

Totalitarian Power as A Source of Horror: The Compositional Features of Stephen King's "The Institute"

 Nilufar Kurbonova

PhD student UzSWLU, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Received: 08 Apr 2026 | Received Revised Version: 30 Apr 2026 | Accepted: 24 May 2026 | Published: 05 June 2026

Volume 08 Issue 06 2026 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajas/Volume08Issue06-15

Abstract

This article examines the compositional features of Stephen King's The Institute (2019), focusing on the representation of totalitarian power as the principal source of horror in the novel. The study analyzes how King combines the conventions of social horror and speculative fiction to expose the mechanisms of institutional violence, political control, and the dehumanization of the individual. Particular attention is devoted to the novel's dual narrative structure, which develops through the parallel perspectives of Tim Jamieson and Luke Ellis, as well as to the interaction of linear and nonlinear narrative techniques. The research investigates the artistic functions of shifting narrative perspectives, parallel plotlines, flashbacks, foreshadowing, and spatial opposition between the Front Half and the Back Half of the Institute in generating psychological tension and sustaining suspense. The article further demonstrates that these compositional devices reinforce the novel's central themes of resistance to authoritarian power, moral responsibility, freedom, and human resilience. The Institute is interpreted as an allegory of totalitarian systems that justify violence in the name of collective security, while the experiences of the imprisoned children symbolize the suppression of individuality under institutional control. The study concludes that King's mature narrative technique transforms horror into a sophisticated literary form that combines psychological depth with social and political criticism, thereby expanding the artistic possibilities of contemporary horror fiction.

Keywords: Stephen King; The Institute; horror fiction; social horror; totalitarianism; narrative composition; narrative perspective; flashbacks; foreshadowing; psychological tension; institutional violence; political allegory; human resilience.

© 2026 Nilufar Kurbonova. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). The authors retain copyright and allow others to share, adapt, or redistribute the work with proper attribution.

Cite This Article: Nilufar Kurbonova. (2026). Totalitarian Power as A Source of Horror: The Compositional Features of Stephen King's "The Institute". The American Journal of Applied Sciences, 8(06), 321–328. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajas/Volume08Issue06-15>

1. Introduction

Stephen King's "The Institute" (2019) is a compelling novel that successfully combines elements of science fiction with those of social horror. The narrative follows the tragic fate of children endowed with extraordinary psychic abilities who are abducted and confined in a secret institution known as the Institute. Within its walls, they are subjected to a series of brutal experiments designed to exploit their telepathic and telekinetic

powers in pursuit of obscure political objectives and sinister institutional agendas.

The novel demonstrates several defining characteristics of horror that distinguish King's artistic approach to the genre. One of these is the incorporation of the supernatural into an otherwise recognizable reality, as the principal characters possess telepathic and telekinetic abilities. Beyond these overt manifestations of horror, however, the Institute itself functions as a source of profound existential anxiety. Officially presented as an

organization established to prevent catastrophic global disasters threatening humanity, the institution ultimately embodies a system in which the pursuit of collective security legitimizes violence against the individual. Alongside elements of speculative fiction that explore potential existential threats facing modern civilization, King introduces a critical reflection on political authority, state surveillance, and institutional violence.

This section examines the originality of the novel's compositional structure and the narrative techniques through which King gradually intensifies psychological tension. Particular attention is devoted to the genre-specific opposition between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the systematic alternation of narrative perspectives, and the use of nonlinear temporal organization that together produce a multilayered and emotionally engaging narrative. It is argued that the narrative strategies employed by King in "The Institute" represent an important contribution to the development of contemporary horror poetics. An analysis of these structural elements makes it possible to identify the novel's central thematic concerns, including resistance to oppression, moral ambiguity, and the resilience of the human spirit.

