

### **REDRUM: Childhood Trauma in Stephen King's *The Shining***

Stephen King's *The Shining* is a novel primarily marketed for adults, and yet one of the primary concerns of the text is five year-old Danny Torrance. Although there are many supernatural and terrifying occurrences in the novel, the most difficult and arguably the most grotesque conflict is the struggle Danny Torrance wages within his own mind. Danny's clairvoyance and connection to the supernatural is a tool he uses to confront his internal fears and his family's disintegration. The domestic violence and general turbulence in this child's family cause him to bear much of the burden alone with nothing but his own mental images of the past and the future as well as an "imaginary" friend named Tony to console him. As a child, the supernatural is how Danny makes sense of the world. The true terror for Danny is realism.

My presentation will examine the position of childhood fear in *The Shining* and the ways in which the supernatural become symbols of real world terror and disenfranchisement, specifically for children. Through this text, King points out that children are aware of familial struggles, and yet their lack of agency within the family unit renders them powerless to do anything about it. Even with supernatural powers on his side, Danny Torrance primarily remains an anxious observer. He is aware that his parents are fighting and considering divorce, he is aware that his father struggles with violent urges and alcohol abuse, and yet he also remains powerless to influence his family's decisions or protect himself from the repercussions of their actions.