

Re-envisioning The Devil-Doll: *Child's Play* and the Modern Horror Film

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Nearly 2,000 years after St. Paul of Tarsus wrote his poetic epistles to the people of Corinth, we still equate our capacity for selfless love with the putting away of childish things. That is to say, the time comes for each of us to grow up and pack up our toys.

David Hajdu, "The Toys Are Us,"
The New York Times, 6/20/10, WK9

Hi, I'm Chucky, and I'm your friend to the end! Wanna play?

Child's Play (Holland, 1988)

Introduction

Charles "Chucky" Lee Ray (Brad Dourif) flees from police officer Mike Norris (Chris Sarandon) through the wintertime streets of Chicago. Abandoned by his getaway driver Eddie Caputo (Neil Giuntoli), Ray, aka The Lakeshore Strangler, enters a children's toy store and is shot by Norris. Mortally wounded, Ray transfers his soul into the body of a Good Guy doll; a red haired, freckled, proportionally child-sized companion dressed in overalls and sneakers that is apparently the best option one can muster for satanic possession.(1) Lightning strikes through the toy store skylight as the dying criminal recites an incantation. The film cuts to Norris standing over the lifeless body of Ray. Like the lightning storm, firelight casts an ominous shadow over the doll's smiling and seemingly vacant face. Frankenstein meets Pinocchio in the age of consumer culture – Chucky is alive.

According to *The BFI Companion to Horror*, *Child's Play* is "an effective, slick variant of the boy who cried wolf theme," the story of six-year-old Andy Barclay (Alex Vincent) and his inability to "convince adults that his doll Chucky is possessed by a voodoo serial killer who wants to migrate to his body" (Newman 1997).(2) In the opening scene of *Child's Play*, Ray inhabits the body of a Good Guy doll and successfully eludes the police, only to become obsessed with revenge and a return to human form. After murdering his cowardly getaway driver Eddie Caputo, Chucky discovers that in order to return to an organic body he must possess the first person he revealed his true identity to, Andy.

A frequently overlooked contribution to the post-slasher cycle, *Child's Play* has spent its lifetime in the shadow of the more celebrated *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Hellraiser* series.(3) In the literature devoted to the slasher and post-slasher cycles and the discourse surrounding gender, genre, and horror *Child's Play* is a footnote.(4) Chucky is an anomaly compared to Leatherface, Michael Meyers, Pamela and Jason Voorhees, Freddy Krueger, and Pinhead. According to Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Child's Play* is one of the last major horror franchises of the 1980s and "pales in comparison to Holland's far superior *Fright Night*" (1985), also starring Chris Sarandon as the vampire Jerry Dandrige (Dixon 2010).(5)

Dixon's dismissal of *Child's Play* is reminiscent of a well-established trend in horror criticism beginning with Robin Wood's valorization of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in the late 1970s.(6) Carol J. Clover then publishes "Her Body, Himself," also focusing on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and establishes herself as a leading voice in the study of gender in the modern horror film.(7) Clover defines the "American cinematic horror," as "films from the 1970s to the mid-1980s (with some reference back to progenitors), and only with those subgenres in which female figures and/or gender issues loom especially large: slasher films, occult or possession films, and rape-revenge films" (Clover 1992).(8) Clover's analysis is specifically concerned with "the relationship of the 'majority viewer' (the younger male) to the female victim-heroes," in particular the Final Girl, "who have become such a conspicuous screen presence in certain sectors of horror" (Clover 1992).(9)

Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett anthologize both Wood and Clover, further solidifying the distinction between the progressive and reactionary horror film.(10) According to Wood, the progressive horror film is imbued with a sense of social and political activism, specifically the fight against patriarchal capitalism. Wood references Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972), Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* as outstanding examples of this trend. Horror in the 80s, on the other hand, reinforces the dominant ideology, representing the monster as simply evil and unsympathetic, depicting Christianity as a positive presence, and confusing the repression of sexuality with sexuality itself. Examples include Craven's *Swamp Thing* (1982), Hooper's *Poltergeist* (1982), and Romero's *Creepshow* (1982).(11)

In the following pages I argue that while *Child's Play* is an example of the reactionary, rather than progressive, horror film, I do not think of the former category as being in any way inferior to the latter. On the contrary, the dominant ideology of *Child's Play*, its half-hearted critique of Reaganomics, its sexist indifference to matriarchy and the single parent household, and the racist portrayal of Haitian Vodou, are *qualifications* for critical analysis. The facile argument that *Child's Play* is a sleazy horror film devoid of artistic merit or political value is precisely the reason why I am interested in its representation of the devil-doll, a likewise underappreciated monster within horror cinema in general and the modern horror film in particular.(12) As Matt Hills points out, the opposition between trash and "legitimate" film culture is overemphasized, glossing over "how notions of trash film have worked to exclude certain types of filmic sleaze that have also been simultaneously excluded from, or devalued within, academic discussion" (Hills 2007).(13)

Child's Play is a noteworthy example of the modern horror film primarily because it calls into question one of its defining characteristics – what Girogio Bertellini identifies as the "sadistic male agency against female victims within a rigid heterosexual framework" (Bertellini 2004).(14) Chucky represents a series of questions that look beyond gender and genre and strike at the paradoxes of the heart of horror cinema and childhood.(15) Why does Ray choose a child-sized doll to carry on his criminal ambitions? What contribution does *Child's Play* make to, and by extension what is the proper place of *Child's Play* within the pantheon of, horror cinema, and how does Chucky inhabit the ideologically loaded Western concept of childhood as a time of innocence and play?

The answer to these questions begins with the devil-doll, a figure that is prominently featured in *Child's Play*. The devil-doll, specifically ventriloquism and the dysfunctional relationship between puppet and puppet master, is a recurring theme in Anglo-American horror dating back to the late 1920s. While Chucky is more of a supernatural figure than the ventriloquist dummies that precede him, the psychological distortion of the ventriloquist's mind, in particular the puppet master's loss of identity, is an important part of *Child's Play* and the character of Charles "Chucky" Lee Ray.