The narrative of "The Institute" unfolds through two principal perspectives. The first belongs to Tim Jamieson, a former police officer who relocates to a small town in search of a new beginning. The second follows Luke Ellis, an exceptionally gifted twelve-year-old boy who is abducted shortly after the brutal murder of his parents and transported to the Institute. The institution itself is divided into two distinct sections: the Front Half, where children undergo testing and repeated injections, and the Back Half, where their psychic abilities are systematically exploited until they are physically and psychologically destroyed. Through this dual narrative structure, King explores themes of resistance, the loss of innocence, and the endurance of the human spirit as Luke and the other captive children attempt to expose the brutality of the Institute and challenge the abuse of power exercised by its administrators. As a novel belonging to the mature period of King's literary career, "The Institute" combines profound psychological characterization with sustained narrative tension to investigate the ethical boundaries of political authority, moral responsibility, and human endurance.

A number of scholars have examined the ideological and artistic dimensions of the novel. For example, the

American scholar P. McAleer analyzes the recurring motifs of power, the abuse of authority, and childhood friendship, interpreting the Institute as an extended metaphor for state control. According to his interpretation, the novel exposes the mechanisms through which political institutions legitimize violence under the pretext of protecting society.

Similarly, the literary critic M. Wallace interprets the novel's fictional setting and chronotope as a philosophical allegory of totalitarian power, drawing parallels between the operation of the Institute and the history of state-sponsored medical experimentation. In Wallace's view, the medical surveillance imposed on the children and the pervasive fear of hypothetical global threats constitute a deliberately manufactured form of political paranoia. Children possessing telekinetic abilities are abducted and subjected to inhumane experiments in the name of national security, transforming the Institute into a metaphor for the modern state, while the children themselves symbolize citizens whose bodily autonomy is sacrificed for an allegedly greater public good.

Although the plot of "The Institute" generally follows a chronological sequence of events—a structural principle that contributes to the gradual escalation of suspense characteristic of horror fiction—it is simultaneously organized around two parallel narrative trajectories centred on Tim Jamieson and Luke Ellis. These initially independent storylines gradually converge, ultimately intersecting at the novel's climax.

The importance of compositional organization for literary interpretation has been emphasized in contemporary narratological scholarship. For instance, "The Oxford Handbook of Compositionality" examines the recursive properties of language in narrative construction and the interpretative consequences arising from such structures, whereas the study "Genre Identification and the Compositional Effect of Genre in Literature" demonstrates how generic conventions shape literary texts and influence readers' expectations. Considered together, these theoretical approaches illuminate the interaction between compositional elements that enables authors to construct coherent, aesthetically significant, and intellectually engaging narratives. King's innovative narrative design encourages readers to participate actively in interpreting the text, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of its thematic and ideological dimensions.

Throughout the novel, King deliberately contrasts the enclosed, oppressive space of the Institute with the ordinary world beyond its walls while simultaneously developing parallel temporal and narrative trajectories. This compositional strategy serves to illuminate the psychological conflicts experienced by the characters. The continuous alternation of narrative perspectives allows readers to engage with the emotional and moral experiences of both victims and perpetrators. For example, the novel incorporates the internal reflections of Mrs. Sigsby, whose recurring attempts to justify the choices she has made throughout her life are juxtaposed with Luke's unwavering determination to escape the Institute. This contrast not only deepens the psychological complexity of the narrative but also reinforces Luke's moral resilience, presenting his struggle for freedom as one of the novel's central expressions of human endurance in the face of institutional oppression.

A distinctive feature of the novel's compositional design is the continuous interweaving of multiple narrative perspectives and temporal planes. The constant alternation between these narrative layers enriches the plot while providing a broader interpretative framework for understanding the characters' experiences, motivations, and ethical dilemmas. King generates dramatic intensity and psychological depth by shifting between the perspective of the outsider, Tim Jamieson, who gradually becomes a decisive participant in the unfolding events (the "external narrative"), and that of Luke Ellis, a captive imprisoned within the sinister confines of the Institute (the "internal narrative"). Rapid transitions between past and present, together with the continual reconfiguration of temporal perspectives, lend the narrative additional complexity, establish new thematic connections, and steadily intensify suspense. Throughout "The Institute", King consistently realizes his concept of horror by juxtaposing Tim Jamieson's ordinary existence with the extraordinary and oppressive reality experienced by Luke Ellis. This deliberate contrast between the normal and the abnormal highlights the uniqueness of each protagonist, their personal trajectories, and the moral choices they are compelled to make. Consequently, the novel's compositional structure deepens the characterization while simultaneously reinforcing its broader exploration of the boundaries between reality and the extraordinary, as well as the limits of human endurance.

