

# **Carrying Tremendous Weight:**

Trauma Theory Applied to Horror Fiction in *Carrie* by Stephen King and *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris

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This thesis studies the relationship between real-life trauma and horror literature. The main focal point is how the experiences of female characters in horror stories reflect the trauma people face in real life. Throughout the research I use literary trauma theory and psychoanalytic criticism as the main theories for analysis. These theories are utilized in studying the primary sources *Carrie* by Stephen King and *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris. The aim is to consider the similarities between the traumatizing themes involving the women depicted in these books and the real-life events that have a significant part in causing trauma. Through my study of how trauma is received and experienced in fictitious depictions of it, I conclude that such depictions are closely tied to real-life anxieties that are especially felt by women. Whether the trauma is physical, sexual or emotional, oftentimes the consequences are dire and can have transgenerational effects. Trauma is a common element in horror literature, and the characters chosen for analysis depict different aspects of it, as well as different ways to write about trauma. Additionally, the research concludes that trauma experienced by women is often afflicted by a patriarchal society which seeks control over women. This is present in the novels' trauma narratives accordingly, as characters are faced with issues of motherhood and sexuality, both topics that have historically caused discord in real-life issues and the literary world.

**Key words:** Stephen King, Carrie, Thomas Harris, Silence of the Lambs, literary trauma theory, trauma transfer, horror fiction, patriarchal terrorism

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## 1 Introduction

Horror literature is, at its core, a complexity of negative feelings and tragic events turned into entertainment. Strong or shocking content is useful for eliciting a response in the readers, and there are several ways of doing this. In the introduction to *Horror Literature through History* Cardin (2017, xxxi) argues that horror itself is not even a genre; in its vastness of narratives, it can be better described as a mode. It can tell a story about nearly any topic or theme, such as supernatural creatures, psychological complexities, or extreme acts of violence, but arguably all horror stories share the common objective of causing a certain effect in the reader. This occurrence of intentional horror can be caused by and through a limitless assortment of means in the writer's disposal. The effects of a horror novel vary depending on the author's intentions as well as the disposition and personal experiences of the reader.

An excellent question to ask, then, is why anyone would voluntarily want to engage with literature that makes them feel negative or uncomfortable feelings, especially when dealing with such a personal and possibly offensive topic as trauma. Cardin (2017, xxx) goes to say that what makes *horror* special and different from just *fear* is an additional sense of inherent wrongness. The feeling of repulsion and dread when faced with something that feels wrong is not limited to just reactions to fiction, but importantly can also be identified when faced with happenings in real life. This bond between experiences that a reader may have undergone in their life and the stories that they read is the explanation to why something fictional can cause a strong emotional response. This is, of course, relevant to all media consumption, but especially in terms of horror it is important to truly define the reasons why a reader can feel so strongly about what is being told and how. Oftentimes people can identify the trauma depicted in fiction and relate it to real-life experiences. But in some cases, reading about horrible experiences that are extremely relatable is too harsh or even traumatizing for the reader, so it is a fine line between experiencing validation or anxiety. In this thesis I study horror fiction from the perspective of trauma theory, utilizing common points from feminist literary theory as well as psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Horror provides an avenue for intricate study of gender, but simultaneously individual pieces of horror writing can hold extremely misogynistic values. Femininity and masculinity are often present in horror stories, taking the shape of monsters and victims. Buckley (2017, 66) discusses the evolution of this topic: "Through the continued reinventions of its monsters, horror fiction offers a space in which to negotiate, challenge and reimagine ideas about

sexuality and gender into the contemporary moment.” Regarding women and feminine monsters in fiction of the past, it is often precisely their female nature and traits that are in some way exaggerated to a large degree, mutated into something that is perceived as wrong. Very commonly the biologically feminine act of birth is depicted in horror as something traumatic or monstrous. Another common theme in horror literature is female sexuality being hostile and violent, therefore punishable. The misogynistic view that women acting upon their sexual desires is indecent is perhaps an antiquated thought, but it is still often reflected in fiction. This is not relevant to only female monsters, but victims as well. Through literary history women have had to play the part of the sufferer, the sacrifice, for the (often male) adversaries to defile. As Hall (2011, 216–17) suggests, like it has been a staple for a long time in horror for women to take the place of the passive character, this is also true for a classic like *Frankenstein*. Like scary stories told to children to make them obey their parents, horror novels can be sometimes seen as cautionary tales for women, especially sexually active ones, to make them submit to the roles deemed suitable for them. Sexuality and gender are extremely common themes in horror, but the treatment of these topics is largely dependent on the text in question.

Hall (2011, 213) argues that Mary Shelley’s experience of losing her mother at birth and her own anxieties about successfully having children are evident in *Frankenstein*. Further, this anxiety is not only particular to Shelley, but rather present in society as a whole (ibid.). This brings us back to the earlier point of horror fiction collecting inspiration from the seemingly natural event of birth. Despite it being an extremely common part of life, it is still, specifically for some women, a subject of pain, trauma, and angst. Throughout history the process of having children has been a given for economical and societal reasons. As members of the patriarchal society, women have been deemed necessary for this reason and most suited for raising children. Women’s main role for centuries was being associated with motherhood and the delivery of the future generations. Although contemporary society the birth of a child is most often a joyous event, this is and has not been true for everyone in reality or in fiction. The trope of a symbolic and unwanted (or even evil) birth, resulting in monstrous offspring or the death of the bearer is often seen in horror fiction and film. This is a purposeful distortion of the natural birth, the horrible event of something going deeply wrong and the result being something *other*. It is easy to see how such an impactful ordeal can be cause for trauma depending on circumstance, among other significant societal and social aspects that influence

women. Altogether, traits and roles associated with femininity still rely on traditional understandings of gender roles and expectations of women.

In this thesis I study the occurrence of trauma in horror literature, specifically focusing on female characters and how they manifest trauma of an explicitly feminine nature. As mentioned, some topics surrounding and facets inherent to women can be traumatic and constructed to appear as “horrificing.” I examine this three-way relationship between women, horror literature and trauma, the implications and expressions of these ties in literature, and how they can be studied using literary criticism. I compare the presentation of trauma in horror literature to real-life psychological studies on trauma, as well as to the idea of trauma novels (coined by literary trauma analysts). I also consider how the trauma narrations in horror are depicted; is the reader explicitly meant to emphasize with the traumatized characters in horror fiction? As Vickroy (2015, 183) mentions, sometimes the traumatized person’s destructive behaviour challenges the reader’s empathy, and this is highlighted in horror novels where characters often act in extreme ways when dealing with their trauma. Throughout the research I perform a qualitative analysis on the books *Carrie* (1974) by Stephen King and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) (henceforth referred to as *Silence*) by Thomas Harris. By analysing the depictions of trauma in these texts I aim to highlight the aforementioned connections between female trauma and its contribution to and role in making horror what it is in the contemporary literary field.

## 2 Outlining the novels

In this section I briefly introduce the novels I use as primary sources in this thesis. In addition to plot summaries, I go over the characters that I am focusing on in the analysis sections and consider what makes up the core of my research in the books. I define the boundaries of my research regarding the characters and plot points, as well as give an overview of the main characteristics I deem relevant in the texts. Both of the books are quite different regarding their plots, characters and narrative styles but my aim is to pick out the facets that come together in the end under my research. Interestingly, the protagonists of the books are in certain ways two diverging stories of the consequences of trauma and how it can be dealt with. *Carrie* is a novel about constant trauma leading to events of explosion, destruction and death. The main character never gets to recover, though she does get revenge. *Silence* on the other hand is about a woman trying to deal with her own trauma by following her path in life and managing her psyche relatively well. Though her personal story is not meaningfully resolved, one can imagine that her efforts will pay off in the future.

