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Picture This: Stephen King's Queer Gothic

Steven Bruhm, *Mount St. Vincent University*

A COMPANION TO THE

GOthic

EDITED BY DAVID PUNTER

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Steven Brubm

The Overlook Hotel, playground of the rich and famous in Stephen King's 1977 novel *The Shining*, is redolent with homosexuality. Its erratic finances seem to require a gay man's touch for redecorating to keep it in the black. For example, there is the current manager Mr Ullman, a 'fat fairy' (King, 1977, 21) who doubtless powders his hands to keep them smooth and white (65), yet whose capacities as an 'officious little prick' (4) and 'fucking little faggot' (99) have allowed the Overlook to turn a profit for the first time in years. And before him there was Horace Derwent, the 'AC/DC' owner who brought the hotel back from the edge of ruin in 1949, the same Horace Derwent whose ghost continually reappears, trailed by his uxorial lover Roger (who is 'only DC' [347]). In a contemporary world where 'hommasexshuls' are causing riots – 'They get frustrated an have to cut loose. Comin out of the closet, they call it', we hear from Watson, the summer caretaker (21) – Derwent and his queer pals have the aura of metaphor. Their spectral masquerade is a literal coming out of the woodwork, uncloseting as it were. What greater horror could we imagine, then, but to place the white, middle-class, American family – Jack Torrance, unemployed English professor turned hotel caretaker, his lovely wife Wendy and their six-year-old son Danny – in this queerly framed castle, this Fonthill Abbey of the Colorado Rockies where Jack will eventually go mad and attempt to slay his family? And what greater relief can be afforded us than for Jack finally to kill himself and destroy the hotel, leaving the fractured remains of the family to reconstitute itself at the end of the novel?

The presence of Horace Derwent, Roger, Ullman and other gay men in *The Shining* replicates the Gothic's long association with male homosexuality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal work, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (which builds on the structuralist work of her earlier *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*) has mapped out the elements of late eighteenth-century Gothic queerness in which King's late twentieth-century characters participate. Sedgwick argues that, among other things, the eighteenth-century Gothic indulged the sensual licence of aristocratic authors who were themselves affiliated with sodomitic practices – 'Beckford

notoriously, Lewis probably, Walpole iffily' (Sedgwick, 1985, 92). Thus, the British Gothic in the late eighteenth century was articulating the very definition of 'decadence' that would come metonymically to be associated with homosexuality. This association attaches itself quite obviously to Derwent. But beyond an indulgence/condemnation of the decadent, and perhaps as its epistemological fallout, the Gothic according to Sedgwick laid the groundwork for Freud's equation of paranoia with homosexual panic. Like the case of Dr Schreber, the paranoid Gothic usually figures a male 'who not only is persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male' (Sedgwick, 1985, 91). Such paranoia will become Jack Torrance's. From a photograph of Horace Derwent, 'a balding man with eyes that pierced you even from an old newsprint photo' (King, 1977, 156), to the voice of Jack's dead father coming to him over the radio, to the masquerade ball at the end of the novel, the ghosts of the Overlook gradually invade and penetrate Jack's identity. And this threat of homosexual invasion is literalised in the fears of young Danny: he is approached by the ghost of Roger to be told, 'I'm going to eat you up, little boy. And I think I'll start with your plump little *cock*' (334). Thus, King effects the first of what we might call a series of queer strategies in the Gothic: an exploration and explosion of heteronormative male subjectivity. By placing Danny and Jack in the arena of historically entrenched male homosocial relations, King documents the anxiety over this forced male proximity, an anxiety that gradually yields psychic dissolution and collapse.

Sedgwick's early Gothic work concerns itself mainly with a 'homosexual panic' whose real subject is heterosexuality, and particularly heterosexuality as it begins to take shape *qua* sexuality in the early nineteenth century. To understand the more contemporary queer version of that panic, we might turn to Jacques Lacan's 1948 essay, 'Aggressivity in psychoanalysis'. Here Lacan theorises:

the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short, the *imagos* that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of *imagos of the fragmented body*. (Lacan, 1977, 11)