In constructing the character of Tim Jamieson, King

places particular emphasis on his physical appearance and moral disposition. Tim is portrayed as tall and broad-shouldered, and Trevor Stackhouse, the Institute's chief of security, even describes him as the embodiment of a classic hero—apart from his glasses, an ironic detail recalling Superman's alter ego, Clark Kent. Yet when Tim is presented with an opportunity to become the singular heroic figure, he chooses instead to become a protector of others. Although he possesses the qualities of a natural leader—courage, compassion, and a strong moral conscience—he lacks any desire to exercise authority and is content with the modest position of Duprey's night knocker. Throughout the novel, he heals not only physical injuries but also emotional wounds, as demonstrated through his interactions with Annie, the injured Go-Mart cashier, and later with Luke and the traumatized children who escape the Institute. Tim's ethical convictions are consistently expressed through his compassion for the vulnerable. His conversation with Mr. Smith reveals the moral foundation of his worldview, as he insists that even the salvation of humanity can never justify the sacrifice of a single child. From his perspective, any civilization that preserves itself through the suffering and destruction of children ultimately forfeits its moral legitimacy.

Tim's narrative begins with an apparently insignificant incident at an airport, where he waits for a delayed flight to New York. As the delay lengthens, passengers become increasingly frustrated. An Institute operative offers financial compensation to anyone willing to surrender a seat for a federal employee, yet initially no one accepts the proposal. Acting on an unexpected impulse, Tim offers to give up his own seat for a substantially larger payment, thereby initiating the chain of events that transforms his life: "Tim Jamieson suddenly decided he wanted to get the fuck off this plane and hitchhike north. Although such an idea had never so much as crossed his mind before this moment, he found he could imagine himself doing it, and with absolute clarity." This episode represents a moment of existential choice that determines the subsequent course of Tim's life and ultimately positions him as a central participant in the struggle against the Institute.

After receiving the compensation, Tim arrives in the small town of Duprey, where he accepts a position as assistant to Sheriff John Ashworth. His responsibilities consist primarily of patrolling the town and maintaining public order. Tim emerges as a psychologically complex character burdened by personal and professional trauma

while seeking both redemption and emotional equilibrium in an unfamiliar environment. King repeatedly returns to descriptions of his appearance to reinforce this characterization: “The man was around forty, of medium height, and wore blue jeans and a workshirt. He had a day’s growth of beard and steel-rimmed glasses. His boots were scuffed. He looked like he had walked a long way.” Tim is portrayed as a protagonist whose past continues to shape his identity, yet whose spontaneous acts of kindness repeatedly alter the course of events. His life in Duprey and his relationships with its ordinary inhabitants provide King with a realistic social setting through which to explore interpersonal solidarity, compassion, and the possibility of moral redemption.

Running parallel to Tim’s story is the narrative of Luke Ellis, an intellectually gifted child who is abducted and transported to the Institute, where he and numerous other children possessing paranormal abilities are subjected to brutal scientific experimentation. Luke is introduced as a twelve-year-old prodigy attending Broderick School: “Luke Ellis was smart. Not just bright, either, but scary smart. At twelve, he had already been accepted at two colleges. His IQ tested at 160. He read books like other kids ate potato chips.”