Furthermore, the evolution of the devil-doll within horror cinema shares a specific vocabulary with the literary and filmic representation of childhood. For both the devil-doll and the child, horror cinema is preoccupied with the relationship between three keywords: innocence, criminality, and anxiety. On the one hand is the fragile cherub who is in need of protection from the horrors of the adult world. On the other hand is the bad seed, an atavistic throwback to an earlier evolutionary stage in which humans are more savage and animalistic. Anxiety stems from the possibility that the adult world has failed to distinguish between what is innocent and what is criminal and consequently brought about its own ruin. I argue that in the case of the devil-doll film the victim is frequently trapped within this cycle of anxiety, while the killer is typically conscious of the undecidability of childhood innocence and criminality and able to weaponize the conflation of cherub and changeling, just as Charles Lee Ray does in *Child's Play*.

The Devil-Doll

The mélange of childhood innocence and criminality in *Child's Play* is rooted in the dichotomy of the cherub and changeling. The conventional wisdom concerning modern childhood (a time of carefree adventure, the stability of family and home, the nation-state as a child-friendly social sphere) is underpinned by the ideologically loaded Western concept of childhood innocence – the useless but also priceless child, the fragile cherub needing protection from adult society.⁽¹⁶⁾ The value of childhood innocence in this case is not measured in terms of economic payoff or genetic fitness but in terms of complementing adult values – book lovers, travelers, athletes, and devotees. According to David F. Lancy, “childhood is as much a cultural as a biological phenomenon,” and in addition to the adult’s genetic interest in the child, it is a common argument “that children require a prolonged period of dependency in order to acquire all the knowledge, skills, and strength they’ll need as successful adults” (5).⁽¹⁷⁾ Childhood, in other words, is an idea that is defined retroactively by adulthood – a nostalgic figure that “is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were. It is the act of adults looking back. It is a ghostly, unreachable fancy” (Stockton 2009).⁽¹⁸⁾

The difficult or unwanted child, on the other hand, the changeling or devil-inspired spirit, is a fickle or inconstant person; a person or thing surreptitiously exchanged for another, more “normal” child. A child is literally and/or figuratively substituted for another – an abnormal child is left in exchange for one stolen. Early references to the changeling include Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), in which the changeling is compared to elves, hags, and incubus; William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1590), in which the changeling is the child taken, not left; and Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96).

The devil-doll emerges in horror cinema after Universal Pictures’ success with *Dracula* (Browning, 1931), *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931), and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale, 1935). Directing for MGM, Tod Browning’s *The Devil-Doll* (1936) features Lionel Barrymore as criminal at large Paul Lavond. Disguised for much of the film as elderly toymaker Madame Mandelip, Lavond seeks out his estranged daughter Lorraine, who is played by Maureen O’Sullivan. Rafaela Ottiano plays the mad scientist Malita, her white-streaked hairstyle in the fashion of The Bride (Elsa Lanchester) from *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

Yet the devil-doll in Browning’s film is still in its nascent form. Madame Mandelip’s monstrous toys are little more than miniaturized adults that Lavond controls through telekinesis, somnambulists that are represented through the use of trick photography, multiple exposures, and oversized sets. Released almost a decade before *The Devil-Doll*, *The Great Gabbo* (1929), an early sound film and musical drama directed by James Cruze, provides a crucial detail that will later define the devil-doll in *Child's Play* –

ventriloquism and the dysfunctional relationship between puppet and puppet master. Chucky may not be a ventriloquist dummy himself, but the motif of the possessed doll and the loss of human individuality is consistent. The concept of corporal ambiguity or the disembodied subject is a vital link between *Child's Play* and the devil-doll film.

Ventriloquism or the “vent act,” named after the puppeteer who “vents” or throws his or her voice into a traditionally wooden dummy, dates back to 1798 and Charles Brockden Brown’s novel *Weiland*.⁽¹⁹⁾ The first screen appearance of the evil ventriloquist is Lon Chaney in *The Unholy Three* (1925), remade as a sound film and again starring Chaney in 1930. Based on a story by Ben Hecht titled “The Rival Dummy” (1928), *The Great Gabbo* stars Erich von Stroheim as the ventriloquist Gabbo. Accompanied by his dummy Otto (voice by George Grandee) Gabbo is a highly esteemed performer. Yet as the film progresses Gabbo becomes increasingly dependent upon Otto as his only means of self-expression. What begins as a gimmick, Gabbo's stage act of making Otto talk and sing while Gabbo smokes, drinks, and eats, ends in Gabbo giving voice to deviant and destructive tendencies through Otto – tendencies that Gabbo would be unable to express without the aid of another self. As a result, Gabbo ruins his career and at the end of the film drives himself mad. If David Fincher were to remake his film *Fight Club* (1999) and replace Brad Pitt with a ventriloquist dummy, he might learn a thing or two from *The Great Gabbo*.

The plot and theme of *The Great Gabbo*, specifically the ventriloquist’s dysfunctional relationship with his dummy, can be traced through *The Dummy Talks* (Mitchell, 1943), a television episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (“The Glass Eye,” 1957), two episodes of Rod Serling’s television series *The Twilight Zone* (“The Dummy,” 1962, and “Caesar and Me,” 1964), Richard Attenborough's film *Magic* (1978) starring Anthony Hopkins, and a 1993 episode of *The Simpsons* (“Krusty Gets Kancelled”) which features a ventriloquist's dummy by the name of Gabbo.

In each example the ventriloquist speaks through the dummy and/or commits a series of crimes under the supposed influence of his dummy, giving voice to repressed thoughts and feelings that the puppet master cannot express without the aid of his double. The puppet master is unable to exist as a singular identity, and turns to the child-sized puppet in order to exist as a coherent self. In this sense the puppet master relinquishes control, he abandons the social authority of adulthood and regresses into a childlike state – it is now the dummy that is the voice of the ventriloquist. One of the most renowned films to deal with this theme, a film that bridges the gap between the mad science of *The Devil-Doll* and the psychological complexities of *The Great Gabbo*, is *Dead of Night* (1945).