– the *imagos*, in other words, of the Gothic aesthetic. According to Lacan, the kind of interpenetration of male subjects that Sedgwick will later analyse as Gothicised homosexual panic proceeds from his now-famous 'mirror stage', in which 'the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body' (18), the image of his body in the mirror. Having inaugurated the structure of otherness by first seeing himself as reflection, the child (a male in Lacan's analytic language) is then doomed to seek in the other a confirmation of his self, a confirmation whose very necessity continually invokes in fantasy the *imagos* of the fragmented body listed above. In other words, the 'triumphant jubilation and playful discovery that characterise, from the sixth month, the child's encounter with his image in the mirror' (18) subtend the very transitivity that destroys the belief in a stable and unified ego. One is forced to let the other in, a force that, within male homosociality, becomes homosexual panic:

it is by means of an identification with the other that he sees the whole gamut of reactions of bearing and display, whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviour, the slave being identified with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer. (19)

Thus Lacan defines as 'captation' a visual fascination with the other that is, in a very real sense, an 'erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself', inexorably seeking outside himself 'the form on which this organisation of the passions that he will call his ego is based' (19).

To the degree that *The Shining* is interested in tracing the etiology of those imagos, it gives us the vivid and spectacular cinema of Danny Torrance's fantasy life. Danny is a study in mirror-stage symptomology. His mind is 'a long and silent corridor . . . lined with mirrors where people seldom looked' (King, 1977, 98). However, he is not alone in that hall of mirrors. He is guided by Tony, an imaginary friend who lives deep down inside him, a friend who manifests himself in the bathroom mirror. Tony is clearly Danny's other, who Danny is but also who he will become. He is Danny's image in 'a magic mirror . . . himself in ten years' who makes the current Danny 'a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion' (420). But it is also Tony who introduces Danny to the world of the fantasised image, the imago that will come to haunt him at the Overlook. Beginning with the literal and material anxieties Danny feels in the face of his father's alcoholism, unemployment and thoughts of divorce, Tony then shows Danny the images of the Overlook, images he cannot understand but which reflect perfectly Lacan's Gothic imagos of the fragmented or invaded body: stinging wasps (31), poison (32), a hand dripping blood, a hissing, stalking monster, REDRUM ('MURDER' on the mirror of his consciousness) (33). While these images undoubtedly proceed from the father's own fractured 'selfimage' (27), they also represent Danny's deepest experience of his own fragmentation, the anxiety produced by the reliance on a mirror other who is both a comforting confirmation of the self – Tony is, after all, Danny's best friend – and a graphic demonstration that the self is always beside itself, a halfling, a fusion.

But while conventional paranoid Gothic narratives like *Caleb Williams*, *Frankenstein*, even *The Shining* represent the mirror imago as male (as in Sedgwick's early analysis), Lacan, following Melanie Klein, sees that other as usually the mother: it is 'the *imago* of the mother's body . . . of the mother's internal empire' upon which the 'voracious aggression of the subject himself' is founded (Lacan, 1977, 20–1). It is the mother, he argues, who first holds the child before the mirror; it is the mother whose smiles, gestures and coos assure the child that he is not only the subject but the object of maternal pleasure; it is the mother whose implacable otherness intrudes into the mirror reflection at the same time that she makes that reflection possible. Thus, it is the mother, Lacan suggests, whom we can find embroiled in the child's captation; she is an indelible image hovering about the periphery of the child's identity. And in the Gothic, that mother often appears as a figure of horror – dangerous, suffocating, monstrous, attempting to lure the subject back to the womb, back to the imaginary time before the ego individuation of the mirror

stage, back to death. It is that mother who terrorises Danny in Room 217. A wealthy socialite who committed suicide years earlier, her ghost appears to Danny, as well as to one of the hotel maids and to Dick Hallorann, the hotel chef. This woman is the suffocating mother writ large: Danny's hallucination focuses on her prominent breasts and pubic hair; she approaches him 'grinning, her purple lips pulled back in a grimace' (217) and wraps her 'fish-smelling hands . . . softly around his throat' (218). She is the mother whom Julia Kristeva, following Lacan, describes as filthy, horrifying, nauseating, corpse-like (Kristeva, 1982, 2–3), a perennial devourer who must be 'abjected', cast out, made Gothic 'other'. As the figure who 'simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject' (5), she interrupts the child's self-image at the same time that she makes it possible. Little wonder, then, that she is the first ghost in the Overlook that Danny cannot exorcise by dismissing it as a mere 'picture in a book'.

