Chapter Three

As though His Life Depended on Learning to Read

Danny’s Language Acquisition as a Determinant of his Survival

To make a signification between the signifier of an apple and the signified of an apple can be seen as part of the process of Danny’s language acquisition:

He [Danny] hunched over the innocuous little books, his crystal radio and balsa gilder on the shelf above him, as though his life depended on learning to read. His small face was more tense and paler than she liked….He was taking it very seriously, both the reading and the workbook pages his father had made up for him every afternoon. Picture of an apple and a peach, the word *apple* written beneath in Jack’s large, neatly made painting….And their son would stare from the word to the picture, his lips moving, sounding out, actually *sweating* it out. (King 134-135)

Danny’s survival “as though” “depended on learning to read”—leaning to read is to master language, which “is seen as structuring the social laws of exchange, as a symbolic pact, etc” (Evans 97). Although the picture of the apple is not a pure psychological entity but a painting on the book, I still see it as the signified
comparably because “the signified is a mere effect of the play of signifiers” (Evans 186). That is to say, without the play of the signifiers, the picture of the apple is just in the sphere of empty speech. Therefore, “The word *apple* written beneath in Jack’s large, neatly made painting” is the signifier of an apple, while the picture of the apple is the signified of the apple. Through seeing the picture of the apple, Danny comprehends the concept of the apple, “the usually round, red or yellow, edible fruit of a small tree” (Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)). Then by pronouncing “the word *apple* written beneath in Jack’s large, neatly made painting,” Danny articulates the signifier of the apple. In the process of learning language, in this case, Danny has to make a connection between the signifier of the apple and the signified of the apple. The reason why his life “depended on learning to read” is that he is “through his unbearably fraught passage through the Oedipus: he has, unlike his father, established a proper relationship between the pre-symbolic and the symbolic”—“he achieves his place in the symbolic at great cost because his father has offered no stable or proper model for him” (Hanson 148). To become socialized, that is, to move from the imaginary order, which is languageless, into the symbolic order, which is the child’s entry into the network of social relations and language, Danny has to go through the Oedipus complex, which is “the conquest of the symbolic order” (Evans 129). However, in this case, Jack’s dereliction of duty as the paternal agency causes Danny
to have no proper model to identify with. Fortunately, Danny himself acquires language competence to avoid the cycle of “the sins of the fathers,” which “will be visited upon the sons” (Davenpor 317), because language acquisition makes him critical of Jack’s misbehavior. Thus, this chapter is devoted to Danny’s language acquisition.

The opposition between image and text explains Danny’s progression and Jack’s regression; the rivalry between Jack, the father, and Danny, the son, can be viewed in this way:

The power of the text stems from the tension between Danny and his father, the tension between the nightmarish images produced by the (joint) unconscious and the everyday world of narrative. Jack the father, has been disturbed by dreadful images coming from the shadow world of the unconscious: these images must be ‘mastered’; and Danny must take a different path from his father if he is, literally, to survive the story. The novel is concerned very obviously with an opposition between image and text: text, or language, must be preferred over the fatal image. In this preoccupation with language (which offers a direct road, so to speak, to the symbolic and the social order), in its concern to establish Danny in a
particular (white, American, male) social and symbolic order, *The Shining* must be considered a ‘conservative,’ regressive text.

(Hanson 145)

I do not completely agree with Claire Hanson’s argument in that the boundary between the imaginary order and the symbolic order is not absolutely demarcated, that is to say, I assume that both of Jack and Danny have been “disturbed by dreadful images coming from the shadow world of the unconscious” but Danny “masters” these images to the best of his ability through expressing them in terms of language. In this view, “this preoccupation with language (which offers a direct road, so to speak, to the symbolic and the social order)” seems to prefer “the everyday world of narrative” to “the nightmarish images produced by the (joint) unconscious.” However, Jacques Lacan develops his classic thesis that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (*Seminar Book XI* 20): Lacan argues that “the unconscious is, like language, a structure of signifiers, which allows him to formulate the category of the symbolic with great precision” (Evans 97). Therefore, “the nightmarish images produced by the (joint) unconscious” are not that opposed to “the everyday world of narrative;” to be more neutral, I would see Danny’s language acquisition as transforming “the nightmarish images produced by the (joint) unconscious” into “the everyday world of narrative,” that is to say, Danny learns to decipher the signifiers,
such as the words, and then to make signification (the articulation) between the
signifier and the signified (the image of the concept). I believe that “dreadful images
coming from the shadow world of the unconscious” disturb not only Jack but also
Danny, but Danny’s language acquisition, that is, to “master” these images, makes
him sober enough to survive the story.