Dead of Night is an atypical genre film from the British Ealing Studios, better known for their comedies. Consisting of six tales of horror, a portmanteau narrative structure that inspires Amicus Productions’ *Dr. Terror’s House of Horrors* (Francis, 1965) and *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964), *Dead of Night* is best known for the segment “The Ventriloquist’s Dummy.” Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, “The Ventriloquist’s Dummy” immortalizes the devil-doll – the puppet as a vessel of evil – through the story of Maxwell Frere (Michael Redgrave), a successful ventriloquist who performs with his dummy Hugo Fitch (John McGuire). Hugo, though, begins to talk and walk on his own without Frere’s assistance. Hugo becomes a free agent, a violent and sadistic monster that drives his puppeteer mad. Victoria Nelson in *The Secret Life of Puppets* writes that:

Historically, Western puppet entertainments were always violent spectacles, as witness the standard pummelings of traditional Punch and Judy shows, which usually ended with Punch’s onstage hanging and exit in a coffin. The rough-and-tumble, however, was always puppet to puppet, not puppet to human, and this is an important distinction. In the second category, Hugo in ‘The Ventriloquist’s Dummy’ segment of

the British film *Dead of Night* (1945), an autonomous entity who wreaks havoc on the people around him, bears the distinction of being the first puppet murderer of a human in a popular film (Nelson 2001).(20)

Michael Redgrave's renowned performance as the mentally unstable puppet master introduces a horror cinema motif that is indispensable to *Child's Play* – the devil-doll, as Nelson points out, is a threat to humanity. The distinction between the devil-doll in *Dead of Night* and *Child's Play* is that in the former film Hugo is meant to be inanimate or lifeless from the start. Chucky, on the other hand, subverts or exaggerates the “normal” function of the dummy; he serves as a conduit or amplifier for Charles Lee Ray's criminal tendencies.

In other words, the devil-doll is a threat to humanity because it embodies a slippage between innocence and criminality as well as childhood and adulthood. Maxwell loses control of Hugo in *Dead of Night*. The puppet becomes the puppet master. At the beginning of “The Ventriloquist's Dummy,” Maxwell, like The Great Gabbo, is a successful ventriloquist performing before an admiring audience. At the end of the segment Maxwell stands accused of attempted murder, is hospitalized for dissociative identity disorder, and, after destroying Hugo in his prison cell, speaks with Hugo's high pitched voice. *Dead of Night* drives home Robin Wood's observation “that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for the recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its re-emergence dramatized, as in our nightmares, as an object of horror, a matter for terror” (Wood 1986 [2003]).(21) Hugo now exists *within* Maxwell.

After *Dead of Night*, a series of films were made between the UK and US that are specifically concerned with the devil-doll and the ventriloquist dummy as a vessel of evil: Lindsay Shonteff's *Devil Doll* (1964), *Dolls* (Gordon, 1987), *Puppet Master* (Schmoeller, 1989), *Dolly Dearest* (Lease, 1991) starring Rip Torn, *Demonic Toys* (Manoogian, 1991), *Revenge of the Red Baron* (Gordon, 1993), *Saw* (Wan, 2004), and *Dead Silence* (Wan, 2007). The devil-doll also appears on television, in *The Twilight Zone* episode “Living Doll” (1963), starring Telly Savalas, and a 1992 episode of *The Simpsons* (“Clown Without Pity” from “Treehouse of Horror III”). The most chilling scene in “The Ventriloquist's Dummy,” when Maxwell speaks with Hugo's voice, is also *Dead of Night*'s most important contribution to horror cinema – the disembodied voice that is the locus of evil and criminality.

According to Slavoj Žižek in the film *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Fiennes, 2005), “voice is not an organic part of a human body. It's coming from somewhere in between your body” (Fiennes 2005).(22) Citing “The Ventriloquist's Dummy” from *Dead of Night*, as well as William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) and the possessed Regan (Linda Blair) who speaks with an adult demonic voice (Mercedes McCambridge), Žižek states “whenever we talk to another person there is always this minimum of ventriloquist affect, as if some foreign power took possession” (Fiennes 2005).(23) This, according to Žižek, is “the voice in its obscene dimensions,” the “traumatic dimension of the voice,” “which freely floats around,” and is “the ultimate object of anxiety which distorts reality” (Fiennes 2005).(24)

It is the voice in its free floating and “traumatic dimension” that is the common thread between *The Devil-Doll*, *The Great Gabbo*, and *Dead of Night*. Paul Lavond as Madame Mandelip, Gabbo, and Maxwell Frere all share one thing in common, they lose sight of the difference between themselves and their doubles – the organic body of the puppet master and the obscene voice of the puppet. As a result, they stumble upon and are overwhelmed, if not destroyed, by “the properly traumatic dimension of the human voice, the human voice not as the sublime ethereal medium for expressing the depth of human subjectivity, but the human voice as a foreign intruder” (Fiennes 2005).(25) The puppet becomes the

puppet master in a transformative moment that is reminiscent of a psychotic or schizophrenic episode. Nelson observes that the puppet:

Played an important supernatural role in the Western psychotic imagination during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From Plato to Descartes, the image of the puppetmaster pulling the strings to make his creation move had emblemized first a presumed division between soul and body, then one between mind and body. Recognizing the close connection of the puppet . . . with notions of intrapersonal invasion, manipulation, and the loss of autonomy, the new twentieth-century discipline of psychology identified the sensation that an alien entity is manipulating the afflicted person, ‘pulling the strings,’ as a symptom of various types of pathology, particularly schizophrenia (Nelson 2001).(26)

What is the correlation between the devil-doll, “the properly traumatic dimension of the human voice,” and horror cinema, criminality, and childhood? According to Paul Wells it is the link between devils and doubles. Wells writes that “central to the horror genre’s identity is the configuration of the ‘monster,’” in particular “the monstrous element in the horror text” that “is usually an interrogation of the amorphous nature of evil, or an address of the limits of the human condition; physically, emotionally and psychologically” (Wells 2000).(27) Wells states “the prevailing archetype of the monster is the Devil, the symbolic embodiment of evil that is a constituent element in monist religions and which appears in various forms in myths across the globe” (Wells 2000).(28)

The conflict between good and evil, according to Wells, is “played out in the horror text,” “a conceptual umbrella for struggles between law and order, the sacred and the profane, barbarism and civility, truth and lies” (Wells 2000).(29) These binary oppositions, Wells points out, “are addressed through one of the dominant motifs of the horror text: the *doppelgänger*” (Wells 2000).(30) Wells defines the *doppelgänger*, or double, as that which humankind confronts, a “nemesis either through the opposition of an individual and a monster or by the exposure of the two competing sides of an individual – normally, one rational and civilised, the other uncontrolled and irrational, often more primal and atavistic” (Wells 2000).(31) This is a point that applies to *Child’s Play*. The devil-doll is not so much a monster that invokes feelings of horror (nausea, repulsion, disgust). The devil-doll as *doppelgänger* is an atavistic figure, horrifying because it is the uncontrolled and irrational other, a primal figure that defies normality, rationality, and civilization.