### 2.1 *Carrie*

A high school girl's unfortunate and short life and the effect she has on the people and the environment around her are in focus in *Carrie*. The title character of the book is the main character Carrie White, and her supernatural skills in telekinesis (as well as later becomes evident, telepathy) construct the plot of the novel. To briefly summarize the events, Carrie is being severely bullied at school due to her abnormal behaviour and poor looks, as well as abused at home, and she begins to develop and further control her powers that initially occurred in her early childhood. Her abusive and deeply religious mother controls her whole life, but Carrie slowly begins to fight back and think more for herself. The plot culminates in Carrie getting cruelly pranked at the school prom by a fellow classmate. She and her boyfriend plot to pour buckets of blood on Carrie when she is crowned the queen of the ball, which incites Carrie's ultimate breakdown and rampage, leading to the deaths of hundreds. Eventually she herself dies, presumably from a knife wound her mother inflicts, and the exertion of using her powers to a huge degree.

Carrie is naturally my main focus in the analysis on trauma of the characters in this book. Carrie lives with her fundamentalist Christian mother, Margaret, whose conservative and abusive behaviour is apparent and detrimental to Carrie's wellbeing. Margaret lives in fear of

Carrie's supernatural powers, and as a whole sees her as evil incarnate. This has roots in the mother's deep religious beliefs that border on delusion, and the fact that Carrie is a child of rape, therefore a reminder of her husband's violence. These points are extremely relevant to my analysis on female trauma, and I study Margaret on topics such as motherhood, rape and familial abuse. Further, I study large-scale trauma on a general level, regarding the mass destruction caused by Carrie. As I go to mention in section 6.3, trauma is not necessarily always interpersonal in quality, but it can also occur to people that have experienced wide-scale traumatizing events, such as war or natural disasters. I argue that Carrie's frenzied actions that cause her hometown to go into a state of panic and disarray qualify as a traumatic event such as mentioned. Tying all these depiction of trauma together, I assert that *Carrie* is fundamentally a tragic story about the development and causes of untreated trauma and childhood abuse.

## **2.2 *Silence of the Lambs***

As a thriller and a crime novel, *The Silence of the Lambs* is narratively more complicated than *Carrie*. There are more plot points and action taking place in the novel, and the characters are also treated quite differently. Regardless of this, my research is similarly focused on certain aspects of the characters' narratives and the appearance of trauma in the novel. The plot revolves around Clarice Starling, an FBI agent in-training, who is set out on a job to interview the imprisoned serial killer Hannibal Lecter. Her goal is to receive information to assist the ongoing investigation on "Buffalo Bill," an active serial-murderer who kidnaps women and skins them. Detective work aided by Hannibal's tips and knowledge leads Clarice to eventually tracking down the killer. After a struggle, she manages to shoot him and save the woman he had as a hostage at the time.

The protagonist Clarice is my main point of research, and I delve into her past and present as a source of trauma. Her childhood, which consists of the loss of her father, a traumatizing stay with family and life at an orphanage, is rife with potential traumatic events. I study how these instances influence her personality, as well how her current occupation and daily life affect these matters. As a part of her career, Clarice sees things that could be described as traumatizing to any average person. In addition to witnessing acts of extreme violence and death, she is also the target of harassment and mockery due to her being a woman. I analyse how her past and present have inflicted trauma on her, as well as how she manages to live with this trauma. Clarice's trauma narrative is in the focus, and I highlight how the novel's

society mistreats her through sexism, and therefore adds to her trauma. Finally, similarly as with *Carrie*, I discuss how an active serial killer can cause wide-scale trauma to the general public. The effects of it might not be as apparent or as severe as the direct destruction by Carrie, but nevertheless a serious threat or even the possibility of violence and death can cause vast distress in a localized group of people.

### 3 Trauma defined

As part of psychoanalysis and its application in literary analysis, trauma is a term often associated with the works of Sigmund Freud. In addition to his historical renown in psychology, he is also the originator of classical psychoanalytic literary criticism. It is important to me to define the background of the subject, as I will not purely rely on Freud's opinions, but rather I aim to reach a more contemporary approach to both the psychological and analytical aspects surrounding the topic of trauma. I do not strictly adhere to Freud's methods or definitions. Despite this, it is necessary to consider where the approach and the terminology of it were first used. The origin of trauma is Greek τραῦμα ('traûma'), a word used in medicine: "Trauma was originally the term for a surgical wound, conceived on the model of *a rupture of the skin* or protective envelope of the body resulting in *a catastrophic global reaction* in the entire organism" (Leys 2000, 19; emphasis added). In psychoanalysis the term was adopted to transfer its meaning to the lexicon of mental health. According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1974, 466), the transfer retained three aspects from the medical meaning: an initial shock, a remaining wound and the effects of it on the larger complex. This follows the general modern idea of trauma having an origin (the traumatic event itself) as well as the issues that linger and are caused by the event (in some cases appearing as PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder).

Sigmund Freud himself had a different idea surrounding trauma. His understanding was that the remembering of the past event was key. More specifically, the delay and dissonance between the time of trauma and the time of "remembering" it (often occurring as part of sexual maturity) was what caused the person's discomfort. As Leys (2000, 20) describes: "For Freud, trauma was thus constituted by a dialectic between two events, neither of which was intrinsically traumatic, and a temporal delay or latency through which the past was available only by a deferred act of understanding and interpretation." As one can see, the idea of the intricacies involved in trauma has largely shifted towards an understanding that emphasizes the initial event as the cause of pain. Freud's theories on the importance of sexual maturity and traumatic memories on the other hand, while not completely abandoned by all, seem to have aged poorly in many people's eyes. Therefore, I endeavour to utilize more current-day perspectives and sources in my analysis, while still staying aware of the history of the field.

## 4 Literary trauma theory

Expanding the meaning of trauma into literature demands that the topic be adapted to fit into a different scientific environment altogether. This field is a relatively new addition to literary criticism, and the most notable work that gained attention during early stages of criticism is Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). This work was fundamental to the general growth of the field and the understanding that trauma theory could also be applied into literature. Caruth's and their peers' analyses relied heavily upon revisiting theories that coincided with Freud's thoughts regarding temporal gaps and the recollection of the traumatic event (Caruth 1996). In comparison to this early thinking, literary trauma theory has evolved in leaps and bounds during the last decades in congruence with the growing understanding of the topic. Balaev (2014, 2) mentions in her introduction of "*Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*": "The evolution of trauma theory in literary criticism might best be understood in terms of the changing psychological definitions of trauma as well as the semiotic, rhetorical, and social concerns that are part of the study of trauma in literature and society". While the existence of trauma itself can be seen as an unchanging fact, general attitudes towards it and the understanding of it are in constant transition. The discourse around trauma theory is therefore not simple, nor can it be easily summarized, as different scholars have different ideas surrounding it. Elsaesser reflects on the general understanding of trauma theory and how it is to be analysed in a two-sided manner in the contexts of both psychology and literature:

[Trauma theory] subsumes on the one hand the body of thought around the experience of Holocaust survivors, the clinical case histories around post-traumatic stress disorders and the public debates around the so-called 'memory wars' (recovered memory syndrome). On the other hand, it names and associates itself with an ongoing effort in the humanities – [...] — to probe these divergent issues and cultural interventions. (Elsaesser 2001, 194)

As mentioned in the quote, the origin of trauma study subsides in psychology. It was initially comprised of the studies around PTSD and the events that lead to it, as well as debates on Freudian memory recollection. Secondly, it found influence among humanitarians in the literary field through Caruth's analysis, thus expanding into literary trauma theory. Altogether, the history of trauma studies residing in psychology cannot be ignored. Trauma novels themselves have varying definitions, with the most open opinions not excluding any type of narration, style or even content. While some literature relies on graphic retellings and gruesome details, some take a more subtle stance by utilizing symbolic imagery or the

complete omission of the traumatic event (Balaev 2008, 159). These varying depictions of trauma constitute what is regarded as trauma literature. Balaev (2008, 150) expands on this: “The term ‘trauma novel’ refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels.” At first glance, it is easy to see how this definition can encompass a huge variety of books and stories. Trauma is not an unusual phenomenon in real life, so it is natural that authors would also use it as part of story writing for a multitude of reasons.