In Part Two the readers gradually know that Danny has a special ability to see
through minds and the past (Russell 48). According to Sharon A. Russell, “the part
of his mind identified with this power takes the form of an imaginary playmate
named Tony who shows him things or leads him to information” (48), so I would
discuss the shining along with Tony.

Danny’s fervent desire for growing up manifests itself in the fourth section
“Shadowland” of Part One:

He wasn’t quite a kid yet, but he wasn’t a baby anymore. Big kids went to
the big school and got a hot lunch. First grade. Next year. This year was
someplace between a baby and a real kid. (King 29-30)

Danny perceives his being within the twilight zone between “a baby and a real kid,”
and he hopes to receive a higher education of “big kids.” To go to “the big school”
suggests that Danny aspires to be socialized to a microcosm of the society, the school,
that is to say, Danny has to move into the symbolic order, the “realm of laws.” The
symbolic order is where the child has to “master” language, the discourse of the Other, and it is the progress into the symbolic order that facilitates the child’s sociality and socialization (Hanson 13). However, in the process of moving into the symbolic order, Danny confronts many obstacles, and the first of which is Wendy’s reluctance of letting him know “some of the things she was worried about were too grown-up for Danny to understand” (King 30). There is nothing “too grown-up for Danny to understand,” because *The Shining*’s “concern” is “to establish Danny in a particular (white, American, male) social and symbolic order” (Hanson 145). From the standpoint of Wendy as a mother within the framework of the Oedipus complex, she has to maintain the father’s self-image for the child to identify with. Thus, she spares no efforts to put a varnish on “vague things that had to do with security, with Daddy’s self-image, feelings of guilt and anger and the fear of what was to become of them” (King 30). Ironically, Wendy’s unwillingness to let Danny apprehend the reality of Jack’s misbehavior seems “to do with security,” because the breakdown of Jack’s image would probably make Danny identify with the improper model. Yet, Danny has no choice but to understand “feelings of guilt and anger and the fear of what was to become of them,” because this comprehension would allow him “to split his own image of his father, blending all the beneficent aspects of his father into an image which can be split off from the crazed maniac who faces him in the final scene”
Here the split is necessary: “the split father guarantees the healing of the split(s) in Danny, guarantees the establishment of a stable and unified self” (148). In this way, The Shining is not that “conservative” (King) and “regressive” (Hanson) as they argue, because Danny does not follow a traditional way of identification with Jack but leads to “the establishment of a stable and unified self” by “splitting his own image of his father.” Language acquisition is the way Danny splits his own image of his father as a result of language’s being a tool for the endless compensation for the lack in the unconscious. I employ the Oedipus complex to help explain the acquirement of language as follows: for Lacan, it is at the time when the child cannot help but repress his desire for his mother for the fear of possibly being castrated by his father, that the unconscious is created and language is acquired at the same time. Lacan develops his classic thesis that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (Seminar Book XI 20). Only when he perceives the absence and the difference of his mother can he have the motivation to name it. In this case, although Danny does not compete for Wendy’s love with Jack apparently, he does undergo the Oedipus complex to acquire language competence.

Jack’s dereliction of duty as the paternal agency to help Danny undergo the Oedipus complex causes Tony and Hallorann to come to Danny’s assistance for the “establishment of a stable and unified self” (Hanson 148). Steven Bruhm argues
that “King represents Tony as the discourse of Other, the barely audible voice that proceeds from the space opened up in the mirror stage” (59). As for other/Other (autre/Autre), Lacan holds that the little other is inscribed in the imaginary order and the big Other is inscribed in the symbolic order:

The little other is the other who is not really other, but a reflection of the EGO….The little other is thus entirely inscribed in the imaginary order. The big Other designates radical alterity, an other-ness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification. Lacan equates this radical alterity with language and the law, and hence the big Other is inscribed in the order of the symbolic. Indeed, the big Other is the symbolic insofar as it is particularized for each subject. The Other is thus both another subject, in his radical alterity and unassimilable uniqueness, and also the symbolic order which mediates that other subject. (Evans 133)

Based upon Lacan’s argument that “the unconsciousness is the discourse of the Other” (Écrits 16), Tony represents Danny’s unconscious. Therefore, to decipher the signs given by Tony is a task of dealing with Danny’s unconscious. Although in King’s work what Tony shows Danny are “signs,” for Saussure the sign is composed of these two elements: one is a conceptual element (which Saussure baptizes the
signified), and the other is a phonological element (which Saussure baptizes the
signifier). These “signs” given by Tony in fact are the images, the signified, and the
empty speech. Yet, for Lacan a language is not composed of signs but of signifiers. To
articulate the signs is to use the signifiers and the true speech to express them.

To discuss language acquisition as Danny’s way of moving into the symbolic
order from the imaginary order, I have to clarify the concept of language first:

One common misconception of Lacan is that language is synonymous
with the symbolic order. This is, however, not correct; Lacan argues that
language has both a symbolic and an imaginary dimension: “there is
something in the symbolic function of human discourse that cannot be
eliminated, and that is the role played in it by the imaginary” (Seminar
Book II 306). The symbolic dimension of language is that of the signifier
and true speech. The imaginary dimension of language is that of the
signified, signification, and empty speech (Evans 98).

Based upon Evans’ definition of language, I would employ the signifier, true speech,
the signified, signification, and empty speech to elucidate certain selected passages.

**Tony as Danny’s Unconscious**

Tony, Danny’s invisible friend, plays a lot of roles. Davenport assumes that
Tony “marked Danny’s heightened perception and gives evidence of a supernatural
world” and that Tony “helps Danny interpret information and warns him of danger” (327). As “a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion” (King 420), Tony “stresses the strong connections between Jack and Danny” (Davenport 327). I believe that Tony’s function of Danny’s growing to maturity is to serve as a bridge between the imaginary order and the symbolic order. As Stephen Davenport argues, “he [Tony] is not real,” and “he is neither father nor son, alcohol poses no threat, and he will never be a man” (327). I argue that it is Tony’s being unreal that represents him as “the discourse of the Other, the barely audible, barely intelligible voice that proceeds from the space opened up in the mirror stage” (Bruhm 59). That is to say, Tony serves as Danny’s unconscious, “the discourse of the Other” (Ecrits 16). However, the more “barely audible” and “barely intelligible” the discourse of the Other is, the more difficult Danny’s language acquisition is. The discourse of the Other represented by Tony has to be “audible” and “intelligible” enough so that Danny can have his sense of radical alterity from the Other. To be more precise, the signifier of the discourse of the Other represented by Tony, the voice of the word, has to be “capable of being heard,” while the signified of that, the concept of the word, has to be “capable of being understood.” Within the framework of the mirror stage to separate himself/herself from the wholeness of his/her image in the mirror is the challenge to be dealt with. In this case, although Danny is much elder than the
mirror-stage child, to have his sense of the alterity from the Other is his mission. To modify Davenport’s argument, I would assume that Tony “marks Danny’s heightened perception” to have the sense of the alterity from the Other so that Danny can “interpret information” mostly from Tony.

Steven Bruhm contends that “horror is the result of a chain of signifiers, a veritable lexis machine; Frankenstein’s monster is the written word:”

If the Enlightenment Gothic documents the fear of doubleness and self-splitting that is the result of the repression of desires, King’s post-modern Gothic documents the fear of self-splitting that is the result of documentation, of the act of writing and of representing the self.

(Bruhm 58)

Documentation, “confirmation that some fact or statement is true through the use of documentary evidence” (WordNet® 3.0), in this case, is to confirm the signifieds and empty speech through the use of the signifiers and true speech. Once the signifieds and empty speech are articulated through the signifiers and true speech, the self would undergo an experience of self-splitting. Documentation as the act of writing and representing the self is to articulate the signified of the self through the signifier.

However, to modify the Saussurean sign, Lacan replaces Ferdinand Saussure’s diagram of the sign with an algorithm: S/s. The bar between the signifier and the
signified does not betoken union anymore but the resistance inherent in signification. As a result, Lacan claims that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is far more precarious, and he considers the bar between them in the Saussurean algorithm “not a bond but a rupture (185),” a “resistance” to signification (Ecrits 164). Therefore, I think that the bar between the signifier and the signified not as a bond but as a rupture (185), a “resistance” to signification, is the ground upon which the fear of self-splitting arises from. How to deal with the agony of self-splitting is The Shining’s issue. The agony of self-splitting is so strong that it may result in insanity. Danny is sober enough to bear it while Jack is not. I will leave Jack’s insanity to the next chapter.

I argue that Tony as the representation of the discourse of the Other (Bruhm 59), the unconscious, is the return of the repressed. The repressed are “some of the things she [Wendy] was worried about were too grown-up for Danny to understand” (King 30). As I argue earlier, Danny must learn these things as part of the process of growing up and becoming an adult. Paradoxically, the repression of these things, which are too grown-up, has to malfunction, so Danny can approach the repressed materials, which are essential for The Shining’s “concern to establish Danny in a particular (white, American, male) social and symbolic order” (Hanson 145). I would view the return of the repressed as The Shining’s putting Danny at his mettle. The
concept of repression “denotes the process of certain thoughts or memories which are expelled from consciousness and confined to the unconscious” (Evans 165), so Tony’s presence is to awaken “certain thoughts or memories which are expelled from consciousness and confined to the unconscious,” that is, “the repressed material is always liable to return in a distorted form, in symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue, etc” (165). The repressed material manifests itself in all sorts of forms, such as the signifier, true speech, the signified, empty speech, and the signification, which are expressed by Tony for Danny’s decipherment.

**Divorce and The Bad Thing**

In the section of “Shadowland” Danny learns to split his own image of his father because he comprehends the Bad Thing’s leading to a DIVORCE. He has to make a signification between the signifier of the Bad Thing and DIVORCE and the signified of them. Initially he perceives Wendy’s maintaining Daddy’s *selfimage*, which is so negative that it is improper for him to identify with. In other words, due to Danny’s understanding of Jack’s misbehavior Danny employs language to define it and in this way avoids identifying with Jack. Originally, the word DIVORCE and The Bad Thing is over his head, but he comprehends the signifieds of them by degrees:

Danny knew perfectly well what the Bad Thing was, since Scotty Aaronson, who was six months older, had explained it to him. Scotty
knew because his daddy did the Bad Thing too. Once, Scotty told him,
his daddy had punched his mom right in the eye and knocked her down.
Finally, Scotty’s dad and mom had gotten a DIVORCE over the Bad
Thing. (King 30)
The words of DIVORCE and the Bad Thing are the signifiers for Danny’s
decipherment. To comprehend Divorce and the Bad Thing, Danny has to try his best
to make a signification between the signifiers of DIVORCE and the Bad Thing and
the signifieds of them. The signified of DIVORCE is that “your parents no longer
lived together” and that “you had to go with one of them and you practically saw the
other one, and the one you were with could marry somebody you didn’t even know if
the urge came on them” (30). Danny also knows the signified of the Bad Thing is that
Jack beats Wendy and broke his own arm after Jack’s intoxication. Comprehending
the Bad Thing is essential for Danny because it is the Bad Thing’s badness that
reminds Danny of not identifying with Jack’s misbehavior. The statement that the Bad
Thing would lead to a Divorce is accepted by Danny. For Danny,

The most terrifying thing about DIVORCE was that he had sensed the
word—or concept, or whatever it was that came to him in his
understandings—floating around in his parents’ heads, sometimes diffuse
and relatively distant, sometimes as thick and obscuring and frightening
as thunderheads. It had been that way after Daddy [Jack] punished him for messing the papers up in his study and the doctor had to put his arm in a cast. That memory was already faded, but the memory of DIVORCE thoughts was clear and terrifying. It had been around his mommy [Wendy] that time, and he had been in constant terror that she would pluck the word from her brain, making it real. DIVORCE. It was a constant undercurrent that he could always pick up, like the beat of simple music. But like a beat, the central thought formed only the spine of more complex thoughts, thoughts he could not as yet even begin to interpret.

(King 30-31)

Here it seems that Danny himself can make a signification between the signified of the divorce (the concept) and the signifier of that (the word), which are “floating around in his parents’ heads.” Yet, his ambivalent attitude towards DIVORCE displays itself plainly in the passage. On the one hand, he is reluctant to make a signification between the signifier of DIVORCE and the signified of DIVORCE: “the most terrifying thing about DIVORCE” was that he has sensed “whatever that was came to him in his understandings” by degrees. The more terrifying DIVORCE is, the more reluctant Danny is to “understand” it. He is so afraid of DIVORCE that he “had been in constant terror that she would pluck that word [the signifier] from her brain
and drag it out of its mouth, making it real.” For Danny, plucking the word of
DIVORCE would be making it real, that is, the signified of DICORCE would come
true through the articulation of the signifier (the word) of DIVORCE from Wendy’s
mouth. On the other hand, he senses that it is the Bad Thing Jack does, that “Daddy
punished him for messing up the papers up in his study and the doctor had to put his
arm in a cast,” that would lead to DIVORCE. Being seriously wounded by Jack,
ironically, Danny does not yearn for DIVORCE but refuses it. I believe there are three
reasons: Danny’s disquiet over DIVORCE, the unwillingness to undergo the symbolic
castration, and Wendy’s complicity in Jack’s doing the Bad Thing.

The first reason is that at this time Danny is ill at ease for the uncertainty which
arises from DIVORCE. At that time DIVORCE for him is that “you had to go with
one of them and you practically never saw the other one and the one you were with
could marry somebody you didn’t even know if the urge came on them” (King 30).
“One of them” whom Danny is with could be Jack, and Jack would do the same Bad
Thing again towards Danny. “One of them” that Danny goes with could be Wendy,
around whom “it [DIVORCE] had mostly been,” but Danny does not know whether
Wendy would bring him with her or not. Wendy “could marry somebody” and Danny
would be a woman’s child by previous marriage. Even though at the latter part of The
Shining Wendy’s maternal affections for Danny are strong, Danny cannot be quite
sure if after DIVORCE Wendy would treat him as she did before. The second reason why Danny is in terror of DIVORCE is that in the course of making the signification he has undergone the symbolic castration:

Danny’s frustration over the unintelligibility of “stupid old signs,” like Thad Beaumont’s impotence in front of the signifying SPARROWS\textsuperscript{55}, indeed like the writer’s block that prohibits Jack from writing his play at the Overlook Hotel, proceeds from a castration of verbal acuity that King places at the heart of his Gothic. For Freud, the uncanny often took the form of a bodily disembodiment that could be ultimately located in the castration complex. For Lacan, the phallus that is castrated by one’s emergence into the symbolic order is the phallus-as-signifier, the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness that is fallaciously granted by one’s deployment of language to define and represent one’s self. This symbolic castration appears in King at the dawn of entrance into the symbolic order.

(Bruhm 59)

I assume that “Danny’s frustration over the unintelligibility” of DIVORCE can be seen as his struggle over the progression from the imaginary order into the symbolic order. As Bruhm argues, Danny’s emergence into the symbolic order suggests that the

\textsuperscript{5} Thaddeus Beaumont or known as Thad Beaumont, is the protagonist in Stephen King’s \textit{The Dark Half} (1989). He is an author and recovering alcoholic, who lives in the tiny Maine town of Ludlow. He is also one of “the males on the threshold of some crisis with the world of language” (Bruhm 56).
phallus-as-signifier is castrated, but “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness” can still be maintained by his “deployment of language to define and represent one’s self.” That is to say, in fact, no sooner does Danny acquire language than “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness” is broken. DIVORCE is of symbolic significance here. For one thing, in the preoedipal phase, the imaginary order, Jack, the father, should employs the real phallus to let Danny, the son, forgo the imaginary phallus and identify with the symbolic phallus. Coming through the struggle over the progression into the symbolic order, Danny suffers from the shattering of “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness.” Danny has to deploy language to refer to the Other, and through language acquisition he can separate himself from the Other. It is no longer the little other he identifies with at the preoedipal stage. For another the signified of DIVORCE can also be referred to “a complete or radical severance of closely connected things” (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition), so Danny’s signification of DIVORCE can be seen as to employ language to structure these “closely connected things.” These “closely connected things” being structured by language are no longer “closely connected” but “fallaciously” granted “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness.” How can Danny tell if “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness” is “fallaciously” granted is an issue. I believe that it is the fallaciousness of “the sense of unity and
imaginary wholeness” that confuses and enlightens Danny at the same time. In the process of growing up mentally Danny has to accept the probability of DIVORCE.

That is to say, DIVORCE is acceptable on the condition that the marriage is unbearable. What confuses Danny about DIVORCE is that in a normal condition DIVORCE should not happen to the Torrance family. To accept the probability of DIVORCE implies Danny’s adaptation of an unusual condition, and to adapt himself to various conditions is Danny’s task to be dealt with. However, to bow to a non-normal condition, like DIVORCE, would result in the breakdown of “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness.” As a protagonist, who endures “this symbolic castration,” which “appears in King at the dawn of entrance into the symbolic order,” Danny has to forgo the imaginary phallus, which is castrated, and identify with the symbolic phallus. However, in the course of moving into the symbolic order, Wendy’s “lack of agency,” as Sharon A. Russell implies (59), adds the difficulty to Danny’s struggle:

And hadn’t she felt, time and time again, her son’s wordless opposition to the whole idea of divorce?...

There were even times when it seemed that her determination to at least discuss the matter with Jack dissolved, not out of her weakness, but under her son’s will.
I don't believe such things.

But in sleep she did believe them, and in sleep, with her husband’s seed still drying on her thighs, she felt that the three of them had been permanently welded together—that if their three/oneness was to be destroyed, it would not be destroyed by any of them but from outside.

(King 61)

I believe that “her son’s [Danny’s] wordless opposition to the whole idea of divorce” is Danny’s reluctance to adapt himself to the breakdown of “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness.” Danny’s “wordless opposition” suggests that he is on the point of acquiring words to express the idea. Wendy’s “lack of agency” manifests itself through her imputing the dissolving of the idea of DIVORCE not to “her own weakness” but to “her son’s will.” This act relieves Wendy somehow because she would take less responsibility for Jack’s doing the Bad Thing again. She confirms that “the three of them had been permanently welded together,” and this refers to her unwillingness to break “the sense of unity and imaginary wholeness.” “Their three/oneness” has “to be destroyed” so that the imaginary phallus can be castrated. Yet, on the condition that “their three/oneness was to be destroyed,” the symbolic phallus Danny identifies is not that normal. The symbolic phallus would signify a life without his own father for Danny. I think it is the relatively and comparably
uncommon symbolic phallus that makes Wendy hesitate to think about DIVORCE.

In this way, DIVORCE as an unusual life for Danny to live enlightens Danny as to modify the signified of DIVORCE; the new signification of DIVORCE would let Danny grow up mentally through the comprehension and acceptance of DIVORCE. That is to say, the family life being unbearable, DIVORCE could be an option.

**The Shining as a Bridge between Imaginary Order and Symbolic Order**

Robert Killer regards the shining as a kind of monstrous feminine:

Hallorann’s shine to Danny may prove that the shining is monstrous, but it remains to be seen how the shining is specially a kind of monstrous feminine. In American culture we tend to feminize the kind of power Hallorann displays when he knows to call Danny “Doc” (“women’s intuition”)….The shine may occur between two males, but it is located in a distinctly feminine sphere. (Killer 56)

I am of the opinion that where Killer thinks of the shining monstrous is also where the bridge between the imaginary order and the symbolic order arises from. Take Hallorann’s helping Danny name telepathy the shine for instance. Danny has to make a signification between the signified of the shining (the precognitive ability) and the signifier of that (the word of “the shining”). Danny does not exactly comprehend how to name his born gift of telepathy and there are other persons who also share the same
talent with himself until he meet Hallorann on the Torrances’ arrival at the Overlook.

Greeting Danny he sees for the first time, Hallorann asked, “You like lamb, doc” (King 82)? To Jack’s surprise, “from behind them Jack said curiously: ‘How did you know we called him doc’” (83)? Jack becomes bewildered at why Halloran knows Danny’s nickname. Hallorann explains to Jack, “Looks sort like a doc, doesn’t he?” and then “wrinkled his nose at Danny, smacked his lips, and said, ‘Ehhhh, what’s up doc’” (83)? Halloran “said something” to Danny in terms of telepathy, “Sure you don’t want to go to Florida, doc” (83)? King employs the italicized line to express the words in terms of telepathy. Danny “looked at Hallorann, startled and a little scared” (83). Danny cannot believe that someone can communicate with him through telepathy. In order to test Danny’s telepathy and reassure him about it, Hallorann asks Danny, “What’s my name, now. I guess it just slipped my mind” (84). Not to fall short of Hallorann’s expectations, Danny says, “Dick, to your friend” (84). Satisfied and content, Hallorann replies, “That’s right! And you bein a friend, you make it Dick” (84). It is no wonder that “Jack and Wendy exchanged a puzzled glance, both of them trying to remember if Hallorann had told them his first name” (84). Certainly Hallorann has not told Jack and Wendy his first name, Dick, before he “shines” on Danny. As Russell implies, “Danny’s nickname, “Doc” is close to ‘Dick:’” “when
Hallorann immediately knows Danny’s nickname we [the readers] have evidence of Hallorann’s power and the connection between them” (54).

During Hallorann and Danny’s private talk Hallorann gives the kind of telepathy a comprehensible while somewhat vague term, the “shining.” Danny “shines on” “harder than anyone” Hallorann “ever met in my [Hallorann’s] life” (King 89).

Danny has “got a knack” (89), in Hallorann’s term, a specific talent for something, especially one difficult to explain or teach. Trying to name telepathy, Hallorann turns to Danny: “Me, I’ve always called it shining. That’s what my grandmother called it, too. She had it. We used to sit in the kitchen when I was a boy no older than you and have long talks without even openin our mouths” (89). Pleasantly amazed at the discovery of and the meeting with one of the same kind, “Danny, who had been frightened as well as lonely sometimes, nodded” (89). No longer feeling isolated, Danny asks, “Am I the only one you ever met” (89)? Laughing and shaking his head, Hallorann replies, “No, child, no. But you shine the hardest” (90). There are not a lot of people can shine, but “you [Danny] do run across them” (90). In this sense, as Killer assumes, the shining is feminized again and again:

Dick’s story about the nonspoken conversations he would have with his grandmother further feminizes this power. Not only is it introduced to Hallorann through his grandmother, but she also invents the term
“shining,” establishing it as a kind of matriarchal institution….it is well within reason to consider shining as an especially maternal power.