According to Neil Norman, one suspects “that ventriloquists use dummies to express their darkest thoughts – to vent their wrath and exorcise their own psychological demons” (Norman 2005).(32) The dummy, according to Norman, “an approximately life-sized wooden doll that is invested with life through the medium of the ventriloquist,” is “a totemic miniature human” that gives voice to or exposes the warring sides of the ventriloquist (Norman 2005).(33) It is a child-like figure, or *doppelgänger*, that is “clearly lifeless” yet “nonetheless speaks and exudes a personality” that is the voice of adulthood’s repressed desires (Norman 2005).(34) Norman states that the ventriloquist’s dummy is horrifying on two levels. First, the body of the dummy, its “mad, swiveling, psychotic eyes beneath arched eyebrows and that crude parody of a mouth (with painted teeth) that opens and shuts with a click,” as well as the “floppily articulated limbs that lend them the aspect of death” (Norman 2005).(35) Second, the voice of the dummy, the “high-pitched squawk that . . . is one of the least pleasant sounds made by a human being” (Norman 2005).(36)

Norman writes that America's most celebrated puppeteer or “vent” is Edgar Bergen (1903-1978). “Having survived the death of vaudeville” in the early 1930s, Bergen and his chief dummy Charlie McCarthy, modeled after an Irish newsboy and then remodeled after a dapper socialite, tour the Chicago supper club circuit and eventually perform on radio with Mae West, W.C. Fields, and Orson Welles (Norman

2005).(37) Candice Bergen, in her autobiography *Knock Wood* (1984), writes that as a child she was treated by her father as the dummy's kid sister: “for me as a child Charlie McCarthy had semi-human status. He wasn't flesh and blood and he wasn't a doll, either. But he was a sacred calf. He brought home the bacon” (Bergen 1984).(38)

Candice Bergen's sibling rival is her “older brother,” the changeling Charlie McCarthy. Dressed in a top hat, cape, and monocle, McCarthy is a highly precocious child – a debonair, girl-crazy child-about-town. Edgar Bergen exploits McCarthy's childhood identity, favoring McCarthy's representation of childhood over his daughter Candice, in particular during their radio dialogues. Speaking through McCarthy, venting not only through the wooden dummy but also the technological medium of radio, Bergen is able to include lewd material and double entendre into his act, circumventing the otherwise censorious radio broadcast standards of the time. The dummy/child is capable of a degree of precocity that the ventriloquist/adult is not – he is a figure that is semi-human in the eyes of his puppeteer/father.

Taking into consideration that Candice Bergen's autobiography is a personal account of her life and not a verifiable document, her testimonial is highly resonant with Wells' understanding of the horror genre and the imbrication of monstrosity, the nature of evil and the Devil, and the atavistic tendencies of the *doppelgänger* – a primitive form of humanity or “throwback to an earlier evolutionary stage in which humans are more savage, animalistic, and criminalistic than today” (Gibson and Rafter 402).(39) Coupled with Norman's analysis of the dysfunctional relationship between puppet and puppet master, the story of Edgar Bergen, Candice Bergen, and Charlie McCarthy illuminates the ventriloquist's dummy as a “totemic miniature human,” a “child-like figure” that is made strange or queer by the adult self's “darkest thoughts” and “psychological demons.”

The relationship between the devil-doll, “the properly traumatic dimension of the human voice,” and horror cinema has everything to do with the desire on the part of adulthood to channel or ventriloquize its primal and atavistic tendencies through the figure of childhood – an existential anxiety that is reminiscent of the life-and-death struggle of the Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic. G.W.F. Hegel's reading of lordship and bondage (*herrschaft und knechtschaft*) is that the formation of identity is a dynamic and intersubjective relationship. In terms of the devil-doll, the puppet (slave) that is dependent upon the puppet master is revelatory of the master's lack of selfhood. The vent act is predicated upon the illusion of the puppet/other as an independent self that overshadows its master.

In horror cinema the ventriloquist's most compelling vent act is also the obliteration of the puppet master as a coherent identity. The representation of the devil-doll in *Child's Play* flows from the relationship between the puppet and puppet master as a ventriloquized codependence – the confusion of adulthood and childhood – a theme that reaches back to *The Great Gabbo* and *Dead of Night*. In each film it is unclear who is in control of whom, the ventriloquist/adult or dummy/child, and whether the devil-doll is acting out of innocent curiosity or criminal lack of self-control. The difference is that Chucky is not a ventriloquist dummy; he is a conventional doll that can speak with his human voice. He is also a doll that is possessed by a dead human, whereas more conventionally, the human is “possessed” by a persona they have created in order to bring the doll to life.

In psychoanalytic terms, the representation of the devil-doll in horror cinema stands for the violent breakdown in the early process of the child's ego construction. This traumatic event is frequently returned to in horror when the child enters into adulthood via puberty.(40) In *Child's Play* Charles Lee Ray reverses the Freudian “ghost in the nursery” scenario. Rather than through deferred effect, or *Nachträglichkeit*, in which a trauma encountered in childhood is reactivated or belatedly understood later

in life, Ray dismantles the romanticized desire to relive one's childhood, to return to a supposedly more innocent time, in order to *criminalize* the innocent child. Ray transforms himself into Chucky and possesses the ability to "throw his voice," to disturb the boundaries of self and other and to become an autonomous partial object. For Žižek "the lesson is clear. The only way for me to get rid of this autonomous partial object is to become this object" (Fiennes 2006).(41)

The Devil-Doll in *Child's Play*

The devil-doll in *Child's Play* is the voice of Charles Lee Ray – adulthood's perverse and disembodied return to childhood. The signature of the *Child's Play* franchise is the versatility of actor Brad Dourif's voice that speaks from within the Good Guy doll Chucky. A frequent player in horror cinema, Dourif is referred to as "the premier twitchy psycho of his generation" (Newman 1997).(42) Nominated for an Academy Award for his performance in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1976), Dourif has also appeared in *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (Kershner, 1978), *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986), *Exorcist III* (Blatty, 1990), *Trauma* (Argento, 1993), and Rob Zombie's remake of the *Halloween* series (2007, 2009).