The motivations for using traumatizing events as plot points in media can vary, and criticism has been aimed at various authors, directors and screenwriters, accusing them of taking advantage of both real-life horrors that people (often women or children) have to go through, as well as the audience’s desire for these sorts of stories. The basic concept that authors manifest their own ideas and worldviews in their narratives, including ones of trauma, is the basis for most literary trauma analysis. In their book *Readings of Trauma, Madness, and the Body*, Anderson (2012, 8) introduces different directions that literary critics have taken in studying the area; the primary focus is on how narratives attempt to let readers access their own trauma through fiction, in a way transferring the trauma to them with the intent of highlighting the effects of cultural oppression. On the other hand, there is the distinct possibility that the author themselves has personally experienced some notion of trauma and is using their work to process or share their own unique past. Following this thinking, Tal, a peer of Caruth’s, has a stricter definition of trauma narration. Their theories, while sharing some aspects with Caruth, are quite different in point of focus. Tal (1991, 16) emphasizes the roles of the victims of trauma in literature; to them, only the survivors of trauma are fully capable of understanding the literature written by the traumatized, reading in context of their own trauma as “the reexperience of trauma in the reader will always be derived from the reader’s own traumatic experience [...] the non-traumatized reader does not have access to the meanings of sign that invoke traumatic memory.” This would suggest that trauma narratives are solely based on the shared understanding of signs between survivors, with non-survivors being unable to detect the hidden meanings. Tal (1991, 17) also emphasizes the importance of the communication between literature written by the traumatized and non-traumatized, but ultimately deems only the writings of those identifying as trauma survivors as the “literature of trauma.” Their more conservative definition moves the focus to the identity of the survivors and highlights their agency and testimonials.

Having sufficiently studied trauma writing and theory from multiple perspectives, I move on to a more detailed analysis on writing trauma in the genre of horror. I consider how horror is different from other types of literature with special attention given to how trauma is represented and used in the genre. Viewing horror from the perspective of literary trauma theory I analyse whether horror is antithetical to, or possibly included in, trauma literature. I suggest that while common in all literature, trauma has a special place in horror through its ability to affect readers through depiction of real-life issues. In seeking to cause strong emotions in the audience, horror utilizes the empathy people experience with traumatized characters. It is another thing altogether if these texts can be considered trauma novels. In the following subsections, I focus on the matter of female-specific trauma. While traumatic events cannot be strictly divided by gender or sex, it is significant to consider the actual occurrences of trauma depictions based on female suffering. I study common female anxieties that appear both in real life and literature, be it through transference of experience and emotion, or the tradition of using female distress for content in fiction.

#### **4.1 Horror literature and trauma**

Horror is a genre of literature that inevitably ends up incorporating themes and subjects that reflect real-life problems and fears. This leads to trauma events and traumatized characters often appearing in the focus of horror novels. The usage of trauma to incite reactions and feelings in readers is a way to enforce the impact the author wants their writing to have, often over-emphasizing negative feelings as is natural for horror. Subjects like death, violence, abuse and rape are obviously recognizable to anyone as something to be afraid of, or feel horror towards, on a practical level. Carroll (1987, 52) supports this notion: “Like suspense novels or mystery novels, novels are denominated horrific in respect of their intended capacity to provoke a certain affective response.” No one wants to be the target of the aforementioned actions, and most readers would have the empathy to feel the same towards characters in a book.

Notably, there is a variety of different attitudes towards the horror genre that range from repulsion to infatuation. What is the reason for people consuming (and presumably) enjoying the horrific stories in these novels? In their article Bantinaki (2012, 389–90) proposes an answer: Horror is a safe mode for experiencing negative emotions, primarily fear, in a non-risk environment. They suggest that the action of consuming horror is parallel to a real-life threatening situation. The benefit the reader receives from this emulation of danger is a

learning opportunity; they can develop better coping mechanisms and feeling management in an environment with no actual risk involved (ibid.). I find this notion extremely interesting and also a likely scenario, as some people are often drawn towards seeking extreme feelings and situations. While most average people do not purposefully seek out bad experiences, there is an inherent curiosity in exploring the extremes. For many, fiction is a relatively safe way to experience situations that they might not actually want to be in themselves. Horror fiction serves to mimic real-life horror, with readers inserting themselves into imaginary situations and, in a way, testing out the harmful experiences in order to learn. While this is probably not the first reason an average horror fanatic would name when asked why they are drawn to the genre, it is a relatively logical explanation to the popularity of horror in general.

But what is the role of real-life trauma in horror literature? Where do fictitious stories, ultimately written for entertainment, stand in comparison to actual psychologically damaging events? Some would argue that a portion of horror is inherently exploitative, as it uses trauma as inspiration. As literature and art in general, horror is forced to draw from reality, be it corporeal events or the creator's inner world. Often, the abuse and trauma women (and children) face in the real world is reflected in these stories. A large part of horror fiction revolves around these groups facing trauma. The trope of portraying women as the victims in fiction is an old one, with horror often markedly focusing on the juxtaposition between protagonist and villain. If the antagonistic power targets specifically women or children, it is viewed as inherently more abhorrent. Alongside this one-sided setting, there also exists the alternative: The woman appearing as the sinister force themselves. Women as either victims or villains is a thinking pattern that permeates both psychological fields and the world of fiction. The simplified duality might not have anything to do with actual women, but it is related to how society and cultures view them. The trope of dividing women into groups of good and bad is one that ultimately does serve the genre of horror.

Regarding this classification of female characters, it is important to consider what angle the characters are supposed to be viewed from. Taking *Carrie* as an example, her character arch is one of revenge. Her traumatic life as an abused child and teenager is sure to elicit sympathy from readers, but few would say her destructive actions are exactly justifiable. There is a certain degree of empowerment in her development from a clear victim to a holder of power, even the villain of the book. The horror in her story resides in the abuse as well as the eventual implosion of her feelings and powers stemming from her constant anxiety and fear. The abuse she suffers is enough to make her a cruel and remorseless character with unlimited

power in the end. King's description of Carrie's life makes her actions make sense on a certain level. Although they are ruthless and violent, on a base level one can understand how this sort of a traumatic life could hypothetically lead one to take severe action. Jaber (2021, 166) describes *Carrie*'s narration of transformation from victim to perpetrator as an amalgamation of all this trauma: "[T]he story infuses trauma with horror and violence so that abuse is set against revenge – the victim of violence turns into a killer." Even though the events in *Carrie* have a not-insignificant supernatural element to them, the basic story of an unfortunate child in a bad environment taking revenge is not uncommon. The protagonist's gender is what makes the plot slightly more unique; women acting out in anger and bloodlust is a relatively polarizing topic, especially during the 70s when *Carrie* was written. In *Silence*, Clarice is a more mature protagonist and the troubles she faces are quite different. Her character is written to be empowering; a brave woman working in a dangerous environment and often going against the wishes of men in power. The horror and crime elements of the book deal closely with violence against women, but Clarice is written as the opposing and victorious power towards them. Although she has suffered trauma, her symptoms do not function to limit her in large capacity, rather they drive her forwards in her ambitions and profession. She is not a victim in the context of the events of the novel, but she is a victim of her past life. Clarice has to face her past to reconcile her present; she is trying her best to silence the demons of her childhood by saving other people now that she is able to do so. She is character focused on saving others and her trauma drives her toward this goal, unlike Carrie, who instead ends up hurting the people around her.