But the woman in Room 217 is horrifying only in proportion to her seductive attractiveness. See what takes Danny to her in the first place, the desire that lures him to the hotel room that has, Bluebeard-like, been declared off-limits to him:

Danny stepped into the bathroom and walked toward the tub dreamily, as if propelled from outside himself, as if this whole thing were one of the dreams Tony had brought him, that he would perhaps see something nice when he pulled the shower curtain back, something Daddy had forgotten or Mommy had lost, something that would make them both happy – So he pulled the shower curtain back. (217)

The impetus to Room 217 seems less a propulsion forward in the narrative than a return, a search for repair, a regression to a time when the family was fulfilled and happy (as opposed to now, when the parents are on the verge of divorce due to damage sustained by Jack's alcoholism). Danny's captation, his obsessive desire to look 'as if propelled from outside himself', foregrounds the text's concern with the child's primary narcissism, his desire to return to an illusion of unity and wholeness before the ruptures of paternal violence. For just as Danny will race to his mother's arms to be rocked and cooed at when the hotel haunts him, so here he seeks through looking a regressed identification with the mother. And what is perhaps most terrifying is that he achieves this identification. Danny is partially strangled by the woman in Room 217, an assault that gestures not only to the suffocating lure of a mother who must be abjected if subjectivation is to occur, but also to Danny's identification with his own mother. She too is almost strangled to death, but by her abusive husband. Nor is Danny the only male Torrance to take up the position of the feminine: moments before the hotel explodes at the end of the novel, Jack arrests himself from killing Danny by turning his murderous roque mallet upon himself and smashing his own face in. What emerges from that brutalised face is 'a strange shifting composite, many faces mixed imperfectly into one', faces that include 'the woman in 217' (429). What her face in Jack's dramatises is the way he occupies the place of his mother by beating himself with the mallet: for his mother had also sustained numerous beatings by her husband's cane, beatings that, in one particularly vivid recollection, attacked and destroyed her

face (224). Jack is the beater here but also the beaten; he is the paternal tyrant and s/he who is tyrannised by paternity. Like Danny strangled in the bedroom, Jack adopts the position of the feminine maternal destroyed by the very mirror other of himself, the male self that must abject the feminine if it is to establish and maintain its powerful, phallic individuality. Thus, the Gothic's second queer strategy: it registers the normative male's anxiety of effeminisation, his fear that, in becoming the other for another man, he will fall (back) under the sway of the maternal and identify with the very subject position that masculinity has demanded he repudiate.

Yet, while the woman in Room 217 holds to the fore the seductive, destructive lure of 'the mother's internal empire', while she figures the normative man's horror of taking up the position of the feminine, she is not the 'real' mother, or at least that is not all she is. For the m/other, Lacan argues, is always based on a misrecognition of something more primal, 'the narcissistic relation and to the structures of systematic *méconnaissance* and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego' (Lacan, 1977, 21). Following Freud, Lacan links the captation/capture by the image of the mother to the male child's narcissistic need to form an ego on the image of his own intact and complete body. By this logic, captation is founded not (only) on the desire to reclaim the mother – her proximity, her protection, her identity as complete lover of the child – but (also) on the desire to reclaim what the mother *signifies*. If oedipal subjectivation proceeds upon the male child's 'recognition' that the mother has been castrated by the father – and certainly Danny Torrance can believe no less – then she signifies for him the phallus, the phallus as removable or detachable in castration; she represents for him the possibility that he, too, may be castrated by the father. This, too, Danny recognises, as the father pursues him to beat him with the same stick that he used to beat his wife, that beat himself-as-woman-in-217, that beat his mother. And so the 'masquerade' of gender is established: the child takes up masculinity as evidenced by his father merely to avoid losing the signifier of that masculinity to the father's castrating potential. In these stirrings of oedipal subjectivation, the mother is then retroactively made into a signifier, one who holds out in fantasy the illusion of wholeness, completion, a time without desire, yet whose very status as fantasised signifier renders her lost to her own meaning. In Lacanian psychoanalysis she comes to represent the lost or losable phallus, the phallus that the child must then phantasmatically desire, the phallus that is *the* imago of the reconstituted, whole, unfragmented body/ego – a phallus whose condition is narcissism.