The Good Guy as a toy in *Child's Play* is the hit of the holiday season due to its ability to talk to its owner in the voice of a prepubescent boy, to simulate the recognition of another as its friend and companion. The hinge between Chucky as a lovable and harmless toy and a serial killer, pre- and post-possession, is Dourif's voice, the shift in pitch from preadolescent to adult, innocent and playful to criminal and uncouth. As with *Dead of Night*, the horror of *Child's Play* is the disjuncture of body and voice – the pivotal moment in which Ray's criminal identity is *audibly*, as well as *visibly*, exposed.

Andy's failure to convince adults that Chucky is a voodoo-practicing serial killer, to bridge the communicative gap between childhood and adulthood, is ineffective on multiple levels. Andy is unable to warn his mother Karen Barclay that she is in danger or, for that matter, console her when her close friend and co-worker Maggie Peterson (Dinah Manoff) is murdered by Chucky. While babysitting Andy as a favor to Karen, Maggie is thrown from the Barclay's fourth-story kitchen window – punishment for not allowing Chucky to watch the nine-o'clock news and a story relating to Eddie Caputo. Andy is not only unable to stop Chucky from killing; he becomes an accomplice to Chucky's criminal behavior – a "puppeteer" who is manipulated by his devil-doll. It is Andy who helps Chucky to locate Eddie Caputo, carrying Chucky from his middle-class Chicago home to Caputo's Southside flophouse. Furthermore, Andy is the only person in the apartment at the time of Maggie's murder, making him a suspect in Officer Norris' investigation.

Building on the cinematic tradition of the devil-doll, Ray accomplishes what his ventriloquist predecessors cannot – he is able to fully realize, to become what Žižek identifies as "the voice in its obscene dimensions," "the human voice as a foreign intruder" (Fiennes 2006).(43) Ray neither depends on the gimmicks of Gabbo nor succumbs to the fate of Maxwell Frere, confined to his hospital bed and possessed by the voice of his dummy Hugo. Ray's possession of a child's toy is a liberating experience and a license to kill – an intentional rather than pathological regression into childhood. It is Chucky, not Andy, who properly embodies the childhood delinquent, "the boy who cried wolf theme," exploiting innocence as a disguise and alibi for criminality.(44)

Ray's reincarnation as Chucky can also be read as a critique of consumer culture. The reproducibility of the ventriloquist's dummy, as a wooden object or voice transmitted over radio, is amplified or mass manufactured in *Child's Play* – an unlimited supply of Good Guy devil-dolls for every American household. As Raymond Williams points out, "in almost all its early English uses," up to the

mid-eighteenth century, “consume had an unfavorable sense; it meant to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust” (Williams 1976).(45) In *Child’s Play*, consumer culture is the lightning bolt that crashes through the toy store skylight, summoned by Charles Lee Ray’s voodoo incantation.

The difference between *customer* and *consumer*, between the “degree of regular and continuing relationship to a supplier” and “the more abstract figure in a more abstract market,” is illustrated when Ray enters the toy store at the opening of *Child’s Play* (Williams 1976).(46) Ray at this point in the film is in search of a second life, a carrier that will allow him to return to an organic body. The connotation is that the toy store is open after hours and the clientele are desperate for the season’s top selling product, a child-sized toy that is not only the object of consumer envy but also a literal lifesaver, a subject that will disturb the congruity of adulthood and childhood. Ray’s “purchasing power,” in its irregularity and discontinuity, is a critique of late twentieth century American consumer culture. The shift from dying body to doll body underscores the destructive potential of consumer choice and “voodoo economics.”

By the early 1980s the United States economy is in the midst of a deep recession, experiencing the worst unemployment rates since the Great Depression. The subsequent economic policies promoted by then U.S. President Ronald Reagan, known as “Reaganomics,” include four pillars: reduce government spending; reduce income and capital gains marginal tax rates; reduce government regulation; and control the money supply to reduce inflation. While running against Reagan for the Presidential nomination in 1980, George H.W. Bush derides Reaganomics as “voodoo economics,” expressing skepticism that supply-side reforms like ending regulation will be enough to rejuvenate the economy.(47)

Lauren Berlant also critiques the right-wing economic as well as cultural agendas of the Reagan revolution. According to Berlant, the triumph of the Reaganite view is that “the intimacy of citizenship is something scarce and sacred, private and proper, and only for members of families” (Berlant 1997).(48) Berlant writes that “the intimate public sphere” and the rise of the Reaganite right is “a familial politics of the national future,” a movement that “came to define the urgencies of the present”:

Now everywhere in the United States intimate things flash in people’s faces: pornography, abortion, sexuality, and reproduction; marriage, personal morality, and family values. These issues do not arise as private concerns: they are key debates about what ‘America’ stands for, and are deemed vital to defining how citizens should act. In the process of collapsing the political and the personal into a world of public intimacy, a nation made for adult citizens has been replaced by one imagined for fetuses and children (Berlant 1997).(49)

Rather than a common public culture, a public sphere in which ordinary citizens hold sway over the state, Berlant argues that the Reaganite view and conservative ideology “has convinced a citizenry that the core context of politics should be the sphere of private life. In so doing, it develops a different story about what has happened to citizenship in both the law and daily life during the last few decades. The privatization of citizenship has involved manipulating an intricate set of relations between economic, racial, and sexual processes” (Berlant 1997).(50)

The consequence of the Reaganite cultural revolution, according to Berlant, “involves the way intimacy rhetoric has been employed to manage the economic crisis that separates the wealthy few from everyone else in the contemporary United States. By defining the United States as a place where normal intimacy is considered the foundation of the citizen’s happiness, the right has attempted to control the ways questions of economic survival are seen as matters of citizenship” (Berlant 1997).(51)