At the age of twelve, Luke possesses intellectual abilities that far exceed conventional expectations. One of his instructors even compares teaching him to the experience of religious scholars receiving instruction from the young Jesus. Despite his exceptional intellect and insatiable curiosity, however, Luke remains recognizably adolescent—self-confident, introspective, and emotionally sensitive. His empathy and social awareness enable him to unite the children confined in the Institute’s Front Half into a surrogate family. His extraordinary intelligence and strategic thinking ultimately make his escape possible, while his kindness earns him the trust and assistance of Maureen. Importantly, Luke’s willingness to help Maureen is never motivated by a desire for control or personal gain; rather, it represents an entirely selfless act that affirms both his own humanity and the essential humanity of the children imprisoned within the Institute. Nevertheless, his intellectual exceptionalism also isolates him from his peers, leaving him profoundly lonely despite his remarkable abilities: “He had no real friends. He didn’t play sports. He was too smart, and the other kids knew it. He knew they knew it.” Thus, King presents giftedness as both an extraordinary advantage and a source of

psychological vulnerability, illustrating the emotional burden that frequently accompanies exceptional intellectual ability.

Following the recommendation of Luke’s school principal, his parents, Eileen and Herb Ellis, agree to send their son to a specialized educational institution where he would be able to pursue advanced studies in engineering and English. Later that evening, while discussing the available options, Luke expresses his concerns about the prospect of studying in Boston. Although intellectually gifted, he experiences profound anxiety, questioning both his abilities and his own adequacy: “He was willing, yes, but also frightened. There was a hole in what he knew, a dark hole filled with ignorance, and he could feel it growing bigger every day.” This episode reveals that Luke’s extraordinary intelligence does not eliminate his vulnerability; rather, it intensifies his awareness of the limitations of his own knowledge, thereby emphasizing his psychological complexity.

Parallel to the development of Luke’s personal story, the novel gradually introduces an atmosphere of concealed danger surrounding the protagonist. Unaware that a covert group led by the mysterious Michelle is preparing to abduct him, Luke continues his ordinary life while the threat remains invisible to both him and those closest to him. This hidden conspiracy fundamentally alters the trajectory of the narrative by severing Luke from his family and transporting him to the secret institution known as the Institute: “Michelle paused at the corner and said, ‘Tonight. Make sure the boy’s bedroom window is unlocked. We’ll come in quiet.’” This episode marks the beginning of the central conflict between the individual and a repressive institutional system. Luke’s abduction is presented as a clandestine operation carried out in the name of scientific research and the alleged protection of society. Here King introduces one of the novel’s principal thematic concerns—the exercise of totalitarian power through secrecy, manipulation, and the systematic exploitation of exceptional individuals. Michelle functions not merely as the operational leader of the kidnapping but also as an instrument of an impersonal and oppressive institutional mechanism. Luke’s narrative consequently explores a range of interconnected themes, including the psychological burden of exceptional intelligence, the tension between youthful idealism and intellectual responsibility, and the dangers confronting individuals who are perceived as different. Through this storyline, King suggests that even

contemporary democratic societies remain vulnerable to the emergence of covert systems of repression and institutional violence.

King subsequently depicts the psychological and physical ordeals that Luke endures after arriving at the Institute. The novel emphasizes the profound isolation experienced by gifted children such as Luke Ellis, Kalisha Benson, Iris, George, and others, all of whom are detained against their will and subjected to scientific experiments intended to manipulate their paranormal abilities. One of the most significant aspects of the Institute's spatial organization is its division into two separate sections. This architectural structure functions symbolically, representing the progressive dehumanization and suppression of individual identity. While children confined to the Front Half retain limited opportunities to play, socialize, and express their emotions, those transferred to the Back Half cease to be regarded as children altogether and are ultimately sacrificed for the alleged "greater good": "Nobody comes back from the Back Half. Once you go there, you're gone. You're dead and you don't even know it." This description reinforces the novel's broader allegory of the relationship between the individual and authoritarian systems of power. Another important figure, the rebellious teenager Nicky Wilholm, likewise embodies resistance to institutional oppression, continuing King's recurring exploration of the struggle between individual agency and totalitarian authority.