## 4.2 Female anxieties

In this section I discuss female identity based on trauma and common female anxieties, as well as how these are reflected in my chosen novels. In today's society women face disproportionate rates of traumatic violence and PTSD (Motta 2020, 15). The majority of this violence is committed by men, more specifically the intimate partners of the victims (UN Women, 2021). This is based on the patriarchal structure that most societies are controlled by; women are at a disadvantage because of men's superior societal, economical and often even physical power. Sexuality and motherhood are some of the themes innate to women's experiences of anxiety and stress that have inherent complexities to them. They comprise a large part of the historical and social environment that women have to live with. Through feminist ideology topics like these have been reclaimed for women's own analysis and study, with contemporary women seeking to attain complete control over their own lives and

possibilities. Nevertheless, women still experience high levels of trauma and adverse social encounters. Connecting this to horror fiction, I analyse how these themes are presented in *Carrie* and *Silence*. The presence of innate female anxiety is apparent in both books; whether it be Carrie's traumatic upbringing of shame and oppression, or Clarice's difficulties managing to live and work in a clearly male-dominated world. The suffering of these characters in their respective worlds is featured heavily, and it is a large component of the horror that is being evoked by the authors.

#### 4.2.1 Sexuality

Historically, women have often been at the mercy of society's perceptions regarding what is acceptable behaviour, sexually or otherwise. Women's independent sexual or marital choices were seen as challenging the societal status quo, as they threatened the dominance of decision-making men. Tying into motherhood, oftentimes women were also seen as naturally more able to carry responsibility for sexual behaviour as a whole, as the consequences of sexual actions were often more implicating to them (Bozon et al. 2015, 13). This simultaneously pushed the majority of responsibility and baggage of sex and sexuality onto women, and made them more vulnerable to the negative consequences, like having an unwanted child for example. These issues of sexuality and reproduction were extremely relevant up until late 20th century and are also closely tied to the relatively recent shift in Western society of women moving away from the singular role of mother. Especially in the past, women's autonomy was actively discouraged. As a result, those who acted in independent ways contrary to the general public's expectations were often shamed and seen as immoral. Therefore women "using" their sexuality in some manner, be it for their own joy or a more practical result, were seen as the lowest of the low so to speak; they were to be judged, reprimanded and ostracized. Traditionally, women were encouraged to practice a passive kind of sexuality, with the focus being on the man's pleasure or the practical matter of reproduction. The control of women's reproductive rights is an issue that many women are still fighting against today, and certain obstacles that women face are not that different from those that were present hundreds of years ago.

So oftentimes, it is not sex or sexuality itself that is a source of stress for women; it is rather the expectations that society puts upon them regarding these subjects, as well as the possible consequences that certain actions taken by these women might cause. Even today, it is generally recognized among most women that certain types of sexual behaviour can and will

brand them in a negative way, which can have a huge impact on their general social prestige and image as a whole. Additionally, society's perception of women also has a larger effect than just personal injustices and bad reputations. As mentioned, what huge numbers of women are fighting against is the general sense of control that the patriarchy still seeks to hold over women through healthcare. As is acknowledged in the 2017 article in Harvard International Review:

We know that women in particular face widespread social, cultural, political, and structural threats to their sexual health and well-being. [...] Without the option to make critical choices about their bodies, women's prosperity, well-being, and potential in society are restricted and gender inequality is therefore perpetuated. (Mlambo-Ngcuka 2017, 50)

This heavily suggests that even current society still has the desire to control women in worrisome ways that impact many lives to a significant extent. In addition to these practices, the matter of sexual violence is also linked to anxiety. While not of course synonymous with sex, sexual violence is a close subject to a disproportionate number of women. Sexuality is not only associated with consensual sex, but the topic is also related to IPV (Intimate Partner Violence), rape and sexual harassment. Unfortunately, many women's perceptions of sexuality are impacted by these negative aspects and thus these topics are linked to the anxiety that is felt as a group. Society nowadays, while more accepting and kinder towards women overall, is still lagging behind with regard to subjects surrounding their sexuality. As an example, the 2015 policy authorized by Amnesty International, which recommended the decriminalization of consensual sex work, was met with serious criticism and disapproval. Despite various reports by sex workers themselves proving that criminalization made them feel more in danger, and that this most often led to the workers themselves getting prosecuted, not their clients, abusers or promoters, the policy was still a target of disdain ("Sexuality, sexual politics and sexual rights" 2015, 197–98). After all, sex workers' rights are closely tied to of other women's rights, as they are often treated as the "worst kind of women" or seen as outright criminals only on the basis of their sexual behaviour and profession. Although the subject is nuanced, there is truth in the notion that the treatment sex workers receive from other people is hugely reflective of old prejudices that cast sexually independent or active women as shameful and worth disparaging. These kinds of presumptions are ones that restrict all women, not only the ones who are associated with sex work.

Taking into consideration the time the novels take place in, the social and sexual environments for women were in a state of swift change. Society was moving towards a more

equal future through the work of second-wave feminism and the mentioned topics were in the limelight for many artists and authors. Although it can hardly be argued that *Carrie* or *Silence* are exactly feminist novels themselves, the themes surrounding the ideology are present in the books. Especially in *Carrie*, the traditionalist and religious views of Margaret represent the older, puritanical ways of thinking that society was already moving away from. Her past traumatic experiences and other issues cause her to act extremely insecurely regarding her and everyone else's sexuality, preferring to pretend it simply does not exist for "good" people. To Margaret, all sexuality and sex is ungodly and morally wrong. She completely rejects this natural part of human nature and sees it as something to be avoided. This extends to Carrie, but she herself wants to be normal and embrace all the aspects of growing up into a teenager and an adult. When she lets her mother know that she has been asked to the prom by a boy, Margaret sees it as a horrible sign of Carrie ultimately corrupting herself through sexuality: "'Devil's child, Satan spawn—' [...] 'Lust and licentiousness, the cravings of the flesh—'" (*Carrie* 121). Her ravings are illogical and barely understandable, but it is easy to see that for Margaret sexuality is the manifestation of utmost evil. For her, all sexuality is the epitome of shame, disgust and wrongdoing. Carrie's own mother's rejection of her wishes and urges to behave in a way that is normal for any 16-year-old is crucial in Carrie not being able to develop naturally. This final opposition has a large part in making Carrie unstable and unwilling to cope with her mother, as she ends up embracing herself and abandoning her mother's morals.

Unlike *Carrie*, *Silence* is far more implicit in its depiction of female sexuality. Clarice as the protagonist is not written to exhibit sexual thoughts or behaviours, and characters' sexualities are not in the focus (aside from the sex-crime viewpoint). While a horror and a thriller, the novel is ultimately a crime story, with the main plot revolving around the case and Clarice's communication with Hannibal. It seems that *Silence* resolves to the "sexless" approach to its female protagonist. Clarice is a woman who is required to adapt into the male world to succeed, and while her femininity is not disregarded completely, it is apparent that she is restricted to a smaller box than women in other professions. In a new era of career-oriented women, Clarice is the female model of a business-only type of person. It is also possible that in an effort to depict this kind of woman neutrally, without objectification, she is stripped of her sexuality. The subtle and only indication of Clarice acting in any way sexually is at the very end of the novel, as she is depicted lying in bed, possibly with a man (*Silence* 368). While the idea of not unnecessarily focusing on her sexuality might be good on the surface

level, this intentional omission may be done to assure the reader that she truly is as professional and capable as a man. While not necessarily implying this is the case in *Silence*, the writing of a strong female protagonist by men can occasionally lead to the unintentional input of misogynistic values, such as the thought that a woman cannot exhibit traditionally masculine traits and interests, while still retaining her sexuality. To some men and women, the thought of displaying female sexuality in any form was, and still is, shameful, indecent or even unnecessary.