Following Lacan, Judith Butler (arguably the decade's most influential queer theorist) asserts that this phantasmatic phallus structures the very genesis of the erotic. She writes: 'Sexuality is as much motivated by the fantasy of retrieving prohibited objects as by the desire to remain protected from the threat of punishment that such a retrieval might bring on' (Butler, 1993, 100). More specifically:

The oedipal scenario depends for its livelihood on the threatening power of its threat, on the resistance to identification with masculine feminization and feminine phallicization. But what happens if the law that deploys the spectral figure of abject homosexuality as a threat becomes itself an inadvertent site of eroticization? (97)

In the logic of psychoanalysis – and in the laws of the Gothic – that inadvertent eroticisation seems as inevitable as it is prohibited. For if the male child must identify with the father as a way of assuming culturally conscripted masculinity, yet if (and because) that identification is driven by a phantasmatic investment in his own phallus, then the phallus of masculinity – one's own/that of another – can repeatedly and clearly emerge as the Gothic male subject's desired object. Sedgwick puts it this way: 'Oedipal schematics to the contrary, there is no secure boundary between wanting what somebody else (e.g., Daddy) has, and wanting Daddy' (Sedgwick, 1985, 105–6). Butler has it so:

To identify is not to oppose desire. Identification is a phantasmatic trajectory and resolution of desire; an assumption of place; a territorializing of an object which enables identity through the temporary resolution of desire, but which remains desire, if only in its repudiated form. (Butler, 1993, 99)

Thus we have a third queer Gothic strategy, the one I find most provocative: the effects of a homoerotic narcissism in the male subject, a narcissism made compulsory not only by oedipal subjectivation but by the very demand, at least since Lacan, that the straight male submit his seemingly transparent, unmarked sexuality to introspective analysis and self-consciousness. Forced by the vagaries of homosociality to think about himself in relation to other men, he is made to think about the phallus, his phallus, as a privileged cultural object that demands he desire it, yet condemns his desire.

While *The Shining* documents that tortured desire/prohibition of a male child's identification with the loving, tyrannical father, King makes most clear the effects of phallic narcissism by way of a subplot in Jack's fantasy life. If the inhabitant of Room 217 marked for Danny the eroticised, terrifying return to the mother and to the feminine, it has a very different (or is it the same?) resonance for Jack. With a dream-like uncertainty, Jack enters Room 217 to check out Danny's story of the murderous woman. Approaching the bathtub:

He flung the curtain open.

Lying in the tub, naked, lolling almost weightless in the water, was George Hatfield, a knife stuck in his chest. The water around him was stained a bright pink. George's eyes were closed. His penis floated limply, like kelp.

'George – ' he heard himself say.

At the word, George's eyes snapped open. They were silver, not human eyes at all. George's hands, fish-white, found the sides of the tub and he pulled himself up to a sitting position. The knife stuck straight out from his chest, equidistantly placed between the nipples. The wound was lipless. (King, 1977, 271)

An overdetermined signifier, George Hatfield is the reason Jack is at the Overlook in the first place: he is the boy Jack beat up at his previous job, and because of whom he had been fired. He is the boy whom Jack had thrown off the debating team for his alleged stuttering, his abuse of a language that it is Jack's business to correct. But more important, George is the boy whom Jack sees as 'insolently beautiful' (110–11), whose

success in seducing women miserably contrasts Jack's own failing marriage, and who becomes the sympathetic and gorgeously erotic hero of the play Jack is trying to write. Thus, George-as-fantasy teases out the multiple anxieties in Jack that had coalesced into Danny's image of the maternal phallus: he is Jack's loss of sexual power and the desire to get it back; he is Jack's loss of intellectual power and his desire to get it back; he is Jack's loss of self and the desire to get it back. If Lacan is right to suggest that the ego is always a bodily ego, perceived in the physical form of the other, then it is not difficult to interpret Jack's hallucination of George, whose flaccid, floating penis swells metonymically through a projecting knife into the erect body of the ghost who stands in the bathtub, a vision of terrible power: 'George was standing now, still fixing him with that inhuman silver glare, but his mouth had drawn back in a dead and grimacing smile' (271). The same erogenous zones that had captivated and captured Danny in the image of the dead woman – breasts, pubis, mouth – here enthrall Jack as George's physical power contrasts with his own disempowerment. George is what Jack wants; George is what Jack can never be.