Almost immediately after his arrival, Luke becomes the victim of the Institute's first act of physical coercion when a monitoring device is implanted in his ear without his consent: "He was held by the shoulders while Tony inserted something small and hard into his left ear. Luke screamed. He couldn't help it. Then the pain was gone, replaced by a feeling of fullness." Despite its brevity, this episode vividly illustrates one of the novel's central motifs—the systematic suppression of personal autonomy. Luke is reduced to the status of an object upon whom procedures are performed without consent, depriving him of one of the most fundamental human rights: freedom of choice. The implantation functions not merely as a medical procedure but as a visible manifestation of permanent surveillance and institutional control. Luke's subsequent encounters with Mrs. Sigsby, the director of the Institute, further expose the ideological logic underpinning the institution's practices. Through her attempts to justify morally indefensible experiments, King provides insight into the mentality of those who

exercise oppressive power while sincerely believing in the legitimacy of their actions. The children are subjected to numerous painful procedures whose purposes remain deliberately concealed from them, including repeated injections, electroshock treatments intended to amplify their telekinetic abilities, and prolonged isolation. In one particularly revealing episode, the character Maud establishes an explicit historical parallel: "The first Institute, although not by that name, was in Nazi Germany." This statement directly connects the fictional institution with historical manifestations of totalitarianism, most notably the inhumane medical experiments conducted under the Nazi regime, including those associated with Josef Mengele. By drawing this parallel, King explicitly links the Institute's ideology and methods to real historical systems of political terror, emphasizing that the institution's practices constitute a continuation of totalitarian mechanisms disguised as scientific necessity.

A decisive turning point occurs when Luke, the other imprisoned children, and Tim Jamieson become united within a single narrative trajectory. After enduring weeks of psychological and physical abuse, Luke finally resolves to escape. His decision demonstrates that prolonged oppression has not destroyed his identity but has instead fostered psychological resilience and moral maturity. Relying on his exceptional intelligence, Luke successfully escapes and eventually reaches the town of Duprey, where he encounters Tim Jamieson in a state of complete exhaustion: "The kid looked like he had been through hell. No shoes, blood on his face, clothes torn. Tim knew better than to ask too many questions. He just said, 'You hungry?'" This encounter represents the convergence of the novel's two principal narrative lines while simultaneously symbolizing resistance to totalitarian oppression and the possibility of moral redemption. Trusting Luke's account without hesitation, Tim resolves to help him rescue the remaining children and destroy the Institute. At the same time, the imprisoned children combine their telepathic abilities, triggering widespread destruction throughout the facility. As chaos engulfs the Institute, Tim and Luke arrive at the scene, where the final confrontation unfolds. In one of the novel's most powerful symbolic images, the children literally raise and destroy part of the building itself: "The building began to tremble beneath their feet. Not shake, not shimmy, not quake. Tremble. Luke saw the lights flicker. Then, slowly, majestically, impossibly, the rear half of the Institute lifted from its foundations."

There is little doubt that, through this powerful image of the Institute's destruction, King seeks to convey the idea that even the most oppressive and seemingly invincible system can ultimately be overthrown through collective resistance. At the same time, the novel concludes with an intentionally open ending that invites readers to reflect on the true extent of this victory. Luke begins to suspect that other clandestine institutions similar to the destroyed Institute may still exist. The collapse of the Institute may therefore represent not the eradication of the entire system but merely the destruction of a single node within a much larger network devoted to exploiting gifted individuals for its own purposes. Luke ultimately realizes that authoritarian structures are capable of regeneration and that countless hidden institutions may continue to operate beyond public awareness.

