brain tumor, as well as the vision of the death of the Detterick twins, are all there in the book as mere tools to dramatize the tensions that are vital to the story's integrity. This heightened dramatization, therefore, is the first effect of the mingling between the supernatural and spiritual overtones with the moral values. The spiritual overtone which is apparent in the many similarities between John Coffey and Christ, carries out one of the moral values embedded in the book. As all humans are basically in search of the one truth behind their existence, spiritualism

reflects on the kinds of things which arouse readers to associate themselves with powers beyond their comprehension, the nature of life, or the search for the prime cause of everything that exists in the corporeal world.

John Coffey fills that function because the storyteller keeps his origin shrouded in secrecy, or more appropriately, in blurry past. John Coffey exists to show himself, whether reluctantly or unknowingly, as the man sent, perhaps, by God himself. Supposedly to do good for people, where in the story it is represented by the ensemble of Paul himself, as the narrator, and the rest of the characters.

Moreover, for the readers of the previous Stephen King's books, this spiritual take on the major character provides a departure from his usual *modus operandi*. King offers his own take on God figure based on his interpretation of John Coffey. Instead of choosing a white man, often described superior in a stereotyping of racial discrimination, to portray this character, he lands his option to portray John Coffey in the persona of a black man who is suffering from injustice. Physically speaking, John Coffey could have been a murderer, had he wanted to become one. He is seven feet tall and 330 lbs-an apparent cold-blooded murderer with two dead girls in his arms. But John Coffey is also a very special individual who understands Paul and, sees the kindness that is in Paul and most of the other guards, which is kind of the ironic twist to the story.

In the last chapter of the story, Paul undergoes much of his personal questioning and search for his individual peace. He is still captivated by what John Coffey has done to him and how it continues to haunt him for the rest of his life, even during the writing of his manuscript. He can still clearly feel the supernatural powers of John Coffey work through him like an everlasting battery that just will not

die. He writes the story when he is 104 years old, and still managed to recall with perfect clarity what went on over sixty years before.

He remembers how, some years after what had happened in Cold Mountain, he lost his wife Janice in a freak bus accident upon attending the graduation of one of his grandchildren. How he hoped that John Coffey would have still been there to help, to offer his magical hands to administer miracle one more time.

But of course it wasn't only Melly Moores that John Coffey saved in 1932, or Del's mouse, the one that could do that cute trick with the spool and seemed to be looking for Del long before Del showed up...long before John Coffey showed up, either.

John saved me, too, and years later, standing in the pouring Alabama rain and looking for a man who wasn't there in the shadows of an underpass, standing amid the spilled luggage and the ruined dead, I learned a terrible thing: sometimes there is absolutely no difference at all between salvation and damnation. (533)

This is the irony best phrased by Paul. He feels over the time that his long, dragging life has become a curse on its own, a feeling of loneliness that is just too much to bear. John Coffey haunts him in his guilt and despair. With no one left to share his feelings other than Elaine Connelly, Paul pours it all on his writing. This is where the supernatural and spiritual overtones affect the moral values contained in the story. The haunting feelings that he has experienced drive out all his sense of frailty, that humans cannot expect the har/ds of God to come to the rescue anytime, that sometimes conscience is numb against the hardships of life, and that sometimes there is absolutely no difference at all between salvation and damnation. Ambiguity in the sense of right and wrong and the fine line between blessing and

curse (and perhaps even the ambiguity in the genre of this novel) becomes the second effect of the interaction between supernatural and spiritual overtones with the moral values. The quizzical state of heart, which for both Paul and the reader, inflicts the disturbingly uncertain parallelism of the fine line between salvation and damnation; a man's perspective may be distorted to the point where he can no longer grasp what are good for them and what are not.

Pouring out of him and into me, whatever strange force he had in him coming through our joined hands in a way our love and hope and good intentions somehow never can, a feeling that began as a tingle and then turned into something tidal and enormous, a force beyond anything I had ever experienced before or have ever experienced since. (533-534)

This is the bonding that goes on between Paul and John Coffey, even long after Coffey's death. The supernatural and spiritual occurrences that happened years before bring out the moral guilt and the realization that punishment can take up any shape, even without blood or any physical torment. Paul expresses the anomaly he finds in his body after he has been healed by Coffey as torturing because he feels that his "immortality" only worsens his guilt and sadness.

Since that day I have never had pneumonia, or the flu, or even a strep throat. I have never had another urinary infection, or so much as an infected cut. I have had colds, but they have been infrequent-six or seven years apart, and although people who don't have colds often are supposed to suffer more serious ones, that has never been the case with me. Once, earlier on in that awful year of 1956, I passed a gallstone. And although I suppose it will sound strange to some reading this in spite of all I have said, part of me relished the pain that came

when that gallstone went. It was the only serious pain I'd had since that problem with my waterworks, twenty four years before. (534)

He realized that he is not immortal in the sense that he will live forever, but he surpasses everyone that he has had any relationship so far. He realized that John Coffey's powers propel him to an astounding life span, yet it also grieves him a lot in a way which makes him live an almost empty life.

In 1932, John Coffey inoculated me with life. Electrocuting me with life, you might say. I will pass on eventually-of course I will, any illusions of immortality I might have had died with Mr. Jingles-but I will have wished for death long before death finds me. Truth to tell, I wish for it already and have ever since Elaine Connelly died. Need I tell you? (534-535)

The effects of the morality questions towards the end of the book really give a depth to the supernatural and spiritual meanings of the work. They stand side by side in enriching the interpretations that can be drawn out of this work. In heightening the sense of melancholic guilt experienced by Paul, Stephen King applies an almost nihilistic ending to his tale, where no one, not even Paul Edgecombe, achieves happiness in a way which extrapolates many works of popular fiction. That John Coffey, a man whose capability evoke the God-like quality, eventually has to succumb to unjustly death.

I lie here and wait. I think about Janice, how I lost her, how she ran away red through my fingers in the rain, and I wait. We each owe a death, there are no exceptions, I know that, but sometimes, oh God, the Green Mile is so long. (536)

The nihilistic atmosphere at the end of the story is the third effect of the spiritual and supernatural overtones to the moral values. John Coffey prefers to

accept his own death penalty rather than having to witness any more of human's corrupt lives. "You and Mr. Howell and the other bosses been good to me," John Coffey said. "I know you been worryin, but you ought to quit on it now. Because I want to go, boss." (491) These lines show us that John Coffey has indeed been tired of doing the good jobs that seem to always be overwhelmed by the sins of the world.

Stephen King keeps a balance between maintaining the suspense of the tale by infusing a dose of realism and imbuing the kinds of literary ambiguity towards the tale. One will have a different take on *The Green Mile* in that it cannot just be categorized into one particular genre because it has managed to build a chemistry that goes between the supernatural and spiritual overtones and the morality values.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION