Chapter Five

Conclusion

Conclusion of the Psycho-Analytical Study of The Shining

To deal with one of the characterizations of the ghost story, the haunted house, King not merely utilizes a conventional image of “the haunted house” but also “gives it new credibility” (Russell 51). The Overlook is like “many haunted houses,” which “stored this energy” (Underwood and Miller 265)—“the strangest emotions are the primitive ones—rage and hate and fear” (King, Danse Macabre, 265). How to not be affected by the negative emotions delivered by the Overlook can be studied from one’s capacity for articulateness and intelligence from a psycho-analytical perspective. Originally, the title “articulateness and intelligence” is inspired by Steven Bruhm’s arguments that “the function of articulateness and intelligence in making one vulnerable is an ide fixe for King: those characters most vulnerable to horror are males on the threshold of some crisis with the world of language” (56). Articulateness means “the quality of being facile in speech and writing” (WordNet® 3.0); intelligence means “the ability to comprehend; to understand and profit from experience” (WordNet® 3.0). In the process of language acquisition, to make a signification between the signifier and the signified, one needs “intelligence” to understand the
signified and “articulateness” to articulate the signified in terms of the signifier so that he/she can learn language. In part based upon the argument, which is common to Claire Hanson and Steven Bruhm, that one’s grasp of language determines his/her destiny in *The Shining*, I have applied Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus complex and Jacques Lacan’s three orders, language as the discourse of the Other, and *points de caption* to this study of *The Shining*.

On the one hand, although Danny was past the Oedipus stage, which “emerges in the third year of life and then declines in the fifth year” (Evans 127), he is learning to read at five and thus is on “a return to the pre-symbolic imaginary of childhood, a period before the castrating submission to the paternal Law of language”—he is “presented as in the process of acquiring the symbolic” (Bruhm 62). On the other hand, Jack’s adoration for his father lasted until the age of seven; hence, he is past the Oedipal moment, and has, thus, undoubtedly accepted his father’s wrongdoings as reasonable ones. Ideally, a father is someone who can set a proper example for his child to identify with at the Oedipal moment. However, in Jack’s case, his father abuses his authority as the Torrance family patriarch by unjustly beating his mother; therefore, in an abnormal sense, Jack identifies with his father as the Law first and then as the law or the pact between them. The result is that he rationalizes executing
the immoral law, that is, to kill Danny and Wendy at will because he is the Torrance family patriarch.

As far as Danny is concerned, fortunately, 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). Jack absolutely is not a proper model for Danny to identify with at the Oedipal moment, so 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” (148). Tony and Hallorann help Danny in splitting, which is part of the process of language acquisition. Tony serves as Danny’s unconscious, “the discourse of the Other” (Ecrits 16). 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. Only when Danny is able to bear the agony of radical alterity, “the state or quality of being other” (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary), can he fulfill his language acquisition. Hallorann as a mentor balances Danny’s lack of an ideal father to identify with and he consoles Danny because of frightening visions. Both of them have the gift, telepathy. As I argue earlier, the shining is a bridge between the imaginary order and the symbolic order. However, The Shining’s “concern” is “to establish Danny in a particular (white, American,
male) social and symbolic order” (Hanson 145). Thus, there must be a mentor like Hallorann to help him get used to telepathy so that Danny can move into the symbolic order.

The way the Overlook possesses Jack is through pretending the discourse of the evil other it delivers to be the discourse of the Other so that it causes Jack to accept the deviant values from the Overlook. On the one hand, Jacques Lacan assumes that “big Other designates radical alterity,” and he “equates this radical alterity with language and the law” (Evans 133). On the other hand, “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” (133). Jack is not sober enough to distinguish between the discourse of the Other and the discourse of the evil other. Thus, he misperceives the discourse of the evil other as the discourse of the Other. In this way, Jack transforms himself into the counterpart in the mirror, by identification with which [the specular image] the ego is constructed; the reflection of ego is the little other.

Articulateness and intelligence as standards of one’s capacity for language determine whether one can go through the Oedipus complex and distinguish between the voice of Other/other. In this work of horror fiction, Danny does overcome the obstacles he faces in the process of growing up, while Jack sinks deep into the
quagmire to become the scapegoat for the maintenance of essential humanity in horror fiction.