#### 4.2.2 Motherhood

Pregnancy and the act of giving birth have the potential to be extremely stress-inducing for women. While currently considered relatively safe (at least in the Global North), provided the mother and the child receive proper care, a birth is still a significant event. Further, that is only a singular phase of the process of motherhood and parenting. A significant number of women experience anxiety and stress regarding childcare. Societal change and the current understanding of medicine and attachment between parents and children have lifted off some weight from mothers, but research shows that a significant percentage of women still experience negative psychological effects during motherhood. An Australian study on PPD (post-partum depression) concluded that “16.1% of women reported depressive symptoms during the first 12 months post-partum” (Woolhouse et al. 2014). While not a huge portion, it is clear that PPD is an issue that many women struggle with. The reasons behind PPD have been extensively studied, and while there are many possible factors involved, a 2020 study conducted in Kosovo found that the most significantly correlative risk factors for PPD were the following: “Pregnancy complications, fear of childbirth, prenatal depression or anxiety and poor marital relation” (Zejnnullahu et al. 2020). Additionally, a hostile environment before or after pregnancy has been concluded to be positively harmful for the mother. It was gathered that physical and sexual ACE (adverse childhood experiences) and IPV (intimate partner violence) were significantly linked with PPD (Mahenge et al. 2018).

It is important to mention that not every person who struggles with PPD or other difficulties with their pregnancy is putting their child at risk or harming them. Likewise, not everyone who inflicts harm on their children do so because of PPD or other illness. But it is good to acknowledge the fact that motherhood is not always a positive experience and that there are risks involved in it that induce anxiety in a large number of women. This anxiety stretches beyond the time of pregnancy and birth, and issues that may arise from the mother’s personal

life can cause them to be an insufficient parent. As mentioned, PPD has a significant place in this discussion, as it can cause otherwise healthy and capable women to act in damaging ways towards themselves and their children. In a 2019 study, congruent with my previous sources, it was noted that “specific subtypes of violence events such as sexual, emotional and physical violence, and domestic and childhood violence, were also associated with an increased risk of developing PPD” (Zhang et. al 2019, 100). Through this research, I can sufficiently conclude that childhood trauma, abusive relationships in the past or present, general fear or anxiety during pregnancy and possible medical complications can lead to postpartum difficulties for the mother. This is significant in observing how trauma received by the mother can affect the experience of having and raising children. Further, traumatic ordeals and severe issues the mother might have with parenting have the possibility of harming the relationship between the mother and child, again increasing the chance that the child themselves develops a negative attachment style or other difficulties through trauma transfer that lead to problems in their own adult life.

In both of the books I analyse, the roles of the protagonists’ mothers are important but ultimately very different. Carrie’s mother Margaret experiences intensive abuse and trauma throughout her own life and gets pregnant by Carrie’s father, Ralph, through rape. She later delivers Carrie in a violent and traumatic home birth, with no outside assistance. While her case is of unusually extreme proportion, it is a character to be studied through the scope of trauma of motherhood. I analyse how these experiences, together with her other problems, cause her failures to raise and take care of Carrie. On the other hand, Clarice’s mother in *Silence* is largely omitted. Clarice’s childhood trauma is fundamentally based on her father’s death and her mother’s ensuing incapability to provide for the family. As a result, at the age of ten Clarice is sent away to live with relatives, and later at an orphanage. Her mother’s incapacibilities are not described as being caused by specifically emotional or personal problems, but rather the unfortunate economic situation. Having to part with her family at a young age, Clarice has only her childhood memories to go by. Most pointedly, she seeks independence and is active and focused on her career. Even though Clarice takes solace in the memory of her mother, Hannibal aptly deduces her to be “desperate not to be like [her] mother” (*Silence* 22). She may see her mother’s failures as weaknesses, and compensates by trying her best to remain cold, secure and smart. This reaction to a largely absent mother figure is relevant to Clarice’s character and actions. These are my preliminary suppositions regarding the mother characters, and I further study them and their issues in Chapter 6. As a

conclusion to this chapter on motherhood, I present the general statement that motherhood is an ordeal traditionally unique to women, and the consequences of something going wrong with the process are experienced by and visible to many, and therefore a significant cause of anxiety.

## 5 Stages of trauma

In this chapter my aim is to roughly divide the experience of trauma during one's life into three theoretical stages: origin, continuation and possible succession. This division is artificial and extremely simplified, not to mention partially flawed. The experience of traumatization and living with trauma cannot be appropriately separated into clear stages and is only showcased in this section as so because it helps to separate different talking points and parts of the novel analyses into three relevant subheadings. To consider the third part, succession, it has to be mentioned that the phenomenon is not universal to all trauma victims, and I mainly consider the topic in the context of the novels being studied as well as the general notion of trauma transfer. I also study the theory of intergenerational trauma later in section 6.3, which has significant ties to this chapter. In brief, I focus on the initial events of traumatization, the consequences and later manifestations of it and the hypothetical transference of it onto others. I bring examples from *Carrie* and *Silence* and seek to showcase how these particular stages appear in the novels, supported by psychological theory based on real life. Finally, the important stage of recovery is not touched upon in this part, as I go over it in Chapter 7. I believe the subject of surviving with trauma and different coping methods are both important enough to be placed separately. Overall, this Chapter is meant to give a simplified view into how trauma can hypothetically develop and how this process is presented in the novels I analyse.

### 5.1 Origin: Childhood and caretakers

The key event appearing as the initial cause for trauma in *Silence* is Clarice experiencing the death of her father, a town marshal, as a young child. He is killed confronting burglars and dies from his wounds in the hospital a month later. When prompted by Hannibal, she names this as her worst memory of childhood (*Silence* 150). She and her whole life is deeply touched by the event, as it ends up shattering her family unit. Not much is mentioned of her mother or their relationship, but her manner after the death of her husband is telling. She tries to reassure Clarice that everything will be fine, and immediately focuses on the practical side of the situation: "We need to talk and then we'll fix our supper" (*Silence* 82). Despite her efforts to keep the family afloat and together, she ultimately has to send Clarice away two years after the death. Nothing about her treatment of Clarice, perhaps excluding this very act, seems to have caused her daughter harm, at least on purpose. She does not harbour bad feelings towards her mother and was not merely abandoned by her; it is mentioned offhand that she

received presents from her when living in the orphanage (*Silence* 109). This is not to say that the event of a ten-year-old having to part with her mother and siblings, only a few years after her father's death, is not inherently damaging in many ways. Nevertheless, Clarice does not at any point imply that she resents or feels anger towards her mother, rather, she cherishes her memory and finds strength in it.

Clarice's mother's inability to support the family sets off an unhappy course of events where she ends up living on her relatives' horse and sheep ranch. Her father's violent death marks the first of her traumas and possibly makes up part of her future personality and choices. She describes her life on the ranch as fine, getting to be with the animals and having a room of her own. She suffers no abuse or danger with her relatives, but it is a discovery about the ranch that impacts her the most. Clarice finding out that the ranch she lives on is one for butchering both horses and sheep is a cruel realization for a child. Her life there culminates when she wakes up to the screams of a pack of lambs getting slaughtered. She is overcome with sadness but knows she cannot save them. Her first instinct is to help, so she tries to save a horse instead, also destined for death. Their escape leads to them getting caught and sent away to an orphanage, both girl and horse. In the present she knows she could not save the sheep, but she did save the horse named Hannah. Her father's death, killed by criminals, together with the events on the farm clearly impact her desire and attempts to help people. Hannibal himself speculates that her sense of justice and the need to save people is in a way retribution for the lambs she could not save as a young girl.