(56-57)

This kind of “matriarchal institution” makes Danny as one with the genius of the shining who has the ability to foretell what is going to happen and to see through the past in terms of prophetic visions. Like a lecturer in class, Hallorann explains to Danny: “People who shine can sometimes see things that are gonna happen, and I think sometimes they can see things that did happen” (King 97). To reassure Danny about his being immune to what he shines to see, Hallorann consoles him for those frightening visions: “But they are like pictures in a book. Did you ever see a picture in a book that scared you, Danny” (97)? Danny is still startled by the terrifying visions, which do happen at the present, did happen in the past, and are going to happen in the future. Failing to calm Danny down, Hallorann cannot help but reiterate that these ominous things would not do any harm to Danny several times: “But you knew it couldn’t hurt you, didn’t you?” (97) “But Danny, I don’t think those things can hurt anybody” (97) “I don’t think there’s anything here that can hurt you.” (98) and so on.

Thus, I partly agree with Russell’s assumption of Hallorann:

Hallorann’s function as the good father who takes over when the blood relative fails is common in early King’s novels….While King may take
these further by giving Danny an evil father, he balances this by giving him Hallorann. Hallorann gives Danny the understanding which will help him survive….But Hallorann is the good father who understands rather than punishes the mistakes of childhood. (54)

Hallorann does “give” Danny “understanding” which will help Danny survive, but within the framework of the Oedipus complex I do not consider Hallorann a surrogate father as Russell argues. Hallorann balances Danny’s lack of an ideal father to identify with, but I think his role is to help Danny move into the symbolic order not to be a model for Danny to identify with. In addition, Hallorann does not compete for Wendy’s love, so he does not replace Jack’s place as Wendy’s husband. Halorann’s relationship with Wendy is like comrades in arms; both of them survive the battlefield of the Overlook and do their best to help Danny grow up without a hitch.

**Roque. Stroke. Redrum.**

To acquire language requires Danny’s intelligence of the signified and the empty speech to articulate them in terms of the signifier and true speech. In the course of learning language Danny has to master these dreadful images and concepts (the signified and empty speech) before his movement into the symbolic order as Robert Killer argues:
Lacanian psychoanalytic theory generally regards preverbal communication as a special province of the mother-child relationship, or the Imaginary order. To “progress” into the masculine Symbolic order, a child must acquire language, understand the difference between the self and other, and generally follow the principles of the Law of the Father.

(56-57)

Killer’s standpoint is to view the shining as a kind of monstrous feminine so as to make the symbolic order “masculine.” I do not agree with Killer’s dichotomous evaluation of all the forms of preverbal communication in this chapter. I would rather consider preverbal communication as a bridge between the imaginary order and the symbolic order. That is to say, Danny in a sense has to come through the stage of preverbal communication. To acquire language means Danny has to “understand the self and other;” yet, in this case, there are no “principles of the Law of the Father” for Danny to follow. Thus, to distinguish between the Law and the laws of his father is Danny’s task to be dealt with.

Tony acts only as the discourse of the Other not as the Law, so Danny cannot identify with it but separate himself from Tony. However, Tony represents Danny’s unconscious. In a sense, the act of deciphering these signifiers and empty speech Tony reveals to him implies Danny’s control of his unconscious, and this is his initiation.
into the symbolic order, “the realm of laws.” Take the words of “Roque. Stroke Mallet.” (King 125) for instance:

And now he [Danny] was crouched in a dark hallway, crouched on a blue rug with a riot of twisting black shapes woven into its pile, listening to the booming noises approach, and now a Shape turned the corner and began to come toward him, lurching, smelling of blood and doom. It had a mallet in one hand and it was swinging it (REDRUM) from side to side in vicious arcs, slamming it into the walls, cutting the silk wallpaper and Knocking out ghostly burst of plaster dust:

*Come on and take your medicine! Take it like a man!*

…that inexplicable word so much more horrible than any of the others:

REDRUM.

Beside his daddy, in the other front seat, was a short-handed mallet, its head clotted with blood and hair.…

But fear had settled around his heart, deep and dreadful, around his heart and around that indecipherable word he had seen in his spirit’s mirror.