'There is no need to emphasize', Lacan maintains, 'that a coherent theory of the narcissistic phase clarifies the fact of the ambivalence proper to the "partial drives" of scopophilia, sadomasochism, and homosexuality, as well as the stereotyped, ceremonial formalism of the aggressivity that is manifested in them' (Lacan, 1977, 25). As an antidote to this narcissism, he prescribes 'Oedipal identification . . . by which the subject transcends the aggressivity that is constitutive of the primary subjective individuation' (23). But it is here that *The Shining* betrays Lacan, gives the lie to his treatment of narcissism and troubles his normalising oedipal frame. To the degree that oedipal identification is constitutive of homoerotic desire – wanting the father we can never be – it elicits in Jack Torrance a murderous rage and aggressivity that is not 'transcended' by his taking up the place of the father so much as it is *caused* by the requirement to take up that place. (And it is worth noting that, in the strange and shifting composite of faces that are Jack's at the end of the novel, Danny recognises not only the woman in 217 but also Roger, Horace Derwent's DC lover.) Moreover, such a desire to take (the place of) another male is polyvalent in the novel. At the end of Jack's hallucination of George, the spectre's face turns into Danny's; beautiful boys meld. This moment dramatises Jack's anxiety over his own paternal failure, but it does something more: it makes of his son an imago of desire, a desire rendered horrible by the mechanisms of the Gothic. If Sedgwick is right to suggest that there is an unstable boundary between wanting what Daddy wants and wanting Daddy, then the reverse might also be true: there is no stable boundary between wanting what Sonny represents and wanting Sonny. By the logic of fantasy, the Overlook's desire to eat Danny up is not disconnected from Jack's desire to 'raise' him properly. Why else would Jack appear in Danny's dream as 'a tiger in an alien blue-black jungle. A man-eater' (King, 1977, 130)?

Ultimately, visual spectacality is terrifying for Jack – and for the male psychoanalytic subject generally – because it carries with it a kind of knowledge. The male child who 'sees' his mother's castration – figured both in her 'lack' of protruding genitals and

in a primal scene that emblematises the father's power over her – is then haunted by the vision of the absent phallus, his own absent phallus, sought out in scopophilia. Jack Torrance seems at some level to recognise this indelible quality of the visual: remembering an abstract image of the face of Christ he once saw in catechism class (the image of the phallic father *par excellence*), Jack concludes:

Once you saw the face of a god in those jumbled blacks and whites, it was everybody out of the pool – you could never unsee it. . . . You had seen it in one gestalt leap, the conscious and unconscious melding in that one shocking moment of understanding. You would always see it. You were damned to always see it. (281)

But if males in *The Shining* are 'damned' to captation, it is because the compulsory drive to oedipal identification has made it so; the oedipal son cannot see otherwise. But what of other possibilities? What of an escape, even partially, from the phantasms of oedipal prohibition and desire? Might we look elsewhere in the novel for a more therapeutic or queerly useful deployment of identifications and penetrations that is not overshadowed by the monstrous law of the father? I want now to argue that the novel posits a place of knowledge that is different from that of the oedipal spectacle and of the panicked heterosexual father. It is a place that revalues the kind of 'transitivism' that Lacan sees as proceeding from mirror-stage narcissism. It is a place that articulates Stephen King's fourth queer strategy: the revisioning of haunting/transparency/interpenetration through the lens of the homosexual.