Likewise, Clarice's experiences in her childhood can be seen as the reason for her career as an agent, someone who, in her mind, can truly help people. It is easy to see how the screaming of the lambs might as well be the screaming of her father, getting killed for no reason, and Clarice not being able to do anything about it. Although she continues to be haunted by these screams, violent nightmares indicating the lasting effect of trauma, her successful rescue of Hannah was encouraging for her. She "failed" with the sheep, but she could save someone else, another innocent life. This brings her happiness and contentment: "They think she was about twenty-two. Pulled a cart full of kids the last day she lived, and died in her sleep" (*Silence* 229). Perhaps it is the fulfilment she got from saving Hannah that keeps her on track, focused on always helping and rescuing the innocent. In Clarice's case it can be seen how her childhood trauma has affected her long into her adulthood, appearing as PTSD-typical nightmares and a deeply ingrained saviour-like aspect in her personal character.

Trauma can happen in any stage of life, but childhood trauma is fundamentally deep as it can affect development and personality in a serious manner. It also affects the difficulty of possible future treatment: “The work of the first stage of recovery becomes increasingly complicated in proportion to the severity, duration, and *early onset of abuse*” (Herman 1998, 147; emphasis added). Adults with abusive or neglectful childhoods report significantly high rates of practically all types of psychological issues and stress (Horwitz et al. 2001, 184). In the case of Carrie, she goes through continuously traumatizing events in her childhood. Because of the toxicity of her home life, she never actually escapes the traumatic environment she is raised in. Her life at home is controlled by her oppressive and religious mother who is abusive towards her, both mentally and physically. At school she suffers from bullying and loneliness, as her peers actively ostracize her. As a result of her mother’s abuse from a young age, Carrie learns to live with it. When a person lives with trauma in a continuously stressful and traumatizing situation, they can never truly relax and let their guard down. In psychology, this kind of situation is discussed in terms of base survival reflexes; when people are forced to face threats, they automatically enter into a hyper-vigilant state where all their functions focus on survival (Nunez 2020). Through trauma, a person may also develop a tendency to over-exaggerated reactions to events or stress. As a result, the person in state of duress temporarily functions with limited capability, as all efforts are made to ensure that they get to safety. Fight, flight or freeze is the brain responding to outside threats by primitive impulses, so that the person under threat may act accordingly in front of the threat (ibid.). When a person is continuously put to situations like this, they never truly exit this hypervigilant state of mind; they may get used to the sense of panic and cannot live in comfort or security. If they spend a majority of their time (especially in childhood) in danger, they are denied the normal security a person requires to naturally develop.

Applying this thinking to Carrie, the life she lived in her 16 years can be described as endlessly traumatic. Her father dies early enough that she really has no memory of him, but her mother’s aggressive religiousness and fear of Carrie’s powers takes over the majority of their home life. Carrie is described as unusually solemn and already affected by her mother’s preaching as a young child. An encounter with their neighbour depicts how dreadful, fearful and hateful she already feels and seems. (*Carrie* 37–38). She suffers nonstop verbal abuse from her mother, who affects Carrie’s perception of sexuality, femininity and her whole worldview. Margaret’s extreme religion-driven manipulation and abuse have several years to take hold in Carrie, with every moment of reprimand and hurt further driving her into

becoming a person who harbours shame, anger and revenge. Carrie's mother disciplines her daughter through forced isolation and deprivation of her needs, fervent prayer and abuse whenever she sees that Carrie has "sinned." This religious overtone of Margaret's upbringing of Carrie is not to be ignored; she sees Carrie's supernatural powers as a curse from the Devil. Margaret tries to raise Carrie in her own, religious way, and manages to scar and destroy Carrie's perception of herself and the world in the process: "She was alone with Momma's angry God" (*Carrie* 70). As Carrie internalizes these ideas and thoughts for her entire life, her involvement with society is disturbed. She does not learn the necessary norms and social conventions that other teenage girls do, so her behaviour and appearance stands out as old-fashioned and strange. Her obliviousness to some subjects and situations makes her appear as stupid to her peers, and she seems to be unable to form ordinary bonds. These seeds of discomfort and anxiety sown in her childhood manifest in her teenage life and in her eventual realization, escape and death.

## **5.2 Continuation: Perpetration through agitators**

PTSD is recognized as the main consequence of experiencing trauma. As the name suggests, PTSD is a condition that manifests as psychological and physical aftereffects of trauma. The actual symptoms vary wildly in term of type and severity, and in some cases can be debilitating. Motta (2020, 15) divides these symptoms into four clusters:

1. Reliving the event through memories or nightmares, with elevated breathing, heartbeat and blood pressure following.
2. Avoidance of things related to the trauma.
3. Hyperarousal, resorting to survival behaviours (this relates to the previous section's discussion on fight, flight and freeze).
4. Problems relating to cognitive function and mood.

In the case of cluster 2, oftentimes certain experiences, sights or sensations can remind victims of PTSD of their trauma. Many respond to this by consciously or unconsciously avoiding possible triggers. This, of course, can make the process of recovery and therapy exceptionally difficult (Motta 2020, 11–12). Although the past of the diagnosis of PTSD lies in veterans of the Vietnam war, the same reactions and symptoms can be observed through history, and nowadays it is recognized that even relatively common events can cause it (Motta

2020, 18–19). Alongside all this discussion of the diagnosis, it is important to recognize that not all trauma leads to PTSD necessarily. On the other hand, extended trauma heightens this possibility substantially, in addition to women and children being more prone to it (ibid.).

Analysing the novels, both protagonists display clear symptoms of PTSD. Carrie is living in a more volatile situation compared to Clarice and her young age also makes her more vulnerable to the situation, as well as the absence of any safe people to support her. She faces traumatizing abuse from her mother for her whole life and develops PTSD as a result. She knows nothing of a normal life, and lives in a constant state of vigilance and self-criticism. Victims of PTSD can often develop a significantly negative and defeatist image of themselves and the world, which is presented in Carrie's thoughts: "Momma had been right, after all. They had taken her again, gulled her again, made her the butt again" (*Carrie* 226). Carrie has no choice but to confront her stressors every day, as they are key elements in her everyday life. She resolves to assume a state of mind and behaviour that is absent, careful and dissociative. Therefore, her symptoms could be classified into clusters 3 and 4, survival behaviour and mood issues, respectively. Clarice enjoys a more carefree existence, but her PTSD does still show in certain areas of her life. Most apparent are the cluster-1-associated nightmares she has about sheep getting slaughtered, namely their horrible screams, indirectly reflecting her father's fate. Repeating nightmares of this kind are telling of her trauma. With regard to the important cluster 2 symptoms, the avoidance of reminders of trauma, Clarice is a complicated character. On one hand, she is very intent on not discussing the events of her childhood with Hannibal. Of course, this can be also attributed to her reluctance to accept a cannibalizing serial killer as her therapist. Overall, she is not described as wanting to think or talk about her past life. Interestingly, she does not avoid death or crime even though they could easily be seen as possible triggers for her PTSD. It is the opposite, as she herself seeks out a situation which puts her right into the middle of these topics. Perhaps this can be interpreted as Clarice having the ability and resources now as an adult to face her past trauma on her own conditions. Contrary to some victims of trauma, she is ready to face the familiar events and perhaps heal through them.