Throughout the novel, King employs flashbacks as an essential compositional device. The dynamic alternation of narrative perspectives serves to illuminate the protagonists' coordinated efforts to dismantle the Institute while simultaneously sustaining narrative momentum. The continual shift of narrative focus throughout this stage of the novel creates a compelling sense of the inevitability of the approaching confrontation and preserves an atmosphere of constant danger. At the same time, significant memories from the characters' past function as a source of psychological strength, reinforcing their determination to resist oppression. This intersection of temporal layers generates anticipation of the narrative resolution and demonstrates King's ability to integrate diverse compositional techniques and plot strategies into a unified psychological structure.

The interaction of multiple narrative perspectives with interconnected parallel temporal trajectories enables King to construct a novel that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging. These narrative strategies allow him to explore the psychological and ethical complexity of his characters while maintaining an exceptionally high level of suspense. Moreover, the reader is invited to enter not only the consciousness of the abducted children but also that of their captors, thereby exposing the conflicting moral frameworks that shape the narrative. Such a carefully constructed narrative architecture not only sustains readers' engagement but also establishes *The Institute* as one of the most thematically sophisticated novels of King's later period. Beyond intensifying suspense and enriching the novel's thematic complexity, the continual alternation of

perspectives and temporal planes prepares the narrative for the effective use of additional literary devices, particularly flashbacks and foreshadowing. These techniques deepen the narrative by providing psychological motivation for the characters' actions while simultaneously anticipating future developments. By skillfully combining recollections of the past with subtle indications of future events, King creates a multilayered narrative that sustains readers' attention and fosters a profound emotional investment in the destinies of Tim, Luke, and the other children imprisoned in the Institute.

Flashbacks and foreshadowing thus function as complementary narrative strategies that reinforce the novel's shifting temporal organization and enhance its overall artistic impact. In *The Institute*, King masterfully interweaves past, present, and future, adding further emotional resonance to an already psychologically complex narrative. Memories gradually assemble the hidden history of the protagonists like pieces of a mosaic, while simultaneously generating ominous suggestions concerning the consequences of the choices that will ultimately determine their destinies. The recollections embedded throughout the novel provide essential insight into the protagonists' personal histories, motivations, and emotional resilience. As the central figure of the narrative, Luke Ellis repeatedly recalls his life before his abduction: warm family dinners, his extraordinary academic achievements that far exceeded the expectations for a child of his age, and the constant psychological pressure associated with being intellectually gifted. The sharp contrast between these memories and the oppressive reality of the Institute evokes readers' sympathy for Luke while reinforcing admiration for his determination to survive. In particular, his recollections of family life underscore the depth of the emotional bonds that were violently severed by his abduction, thereby emphasizing both the magnitude of his loss and the profound significance that freedom acquires throughout his struggle.

Throughout *The Institute*, King makes extensive use of flashbacks as an integral component of the novel's compositional structure. The dynamic alternation of narrative perspectives serves to illuminate the protagonists' collective efforts to dismantle the Institute while simultaneously sustaining narrative momentum. The continual shifting of the narrative focus creates a strong sense of the inevitability of the approaching confrontation and maintains an atmosphere of constant

risk and uncertainty. At the same time, recollections of significant events from the characters' past function as powerful motivational forces, reinforcing their determination to resist oppression. The intersection of multiple temporal layers thus generates anticipation of the novel's resolution and demonstrates King's ability to integrate diverse compositional devices into a coherent psychological narrative.

Similarly, Tim Jamieson's recollections of his former career as a police officer, especially his decisive choice during the Sarasota incident, reveal the ethical principles that shape his character while foreshadowing his future role as Luke's protector and ally in the confrontation with the Institute. As King writes: "Tim didn't answer immediately. He was thinking of the day, not so long ago, when he had swung into Sarasota's Westfield Mall to buy a pair of shoes, nothing more than that, and a woman had run up to him because he was in uniform. A boy was waving a gun around up by the movie theater, she said, so Tim had gone to see, and had been faced with a decision that had changed his life." This retrospective episode demonstrates that Tim's moral convictions were established long before the principal events of the novel and prepare readers for his later willingness to confront institutional evil.