Applying Berlant to *Child's Play*, upward mobility and the American Dream for Ray is a matter of inserting himself within the economic order of late twentieth century consumer culture. His survival depends upon his ability to pose as a consumable object – to translate criminality into a child's toy. Ray accomplishes this act of translation through the intimate public sphere and family values, in particular Karen's back alley purchase of Chucky. By extension, Karen's black market dealings introduce Chucky into the Barclay Household, a lesson to single motherhood in the rules of proper versus non-legal consumption.(52)

Failing to deliver on her promise to buy Andy a Good Guy for his birthday, Karen is at work in the jewelry department of the local mall. Informed by her friend Maggie Peterson that a peddler (Juan Ramírez) in the back alley is willing to sell a Good Guy for a steal at \$100, criminality enters through the back door of consumer culture and the single parent household. The peddler is a monstrous figure – his soiled cap, yellowed scarf, tattered overcoat, graying fingerless gloves, and foul language imply both disgust and threat. After completing his transaction the peddler sneers, “may it bring you and your kid a lot of joy.” Maggie retorts, “how do we know the damn thing isn't stolen?” to which the peddler, pulling back his overcoat and thrusting out his crotch, replies “steal this!”

The peddler's back alley sale of the devil-doll operates beyond the proscribed consumer venue of the department store. Karen, with Maggie's assistance, purchases a bootleg Good Guy for Andy's birthday, the very same doll that Ray has possessed. The Lakeshore Strangler has chosen wisely. A child-sized doll is the last place the police will think to look. And in order to return to a human body (Andy being the first human that Ray reveals his true identity to) Chucky must only kill a select number of victims. Karen is working the late shift and, while babysitting Andy, Maggie is murdered by Chucky. Investigating the crime scene Office Norris shows Karen a child's footprint in the Barclay kitchen. He asks Andy what shoes he is wearing and Andy replies, “Good Guys PJ Sneakers.” Morris asks Andy if he can look at his soles, and the camera shows images of a gun, hammer, baseball bat, cowboy hat, and fireman's hat – a match with the footprint on the kitchen counter. A loyal consumer of the Good Guy brand and dressed identically to Chucky, Andy is a murder suspect.

According to Daniel Thomas Cook, “the cultural view of markets.... underscores the moral basis of value and valuation. In this view, economic exchange invariably and inevitably encodes precepts of good and bad, of right and wrong, thereby sanctioning certain kinds of activities over others” (Cook 7).(53) In terms of consumer culture and the value of childhood, Cook argues that there is a conflict between, “on the one hand, the kind of value embodied in the singular, sentimental ‘nature’ of children and, on the other, that which is enforced by the equalizing, rational aspects of market calculation. Their intermingling is the actual historical process producing a moral tension in the social valuation of children” (Cook 8).

Charles Lee Ray's reappraisal of childhood is to translate play, the hallmark of childhood innocence, into a criminal activity. Yet what makes this translation horrifying is not that Ray subverts childhood play as a virtuous activity. On the contrary, he exaggerates the child's tendency to perform unspeakable acts through the avatar of the doll, a counterhegemonic practice of childhood, play, and the politics of dollhood. Miriam Formanek-Brunell writes about the attitudes regarding dolls, play, and childhood during the Gilded Age.(54) By the mid-1860s “children's magazines, books, poems, songs, and stereographs revealed that girls were encouraged by adults to develop strong emotional bonds with their numerous dolls” (Formanek-Brunell 363). The post-Civil War department store, beginning in 1865 and at an accelerated rate in 1875, stocked “featured dolls and other toys in addition to dry goods and home furnishings” (Formanek-Brunell 367). R.H. Macy, Jordan Marsh, and Marshall Field advertised the doll

as an object of feminine socialization or rehearsal for adult womanhood – tea parties, outfits for dolls, and sewing skills.

But, according to Formanek-Brunell, little girls and boys also *resist* proscribed notions of childhood play with dolls. They are not only interested in tea parties, miniaturized funerals (a death in the family is acted out through play with dolls) and the fictional literature of “doll culture” advocating “the portrayal of love between a doll and a girl, which often straddled the boundaries between maternal love and romantic love” (Formanek-Brunell 371). In the case of boys often the “authoritative public roles such as doctor, preacher, and undertaker to sick, dying, and dead dolls” are assumed (Formanek-Brunell 374). Children also express anger and aggression toward dolls rather than love and affection – breaking a doll because it is crying, disciplining a “doll by making it eat dirt, stones, and coal” in addition to doll funerals that celebrate, rather than mourn, death (Formanek-Brunell 374-375).

The devil-doll Chucky is a monster of late capitalism and patriarchy, ruthlessly exploiting the single parent household. Chucky also exposes one of *Child's Play's* underlying narrative anxieties, the absence of Karen's husband and Andy's father. In terms of paternity, gender, and the nuclear family Chucky's connection to Andy is both a confession and a calculated manipulation. When Karen asks her son why he and Chucky are so close, why Andy talks to Chucky as if he is a living-breathing friend, Andy replies that Chucky's “real name is Charles Lee Ray and he's been sent down from heaven by Daddy to play with me.”

The representation of Andy's relationship with Chucky is at first a benign expression of anger and grief at the loss of Andy's father. Yet Andy soon discovers that Chucky is a monstrous patriarch who translates the “rational aspects of market calculation” into a commodified weapon of horrific destruction. The value of Chucky as a devil-doll is “determined by its ability to subvert convention, mock materialism, and undermine restrictions” posed by, for example, patriarchal authority (Formanek-Brunell 375). A consumable surrogate father to Andy, the subject of the devil-doll in *Child's Play* is a question of vitality and criminality, the life force within Chucky and the devil-doll's place within the hierarchy of the Barclay Family.