### **5.3 Succession: Potential transfer of trauma onto others**

When breaching the topic of trauma transfer, it is vital to not make accusatory claims about traumatized people always being at fault for dispersing their trauma onto others. The issue is multifaceted and problematic in many ways, and people with trauma are a large and ununified

group. While those with trauma are not more likely to be abusive towards other or to show these kinds of tendencies, it is undisputed that trauma always has a far-reaching effect. In a sense, trauma can be contagious, especially to those close to the victim (Motta 2020, 16). Untreated trauma has the chance of causing the traumatized to lash out and repeat the cycle in bad ways. It is especially unfortunate when this happens in a parent-child relationship where the adult themselves has experienced adverse situations and is not able to provide their own child a better environment than they had in the past. Sauv   et al. (2021, 3; emphasis added) speculate in their article on the transmission of trauma: “The inability to regulate one’s emotional state is an essential factor in the increasing *intergenerational cycle* of hostility, helplessness, and withdrawn parental behavior.” They state that these unregulated helpless or hostile behaviours (caused by their own ACE and trauma) by a parent towards a child has a large part in the intergenerational transference of trauma (ibid.).

Margaret White is an example of a thoroughly traumatized and mentally ill character who actively transfers her trauma onto her child. She is the victim of marital rape and very possibly other sexual violence. Even before her unfortunate marriage, she is strongly implied to have had a negative sexual experience specifically in the parking lot of the roadhouse her family owned. This location is often repeated by her in an obsessed manner when anxious or angry: “She got hysterical and started to rave about an angel with a sword who would walk through the parking lots of *roadhouses* and cut down the wicked” (*Carrie* 74; emphasis added). This quote in particular supports the thought that at least initially she sees religion and God as something to seek comfort in; it is the institution that she puts her hope in and wishes would save her. Perhaps it was this undated event that led to her getting involved with fundamentalist religion and developing strict rules about decency regarding sexuality. She does not believe sex is to be allowed even in wedlock, but does get pregnant at least twice by Ralph, the first ending in miscarriage and the second in the birth of Carrie.

Layton suggests that women who have these adverse experiences are likely to be unusually sensitive to issues of power. This is explained by the need to reclaim the power they felt they lost in childhood, to fix the feeling of helplessness:

Trauma thus split the experience of power and powerlessness, domination and submission in extremely marked ways [...] the literature on women sexually abused as children suggests that they are *preoccupied with issues of power*. These women exhibit a heightened desire or need for power as well as need to see themselves capable of exerting power. (Layton 1995, 114–15; emphasis added)

This quote from the article “Trauma, Gender Identity and Sexuality: Discourses of Fragmentation,” while not necessarily indicative of a wide-scale trend in the psychology of all victims of childhood sexual abuse, still provides a view into some relevant issues regarding the topic. It is possible to use this thinking further by applying it to cases where abused victims commit abuse themselves; they falsely try to reclaim the lost power by exerting it over someone less powerful than themselves and thus contributing to the cycle of violence. This is not to suggest that it is more common for abuse victims to commit abuse than unvictimized people, but to recognize that in some cases abuse is a mechanism through which its consequences can have a negative effect. A Michl-Petzing et al. (2019, 747–48) study in fact reveals that a mother’s history of abuse does not have a direct effect on the likelihood of being abusive herself. Rather this abuse can have many indirect effects, such as maternal depression, which correlate with less responsive parenting, but not outright abuse. Instead, it is posited that harsh parenting can be the result of mothers detecting child problem behaviours in relatively high amounts as “mothers with more extensive childhood maltreatment histories reported greater problem behaviors in their children, which, in turn, lead them to exhibit higher levels of harsh parenting behavior” (ibid.). Childhood abuse does have many indirect effects on behaviours such as parenting but is it unfair and incorrect to assume that abuse inevitably follows abuse.

What is significant to the topic of this section in *Carrie* is Margaret’s possible pre-existing mental illness working together with her fanaticism in religion and her traumatic experiences. Because of this it is difficult to separate her trauma symptoms from her delusions and other issues, but particularly the rape she suffered by Carrie’s father has its part in her loathing of Carrie. Margaret’s judgement of Carrie is made up of her disgust at the notion of both the “sinful” sex that conceived her and the notion of Margaret herself admitting to having enjoyed the event on some level. All of this leads to her abusing her daughter in horrible ways. In a way she is shifting the blame from Ralph to Carrie herself; she sees Carrie as the result and punishment for her own deeds. The way she treats Carrie ends up making her daughter an anxious and traumatized person in turn. As mentioned, Margaret’s abusive behaviour is perhaps not solely the product of trauma, but her worry about Carrie’s sexuality specifically can be argued to stem from her own traumatic experiences. She ultimately wants to protect her daughter (though in an ill-advised manner) from men and the experiences she has had to do through when dealing with them. As said, untreated trauma can cause people to act in unhealthy or abusive ways towards those closest to them. This is definitely the case in the

relationship between Margaret and Carrie. While not excusing her actions, there is a multitude of reasons behind Margaret's behaviour, both explicit and implicit.

Carrie's adverse experiences during her childhood and teenage years culminate in the ending of the novel, as she rampages through her hometown of Chamberlain and takes revenge on her mother. Carrie reaches her breaking point as she becomes the target of a mean-spirited prank at her high school's prom party. She essentially loses her mind at her classmates' final cruel act against her and unleashes her full power upon the town and its people. Her thoughts and acts are a jumbled mess of stream of consciousness -like fragments. The last shreds of empathy have left Carrie, as she spectates the people she made suffer: "Animals. Let them burn, then. Let the streets be filled with the smell of their sacrifice" (*Carrie* 249). She is taking her revenge on both guilty and innocent and does not care to differentiate between them. There is also a distinct religious overtone to her deeds; Carrie is reflecting her mother's devout and senseless thinking in placing herself in the position of judge and executioner. She evidently retains some belief in God, as she attributes her actions to him also: "She prayed and there was no answer. [...] God had turned His face away, and why not? This horror was as much His doing as hers" (*ibid.*). Through her extreme violence and havoc, she is taking her anger, sadness and trauma out on the whole world. These disastrous events are sure to impact and traumatize other people, though perhaps not in a personal manner. In section 6.3 I refer to the consequences of this wreckage on the residents as collective trauma and discuss the further details of it in the context of the novel. It is unfortunate that the results of Carrie finally defending herself are this disastrous, and that to reconcile her trauma she ends up ruining more lives. This narrative presents a negative and extreme example of trauma transfer in action, where a traumatized person knowingly traumatizes others in turn.

## 6 Acts and experiences as the root of trauma

The root causes of trauma vary largely depending on the person and situation as mentioned in section 5.1, but there are certain events and common traits that often seem to lead to the development of trauma and/or PTSD. The later consequences and possible triggers for reliving past trauma are also unique to each victim. Despite this individual variation the shared traits victims of trauma have are significant in diagnosing and treating possible issues that might arise. The severity and longevity of these mental problems also vary both depending on the individual and the experience. In this section I divide the causes of trauma into three extremely simplifying headings: physical and sexual abuse, emotional abuse and collective trauma. All three categories have major overlap between each other, and this kind of categorization is purely for this thesis' convenience. It is common for trauma victims (especially those who experience adverse behaviour from their caretakers during adolescence) to suffer many types of abuse, as they often coincide with each other (Hoeboer et al. 2021, 2). Section 6.3 deals with *disaster trauma* and is unique to the others in that it discusses the collective type of trauma which affects groups of people rather than individuals. Throughout these chapter I analyse *Carrie* and *Silence* through the lens of psychology and trauma theory; I provide evidence detailing the extent and type of trauma the characters suffer in their respective books and consider how these depictions reflect their real-life counterparts in the world of trauma.