'Knowledge is not itself power', writes Eve Sedgwick, 'although it is the magnetic field of power. Ignorance and opacity collude or compete with it in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons' (Sedgwick, 1993, 23). *The Shining* understands this dialectic, at least as far as Danny Torrance is concerned. The 'knowledge' of paternal violence that imprisons Jack and 'damns' him to see the ghosts of the Overlook terrorises Danny as well, but it does more than that. For Danny, shining is access to power as well as to horror. Danny is represented in the novel as liminal, at the edges of power, cognisant of, yet bewildered by, the mysteries around him, a halfling between son and father. Yet from the outset Danny is clearly the knower, he who possesses the visions. And, unlike the Freudian child who must repress the sexual content of the primal scene if he is to take up full identification with Daddy, Danny is always aware of the sexual content of his captation. He doesn't shine his parents, he tells Dick Hallorann, because: 'It would be like peeking into the bedroom and watching while they're doing the thing that makes babies. . . . And they wouldn't like me peeking at their thinks. It would be dirty' (King, 1977, 83). Danny's ingenuousness here merely betrays that he knows *exactly* what he gets when he shines his parents – when he penetrates them, and allows himself to be penetrated by them. He knows what makes babies, and he knows that this knowledge is forbidden. And this knowingness frames the book, from the hotel's closing day when Danny 'sees' a guest thinking that she wants to 'get into' the bellboy's pants (70), to the end when Tony tells Danny that 'you knew. . . . You've always known' the secret of his father and of the Overlook

Hotel, that everything is a masquerade, a false face, a lie, an empty box (419). As I have argued elsewhere, what Danny knows is that the Law of the Father is a lie because it is predicated on castration, that the father is always already disempowered by the very genesis of his masculine subjectivity (see Bruhm, 1996). Such knowledge is Danny's only by virtue of his hallucinations, his shining, and it earns him Hallorann's reluctant praise: "Boy . . . you are gonna know everything there is to know about the human condition before you make ten" (82). If shining offers us access to what terrifies us, it also offers us the means to defuse and undo what terrifies us.

Danny's knowledge is, of course, courtesy of Tony, his mirror-self, who establishes a same-sex economy of erotic penetration and awareness that the novel calls 'shining'. Yet, the limitations of that knowledge are clear: as the Other that is bounded by the self, Tony can only show Danny what at some level Danny already knows, what is deep inside him, forgotten but waiting to be resurrected. Thus, for the psychoanalyst, Danny is well on his way to psychosis, a narcissistic fixation that cannot see otherness outside the self and cannot see the self as anything but other. Lacan's prescription: the subject must distance himself from his mirror image enough to engage in the community of citizens who are recognised as distinct – in other words, he must *love* – at the same time as maintaining enough narcissistic ego gratification to recognise himself as a desiring subject seeking his mirror complement in the love object. This dialectic is crucial if we are to avoid psychosis. Pity that Jack Torrance didn't know this: the fact that he cannot maintain a self–other relationship, that he is completely taken over by the hotel and his own father (and his mother, and George), that he becomes One Of Them, completes King's study of the psychotic. But Danny he will rescue from a similar fate. Caught deep in a hallucination of the Overlook's horrors:

Danny scrambled backward, screaming, and suddenly he was through the wall and falling, tumbling over and over, down the hole, down the rabbit hole and into the land full of sick wonders.

Tony was far below him, also falling.

(I can't come anymore, Danny . . . he won't let me near you . . . none of them will let me near you . . . get Dick . . . get Dick . . .)

'Tony!' he screamed.

But Tony was gone. (305)

Dick Hallorann, fellow shiner, will be that salvific other.

Dick is crucial to Danny and to the novel, but not because he takes the place of the father and becomes the stable, present phallus with whom Danny and Wendy can cobble together some version of The Family at the end (although that is the narrative's broad outline). Rather, Dick is crucial for the way his shining replaces oedipal panic with something much more fluidly homoerotic. Dick, whose sexual pleasures are strikingly gender-unspecific ('When he wanted fuck, why, he could find a friendly one with no questions asked' [316]); Dick, who shared close quarters with an elusive 'Mr Nevers' (97); Dick, who Wendy momentarily fears is seducing and abducting her son (81); Dick, whose shining is couched in the following language:

He had probed at the boy's father and he just didn't know. It wasn't like meeting someone who had the shine, or someone who definitely did not. Poking at Danny's father had been . . . strange, as if Jack Torrance had something – *something* – that he was hiding. Or something he was holding in so deeply submerged in himself that it was impossible to get to. (88)

And if this probing and poking into someone's secret has the air of an outing, the conversation about shining that Dick has with Danny absolutely mirrors that of coming out, of telling our secret to a more experienced queer confidant:

'Get you kinda lonely, thinkin you were the only one?'

Danny, who had been frightened as well as lonely sometimes, nodded. 'Am I the only one you ever met?' he asked.

Hallorann laughed and shook his head. 'No, child, no. But you shine the hardest.'

'Are there lots, then?'

'No,' Hallorann said, 'but you do run across them.' (81)

Yes, Danny shines hard, so hard that when he shines Dick – 'Give me a blast. . . . I want to know if you got as much as I think you do. . . . Just think it *hard*' (82) – he makes Dick's mouth bleed. If shining/hallucination/captation is about finding the lost phallus, Dick and Danny seem to complement each other beautifully.

So beautifully, in fact, that they utterly rewrite the very panic of transparency that Sedgwick says constitutes the paranoid Gothic. When Danny invades Hallorann's consciousness in Florida – ('!!! OH DICK OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE COME !!!' [306]) – Dick must return to the hotel: 'He knew the boy. They had shared each other the way good friends can't even after forty years of it. [It?] He knew the boy and the boy knew him' (316). As Dick tells Danny later, 'We can't have any secrets' (445). There are no secrets because both of them shine; both of them see images 'like pictures in a book', images that by now have come to perform a range of functions in the novel. To the degree that such pictures stand metonymically as *the* captated specular image of the lost phallus – and doubtless King intends the pun on 'dick' – they are the basis of a homosexual narcissism that all men are 'damned' to in the Overlook Hotel and in hegemonic American culture. Yet, to the degree that they are shared, that Danny sees what Dick sees and Dick sees what Danny sees, they indicate the degree to which the imagos of the fragmented self are always inflected by the other – in this case, the other *man*, whose presence is comforting, illuminating, outing. Thus, the shining-as-captation forms a queer bond where differences (dangerous and disturbing) of age, class and race are stitched into the mirror-sameness of hallucinated imagos, and where homosexual narcissism shuttles between two male subjects. No longer the source of panic, male interpenetration becomes a means of restoring (at least partially) the phallus lost at individuation, one's own phallus, the phallus of another man. Perhaps the difference between the queer purchase on captation and the panicked one can best be summarised by the lines of Danny's grade-school primer: whereas his and Hallorann's queer bond is predicated on the simple

imperative 'Look, Dick, look' (121) and its multiple denotations, Jack's paranoid psychosis twists around something more terrifying but no less erotically charged: 'See Dick? Run!'

In the penultimate scene of the novel, Dick rescues Wendy and Danny from the exploding hotel to return them to civilisation, but not before the Overlook has had one more crack at shining Dick. The hotel, that grand and petulant Father, reminds Dick that Danny has in effect murdered Jack and that patricide should not go unpunished. While Hallorann's sympathetic identification with Jack is momentary, it is enough to remind us of the contradiction Leo Bersani sees in the cultural status of gay men: obviously, the gay man is by definition excluded from the realm of normative power relations (and the colour of Dick's skin is repeatedly invoked to hammer home that exclusion), yet by virtue of being male the gay man feels the attractive allure to the 'socially determined and socially pervasive definition of what it means to be a man' (Bersani, 1988, 209). Indeed, according to Bersani: 'The logic of homosexual desire includes the potential for a loving identification with the gay man's enemies' (208). A real terror for the gay reader here is that heterosexuality may become the prohibited other, eroticised precisely because it is prohibited. But within this complex of identifications and their attendant (or supposed) identities is a fifth queer strategy, the one with which I would like to conclude. Like Bersani, Stephen King refuses to sentimentalise the gay male subject; he does not present it as somehow outside or above the cultural discourses that frame it. And it is precisely because that subject is permeable, penetrable, both assertive/insertive and receptive, that it is unfixed. It refuses slavish service to what the demands of identity (*any* identity) will allow. Jack kills himself and almost his family because of his '*selfimage*'; in him masculinity and citizenry become lethal and psychotic. Conversely, to be shined, is to lose one's 'own absent awareness of himself as a unique human creature' (King, 1977, 312), to lose the demands of coherent identity. And if the project of queerness is to liberate the possibility of multiple, complex, even contradictory identifications and desires, if the envisioned (captating?) goal is the dissolution of identity as a prison or regulatory regime, then the queer male self in *The Shining* 'advertises', in Bersani's words, 'the risk of the sexual itself as the risk of self-dismissal, of *losing sight* of the self, and in so doing it proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* as a mode of ascesis' (Bersani, 1988, 222).

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