Conclusion

Child's Play belongs within the pantheon of horror cinema beside Cavalcanti's “The Ventriloquist's Dummy” and James Whale's *Frankenstein*. In *Frankenstein*, the lightning bolt is representative of a life force or soul that is super-added. According to Richard Holmes, the inspiration for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is due in part to The Vitalism Debate between the years 1816 and 1820. The materialist, rather than metaphysical, view of human life during these debates denied the existence of a soul and looked, instead, to biology, specifically craniology and racial typology.(55) Robert Spadoni writes that Whale's *Frankenstein* is representative of the shift in cinematic perception of space, sound, rhythms, bodies, acting gestures, and spoken language. The deeply compromised nature of the monster's living state, Spadoni argues, as well as the creative potential of sound in film, is indicated by the audibility of electricity.(56) Criminality, the “deeply compromised nature” that exists between metaphysics (a life force or soul) and materialism (a criminal brain), between Shelley and Whale's vision of *Frankenstein*, is indispensable to *Child's Play*, it is the lightning rod that seizes the lightning bolt of consumer culture.

Victoria Nelson writes that the possessed doll in *Child's Play* is physically as well as socially autonomous, a devil-doll in the tradition of “The Ventriloquist's Dummy.” She points out that Chucky, like Hugo, is “an

inanimate object invested with the aura of childhood innocence that is suddenly infused with (always) demonic energy – the upsurge of the supernatural grotesque from the least anticipated source” (Nelson 2001).(57) According to Nelson, the serial killer Charles Lee Ray represents the “American mass culture’s coded icon of unrepentant evil, the secular stand-in for the Devil” (Nelson 2001).(58) Furthermore, Chucky expands on the story of *Frankenstein* by disposing of his human master. “Forget Dr. Frankenstein,” Nelson writes, the killer puppet in *Child’s Play* repudiates its “now-superfluous human agents, acquiring supernatural powers along with... freedom”; the roles of master and slave are reversed by “the newly independent and increasingly omnipotent simulacra” (Nelson 2001).(59)

A Frankenstein in the age of late capitalism, Chucky subverts the credo of consumer production and branding – toys to be desired are in fact toys that frame their owners for murder. Hiding in plain sight as a toy that no one would think to interrogate, Chucky the devil-doll is, metaphorically speaking, *both* puppet and puppeteer. *Child’s Play’s* contribution to, and by extension the proper place of *Child’s Play* within the pantheon of, the modern horror film is that the devil-doll can kill as effectively as celebrity slashers. As David Hajdu points out, the capacity for selfless love is the ability to put away childish things, “to grow up and pack up our toys” (Hajdu 2010).(60) Charles Lee Ray’s possession of and transformation into Chucky is representative of adulthood’s refusal to pack up its toys. Chucky literally and figuratively exploits the Good Guy as the object of Andy’s selfless love in order to corrupt and destroy the Barclay Family.

I would like to thank Bernice Murphy and Elizabeth McCarthy for their helpful suggestions and revisions, especially regarding the distinction between the evil doll as a psychological projection versus an object that is desired or possessed.

1. In the United States the late-20th century moral panic surrounding “satanic ritual abuse” (SRA) or “satanic panic” looms over *Child’s Play* and the crypto-vooodoo dark arts that are Ray’s criminal expertise.
2. Newman, K. (ed.) (1997), *The BFI Companion to Horror*, New York: Cassell, p. 68.
3. According to Brigid Cherry, “Slashers are films portraying groups of teenagers menaced by a stalker, set in domestic and suburban spaces frequented by young people, the only survivor a female who (in the early cycles) has not participated in underage sex.” Cherry, B. (2009), *Horror*, New York: Routledge, p. 6. The *Child’s Play* franchise consists of four installments between 1990 and 2004, following Holland’s 1988 film, with the promise of a remake in 2014
4. Notably: Grant, B.K. and Sharrett, C. (eds.) (1984), *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press; Wood, R. (1986), *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, New York: Columbia University Press; Carroll, N. (1990), *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart*, New York: Routledge; Clover, C.J. (1992), *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Creed, B. (1993), *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge; Halberstam, J. (1995), *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press; Grant, B.K. (ed.) (1996), *The Dread of Difference: Gender the Horror Film*, Austin: University of Texas Press; Gelder, K. (ed.) (2000), *The Horror Reader*, London: Routledge; Jancovich, M. (2002), *Horror: The Film Reader*, New York: Routledge; Lowenstein, A. (2005), *Shocking Representations: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, New York: Columbia University Press; Worland, R. (2007), *The Horror Film: An Introduction*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing; Hantke, S. (ed.) (2010), *American Horror Film: The Genre at the Turn of the Millennium* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi).
5. Dixon, W.W. (2010), *A History of Horror*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, p. 168.
6. Wood, R. (1979), ‘An Introduction to the American Horror Film’, in R. Wood and R. Lippe (eds.), *The American Nightmare*, Toronto: Festival of Festivals, pp. 7-28.
Wood then expands on this essay with ‘The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s’, in R. Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 63-84.
7. Clover, C.J. (1987), ‘Her Body Himself: Gender in the Clasher Film’, *Representations*, no. 20, Fall, pp. 187-228. Clover then expands on this essay with Clover, C.J. (1992), *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
8. Clover, C.J. (1992), p. 5.
9. Clover, C.J. (1992), p. 7.
10. Grant, B.K. and Sharrett, C. (eds.) (1984), *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press; Grant, B.K. (ed.) (1996), *The Dread of Difference: Gender the Horror Film*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
11. Wood, R. (2003), *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan...and Beyond*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 168-172.
12. Noël Carroll defines art-horror as “a cross-art, cross-media genre,” including literature, comic books, pulp magazines, theater, film, ballet, opera, musical, radio, and television. Carroll writes, “‘art-horror,’ by stipulation, is meant to refer to the product of a genre that crystallized, speaking very roughly, around the time of the publication of *Frankenstein*.” Carroll, N. (1990), *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart*, New York: Routledge, pp. 12-13.
Joan Hawkins adds the mail-order catalog and video market listings in horror fanzines, for example *Outré*, *Fangoria*, and *Cinefantastique*, to Carroll’s art-horror list. Hawkins writes that art-horror, as it is advertised and marketed in horror fanzines, challenges “the binary opposition of prestige cinema (European art and avant-grade/experimental films) and popular culture,” highlighting “an aspect of art cinema generally overlooked or repressed in cultural analysis; namely, the degree to which high culture trades on the same images, tropes, and themes that characterize low culture.” Hawkins, J. (2000), *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 3.