Foreshadowing performs an equally significant function by anticipating future developments and creating an atmosphere of persistent unease. At the beginning of the novel, Tim settles in the seemingly peaceful town of Duprey; however, this apparently ordinary decision already hints at his future involvement in the events surrounding the sinister Institute. Minor details, including local rumors about mysterious disappearances, gradually accumulate to produce an underlying sense that something profoundly disturbing lies concealed beneath the town's tranquil surface. Luke's memories of his earlier life continually reaffirm the intrinsic value of human existence in direct opposition to the Institute's systematic devaluation of the individual. At the same time, the increasingly brutal experiments conducted in the Back Half steadily intensify narrative tension and prepare readers for the climactic confrontation. Luke's reflections upon his past also influence his present decisions and function as subtle authorial signals that foreshadow his decisive role in exposing and ultimately destroying the Institute.

2. Conclusion

Throughout the novel, King repeatedly alternates between Tim Jamieson's reflections on ordinary life and Luke Ellis's experiences within an extraordinary environment shaped by fear, violence, and institutional control. This compositional strategy invites comparison with *It*, where shifting perspectives and alternating temporal layers likewise organize the narrative. Nevertheless, *The Institute* develops this technique in a distinctive manner by concentrating primarily on two central protagonists, thereby intensifying psychological tension while preserving thematic coherence. The novel's nonlinear narrative also establishes important connections with *The Shining*. As in that earlier work, flashbacks provide essential background information concerning the protagonists' psychological development. In *The Institute*, however, these retrospective passages are complemented by persistent and increasingly ominous instances of foreshadowing, particularly those associated with the Back Half, which sustain a continuous atmosphere of anxiety throughout the narrative. Beyond its sophisticated narrative construction, *The Institute* addresses fundamental questions of resistance, survival, and moral responsibility. The protagonists' collective struggle against institutional oppression recalls the conflict between the Losers' Club and Pennywise in *It*; however, the later novel expands this motif into a broader critique of systemic violence and authoritarian power. Rather than focusing exclusively on interpersonal conflict, King directs attention toward the mechanisms through which institutions legitimize oppression in the name of collective security. This thematic shift reflects the evolution of his later fiction, in which supernatural elements increasingly function alongside profound philosophical and social concerns. As a work belonging to the mature period of Stephen King's career, *The Institute* further consolidates his reputation as one of the foremost contemporary writers of horror fiction. The novel combines sustained suspense with thoughtful philosophical reflection on morality, free will, institutional violence, and resistance to oppression. By integrating supernatural elements with pressing social concerns, King demonstrates the artistic maturity of a writer who has transformed horror from a genre primarily intended to evoke fear into a sophisticated literary form capable of exploring the most urgent ethical and political dilemmas of contemporary society.

References

1. McAleer P. *Déjà vu Destroyed: On Stephen King's*

- The Institute [Электронный ресурс] // Los Angeles Review of Books. – 2019. – October 12. – Режим доступа: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/deja-vu-destroyed-on-stephen-kings-the-institute/> (дата обращения: 11.11.2024).
2. Medical paranoia and the Big State in Stephen King's The Institute [Электронный ресурс] // The Victorian Sage. – 2021. – December 27. – Режим доступа: <https://thevictoriansage.wordpress.com/2021/12/27/medical-paranoia-and-the-big-state-in-stephen-kings-the-institute/> (дата обращения: 11.12.2024).
 3. Hinzen W., Werning M., Machery E. (Eds.). The Oxford Handbook of Compositionality. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. – 746 p.
 4. Worsham J., Kalita J. Genre identification and the compositional effect of genre in literature // Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Computational Linguistics. – Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2018. – Pp. 1963–1973.
 5. King S. The institute. – New York: Simon and Schuster, 2019.
 6. King S. It. – New York: Viking, 1986. – 1138 p.
 7. King S. The shining. – New York: Doubleday, 1977. – 447 p.