(King 37-39)

These are the passages during the time Tony “takes over Danny’s consciousness” (Killer 60). According to Lacan, “consciousness in man is by essence a polar tension
between an *ego* alienated from the subject and a perception which fundamentally escapes it, a pure *percipi*” ([Seminar Book II](#) 177). I think the reason why Killer uses the term “takeover” to describe Danny’s trance is that “Tony’s takeover of Danny’s mind” alleviates the polar tension inherent in consciousness, and this makes Danny’s disobeying Jack’s rules not immoral but amoral. Generally speaking, Danny has to identify with his father as the Law, and then to accept the law of his father as a pact. However, “Tony’s takeover of Danny’s consciousness” lets Danny have an opportunity to reconsider whether he should follow the Law of his father or not.

These passages I have selected are to demonstrate how Tony reveals the truth of Jack’s false Law. The “Shape turned the corner and began to come toward him, lurching, smelling of blood and doom” turns out to be Jack, the father. How Tony reveals Jack to Danny is in terms of “a Shape.” Since in this way Jack is only “a Shape,” “an assumed appearance or a guise” ([Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)](#)), Danny could call Jack’s authority as the Law of the Father in question. That is to say, Jack may not represent the Law of the father but “assume an appearance or a guise” of it. The Law of the father becomes the false Law of Jack, so Danny, the son, can reject the law as the invalid pact.

“A verbal chain comprised of ‘Roque. Stroke. Mallet.’ (King 125)” in Bruhm’s words, is not just a verbal chain for Danny to decipher. The act of deciphering the
verbal chain implies Danny’s ability to see through the Law of the Father that Jack represents. As Bruhm expounds Danny’s comprehension of the verbal chain: “‘Roque’ is the mallet with which his father will try to stroke and re drummer/murder him at the end of the novel” (59). The word “REDRUM” is so “inexplicable” that “fear had settled around his heart, deep and dreadful, around his heart and around that indecipherable word he had seen in his spirit’s mirror.” I assume that the more inexplicable the word REDRUM is, the more radical alterity Danny suffers. The resistance of the bar between the signifier REDRUM and the signified Murder is so intense that Danny’s signification is painstaking. To decipher the verbal chain of “Roque. Stroke. Mallet” is Danny’s landmark of moving into the symbolic order because of his rejection of Jack’s false law and Tony’s being forsaken by him. As Bruhm and I argue before, Tony as the imaginary friend who shows Danny things or leads him to information, is “the discourse of the Other” (Bruhm) and a bridge between the imaginary order and the symbolic order. That is to say, to move into the symbolic order, Danny has to renounce not merely the false Law of his father but also Tony. As Killer depicts Wendy’s coming to Danny’s assistance:

As soon as she [Wendy] grabs the knife, she sees “REDRUM” in the mirror, spelling “MURDER.” Immediately after the mirror translation,
Jack pounds on the locked bedroom door with an axe, causing Wendy and Danny to flee to the bathroom.

Far from castrating Danny, Wendy has played a fundamental role in moving him into the Symbolic order. She participates with Danny in a “mirror stage,” helping him to separate himself from Danny and to find language—turning “REDRUM” into “MURDER.” (60)

Here REDRUM is not just empty speech and the signifier but the signified and true speech, which are to be translated. On the one hand, the signified of REDRUM is demonstrated in terms of Jack’s commitment of the murder: “Jack was crawling after her [Wendy], using the roque mallet as a crutch or a cane” (King 459). Jack’s act has explained what does the signified of REDRUM mean, so Danny makes a signification of REDRUM. Comprehending what REDRUM is makes Danny understand the fallacy of identification with Jack as the law, because committing murder (REDRUM) is invalid. On the other hand, REDRUM has appeared several times in the novel as an inexplicable word for Danny, that is, REDRUM for Danny is empty speech. Yet, through Wendy’s translation of it in the mirror, REDRUM signifies MURDER. With Wendy’s help, Danny ultimately finds specific true speech to express REDRUM. The way REDRUM demonstrates through Tony is through images and empty speech, so Danny has to abandon Tony so as to move into the symbolic order. Tony represents
the discourse of the Other. To undergo the “mirror stage” Danny has to suffer the radical al\textit{terity}, “the state or quality of being other (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary),” from not the little other but the big Other. Only when Danny perceives his al\textit{terity} from the Other can he acquire language. Therefore, Danny has to separate himself from Tony to have the sense of his al\textit{terity} from the Other. As far as Jack is concerned, the Overlook’s intention to “trick” Jack into being a pawn and “taking all of” his family members translates the discourse that it delivers into the discourse of the evil other. Jack cannot come through the radical al\textit{terity} from the Overlook so that he is doomed to comply with the littler other, which is “entirely inscribed in the imaginary order” (Evans 133). Thus, he is in a dreadful plight of insanity—he follows the commands issued by the discourse of the evil other so that he is willing to “get rid of the woman and his snot-nosed kid first” for the purpose of not being “distracted.”