13. Hills, M. (2007), 'Para-Paracinema: The *Friday the 13th* Film Series as Other to Trash and Legitimate Film Cultures', in J. Sconce (ed.), *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 219-239.
See also: Sconce, J. (1995), "Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and the Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style', *Screen*, no. 36, pp. 371-393; Hawkins, J. (2000), *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Conrich, I. (2010), 'The *Friday the 13th* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol', in I. Conrich (ed.), *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Cinema*, London: I.B. Taurus, pp. 173-188.
14. Bertellini, G. (2004), 'Profondo rosso/Deep Red', in G. Bertellini (ed.), *The Cinema of Italy*, London: Wallflower Press, p. 215.
15. Carroll's 'paradoxes of the heart' are the paradox of fiction, the question of how people can be moved or horrified by what they know does not exist, and the paradox of horror, the question of how people can be attracted to what is repulsive in terms of the imagery of horror cinema. Carroll, N. (1990), p. 160.
16. Lancy, D.F. (2008), *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also: Zelizer, V.A. (1985), *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, New York: Basic Books.
17. Lancy, D.F. (2008), p. 5.
18. Stockton, K.B. (2009), *The Queer Child, or Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 5.
19. I greatly appreciate Bernice Murphy's comment that in *Weiland* Carwin is a biloquist, not a ventriloquist. The difference being that while Carwin throws his voice, he doesn't do so through the medium of a doll.
20. Nelson, V. (2001), *The Secret Life of Puppets*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 257.
21. Wood, R. (2003), 'The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s', in *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan . . . and Beyond*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 68.
22. Fiennes, S. (2006), *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*. Mischief Films: Mischief Films.
The majority of Žižek's commentary in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* is drawn from: Žižek, S. (1989), 'Looking Awry', October, no. 50, Fall, pp. 31-55; and Žižek, S. (1992), *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
23. Fiennes, S. (2006).
In *The Exorcist*, Regan initially refers to the demonic being that will possess her as "Captain Howdy." Regarding the voice of the adult that possesses or speaks through the body of the child, I thank Bernice Murphy for also pointing out that Regan's father's name, coincidentally, is Howard.
24. Fiennes, S. (2006).
25. Fiennes, S. (2006).
26. Nelson, V. (2001), pp. 251-252.
27. Wells, P. (2000), *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*, London: Wallflower, p. 8.
28. Wells, P. (2000), p. 8.
29. Wells, P. (2000), p. 8.
30. Wells writes that:
Psychoanalyst Otto Rank wrote of 'Der Doppelgänger' in 1914, suggesting that the double was essentially the way in which the soul or ego sought to preserve itself, ensuring against destruction by replicating itself. Bound up with a narcissistic self-love which is self-protecting and strongly predicated to the denial of death, this act of 'doubling' can work in reverse. Once the double is cleaved or threatened, it heightens the degree by which mortality and the signs of death are enhanced. Wells, P. (2000), pp. 8-9.
31. Wells, P. (2000), p. 8.
32. Norman, N. (2005), 'Archie Andrews: The Rise and Fall of a Ventriloquist's Dummy', *The Independent*,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/archie-andrews-the-rise-and-fall-of-a-ventriloquists-dummy-516992.html>. Accessed 6 July 2010.

33. Norman, N. (2005).

34. Norman, N. (2005).

35. Norman, N. (2005).

36. Norman, N. (2005).

37. Norman, N. (2005).

38. Bergen, C. (1984), *Knock Wood*, New York: Ballantine, p. 46.

Norman writes that, according to Candice Bergen, 'Charlie's room in' the Bergen's 'Beverly Hills home,' included a 'bed, wardrobe filled with monogrammed clothes, desk, West Point cadet's hat, feathered Indian headdress and pin-up of Dorothy Lamour. Most creepy of all,' Bergen 'recollects sitting on her father's knee being encouraged to converse with the wooden brother perched opposite her.' Norman, N. (2005).

39. Gibson, M. and Rafter, N.H. (2006), *Criminal Man*. By Cesare Lombroso, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 402.

40. Examples of 'monstrous puberty' in the modern horror film include *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976), *Martin* (Romero, 1977), and *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978).

41. Fiennes, S. (2006).

42. Newman, K. (ed.) (1997), *The BFI Companion to Horror*, New York: Cassell, p. 98.

43. Fiennes, S. (2006).

44. I greatly appreciate Bernice Murphy's comment that in the UK, *Child's Play 3* (1991) became a lightning rod for anxieties about murderous juveniles when it was wrongly connected to a notorious crime committed by 10-year-old boys.

See: 'Child's Play 3: Venables & Thompson', *mediaknowall: Violence in the Media*,

http://www.mediaknowall.com/as_alevel/mediaviolence/violence.php?pageID=child. Accessed 11 April 2012.

45. Williams, R. (1976), *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 78-79.

46. Williams, R. (1976), p. 79.

47. (2004), 'Reagonomics or "voodoo economics"?' , *BBC News*, <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/270292.stm>. Accessed 7 July 2010.

48. Berlant, L. (1997), *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 3.

49. Berlant, L. (1997) p. 1.

50. Berlant, L. (1997), p. 3.

51. Berlant, L. (1997), p. 8.

52. Thanks to Professor Jacqueline Reich for her insight regarding Karen Barclay's black market experience in *Child's Play* as a teachable moment in consumer culture.

53. Cook, D.T. (2004), *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

54. Formanek-Brunell, M. ([1993] 1998), 'The Politics of Dollhood in Nineteenth-Century America', in H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Children's Culture Reader*, New York: NYU Press, pp. 363-381.

The Gilded Age refers to a period of substantial growth in population in the United States, in addition to extravagant displays of wealth and excess of America's upper class during the post-Civil War and post-Reconstruction era in the late-19th century (1865-1901). The term 'Gilded Age' was coined by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in their 1873 book, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*.

55. Holmes, R. (2009), *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*, New York: Pantheon.

56. Spadoni, R. (2007), *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 29.
57. Nelson, V. (2001), p. 258.
58. Nelson, V. (2001), p. 258.
59. Nelson, V. (2001), p. 258.
60. Hajdu, D. (2010), 'The Toys Are Us', *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/opinion/20hajdu.html>. Accessed 29 May 2011.