



Home and the Superego: The Risky Business of Being Home Alone

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Abstract

Risky Business (1983) and *Home Alone* (1990) are strikingly similar popular American films, family comedies. In both, the family conveniently vanishes and the son is left home alone, presented with the temptations of a newfound freedom which he promptly abuses, and then with seemingly overwhelming problems which he solves through ingenuity and risk-taking. Both are fantasies of the wise child in which adults are unsympathetic (*Risky Business*) or incompetent (*Home Alone*) and the child becomes the real adult. If we consider the superego as the internalized voice of the parents and of the culture, then both young protagonists are in revolt against the superego. In both films, we see the paradox of the child hero trashing his home in order to defend it. The two films present a rebellion against superego, home, and family not as an assault but as a defense of superego, home, and family. Both films represent the divided societal superego of America in the 1980s.

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