### 6.1 Physical and sexual abuse

Being the target of an act or a threat of violence, or witnessing one, is one of the primary causes of trauma. Experiencing this kind of trauma (particularly if in the stage of childhood or in another state of absolute defencelessness) can cause behavioural issues and difficulties in the future regarding both interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal thinking. The experiences of victims can diverge extensively from each other, but there are some common identifiers that can be recognized in people who have experienced traumatic violence. Sexual abuse is often regarded as the most heinous form of abuse in general, and women are the primary victims of it. Ferrari et al. (2018, 2) go to say: "Although [domestic violence and abuse] is experienced by women and men, the majority of severe, repeated and sexual assaults are on women." This is in accordance with the previous statistics mentioned that show that women also make up the majority of PTSD sufferers and victims of trauma. Overall, it is acknowledged that women seem to bear the brunt of traumatic experiences. Abuse that

happened during childhood is also known to have an exceptional correlation to abuse suffered later in life. Chiang et al. (2018, 7) found in a study on Kenyan women that there exists a major link between childhood experiences of violence and future IPV victimization, demonstrating the cyclical nature of physical and sexual abuse. This is especially the case with sexual abuse, as the same study posits: “The association between any sexual [violence against children] and adult physical IPV was significant, as were the associations between childhood unwanted penetrative sex and adult physical IPV” (ibid.). This study corroborates past findings with similar links found between childhood and adult experiences.

With these statistics as the background for the prevalence of abuse in literature, it can be easy to see why it would be bothersome to some, but useful for the genre of horror. Violence is a key part of inducing horror in literature. Threatening a person’s autonomy and wellbeing this severely harms their sense of self and marks the perpetrator in question as an adversary. It is this clear divide that allows the reader to commonly identify the villain or other threat to the protagonist. It is a natural response for humans to be afraid of conflict so severe that it leads to bodily harm, which explains the use of it in horror. The act of hurting someone physically or sexually is arguably going against the perceived nature of humans as sympathetic beings, but it is also common in practice. Despite the relative prevalence of violence in society, when coming close to extreme forms of it, like torture, war, or rape, it is horrifying for the average person to witness. Sexual abuse is widely seen as particularly despicable, but it is still a relatively frequent topic in literature. As a result, even reading about topics like this can be troubling or even traumatizing to some. Especially extreme realism and detail in describing sexual harassment or violence, particularly senseless or cruel forms of it, is shocking in itself, designed often to cause a reaction of repulsion.

An indicative case of this kind of shock value is in *Silence* during Clarice’s initial visit to see Hannibal in prison: while leaving the building Clarice is sexually assaulted by a convict who manages to ejaculate onto her person. The event is obviously surprising and revolting to Clarice, who does her best to take it in stride. But it is just a single example of how her gender puts her at an automatic and heightened risk in the novel’s world. The plot is prominently about a serial murderer of women, which in itself highlights the state of ordinary women as victims, with Clarice managing to obtain an unusual amount of power. Despite this control she has thanks to her job, she still faces sexist attitudes and the aforementioned inherent risks in being female. Her father’s violent death, even though she did not directly see it happen, is

also worth mentioning. Violence and death can be traumatic even when witnessed second-hand, especially the violent passing of a parental figure in one's childhood.

As I argued in section 5.3, Margaret's own experiences of sexual violence have a huge effect on how she treats Carrie. While there is no explicit evidence of childhood abuse perpetrated by her parents, there is a significant event that is mentioned several times. Margaret often references the roadhouse her family owned in her incoherent rants when disciplining Carrie. As mentioned, there is significant reason to believe that she went through some kind of sexual assault there, specifically in a car parked outside the roadhouse. As Carrie tells her about going to the prom with a boy, Margaret gets enraged and yells at her: "I've seen it, all right. Oh yes. But. I. Never. Did. But for him. He. Took. Me' [...]. 'In cars. Oh, I know where they take you in their cars. City limits. Roadhouses. Whiskey. Smelling . . . oh they smell it on you!'" (*Carrie* 120). Just the mere thought of Carrie associating with boys returns Margaret to this memory. Traumatized by the event, she cannot fathom any man behaving differently than her assumed assaulter. There are no specific confirmations regarding what age Margaret was when this assault happened, but it can be said that it likely happened during her teenage years as she also mentions to Carrie that "[a]fter the blood the boys come" (*Carrie* 119), possibly indicating that her assault took place after she began menstruating. I assume this was a hugely traumatizing event in her life, and perhaps even the thing that led to her extreme religiousness and conservatism. She thinks women can avoid these sorts of incidents happening to them by avoiding anything "sinful." This causes Margaret to have a fundamentally skewed perception of womanhood and sexuality (which she tries to transfer to Carrie), and to treat her daughter in very abusive ways. She, among other things, repeatedly locks Carrie up in a closet in isolation for long durations (*Carrie* 29) and reprimands her with violent beatings (*Carrie* 70). This neglectful and abusive behaviour is largely the cause of Carrie's disturbances and aggression.

## 6.2 Emotional abuse

Verbal and emotional abuse is sometimes falsely thought of as less severe than physical abuse; physical evidence of violence or assault is occasionally the only way to "prove" victimhood. Contrary to these inaccurate perspectives, psychological or emotional abuse can be extremely harmful to the victim and can occur in many forms. Skuse (1989, 1692) defines the emotional abuse of children specifically as "the habitual verbal harassment of a child by disparagement, criticism, threat and ridicule, and the inversion of love [...]. Neglect

comprises both a lack of physical caretaking and supervision and a failure to engage the developmental needs of the child.” Of course, this type of abuse is not only limited to juveniles and is also common in other cases of domestic abuse. Committing acts that systematically hurt someone through controlling, manipulative or oppressive behaviour is psychologically abusive and can leave a permanent mark on the victim. IPV, as mentioned briefly in 4.2.2, is a large factor in the abuse women suffer. Interestingly, Kaukinen (2004, 467) discovers in their research on IPV that regardless of whether a husband is physically abusive or not, their perpetration of emotional abuse towards their wife is still prevalent. They present the term patriarchal terrorism, which entails the escalation of violence as well as the use of emotional and physical abuse to “subordinate, isolate, and increase women’s emotional and financial dependence on their male partner” (ibid.). Abuse by men towards women is a pattern of control and false supremacy, as well as a well-documented societal issue.

The environment abuse happens in is also an important factor. Home is the main place of domestic abuse towards women, where the husband may feel completely in control of the situation. Similarly, any place where the abuser can feel power over the abused is advantageous to them. *Silence*, taking place in the time of its writing during the 80s, describes quite a misogynistic state of world. Clarice suffers mockery and abuse both from the criminals and professionals she has to work with, ranging from sexual harassment to belittling. When meeting people in her job, she is still faced with casual sexism and advances: “‘We’ve had a lot of detectives here, but I can’t remember one so attractive,’ Chilton said without getting up” (*Silence* 7). She knows she is putting herself in a “man’s world” by working in the FBI, but this does not deter her. The reader is not completely privy to the extent of her childhood experiences, as large parts of it are not described in detail. Her time on the ranch and the orphanage is not focused on, and she glosses over them, seemingly emitting her whole childhood. It is obscured whether she had a completely positive experience of childhood or not, but it is assumed she suffered at least no extreme abuse during it. Of course, just living apart from one’s family in a religious orphanage will be very different from an average childhood. Alongside all of this, she likely has PTSD from her father’s death and her experience on the ranch. It is not explicitly clear whether she has had to go through emotional abuse, but by the instances where Clarice describes experiences with her parents it is to be assumed she faced no abuse from them at least; the ranch and orphanage being different stories. But the security she enjoyed from her biological parents at least provided her with emotional resources she needed in her early childhood. Perhaps this initial support gave her

the strength to deal with the demeaning ways men target her in her professional life. Constant put-downs by the very professionals and co-workers she is obligated to treat with respect is damaging to Clarice, not to mention the risks she faces when dealing with criminals who might see a woman as an easy target.

As mentioned in the beginning, emotional abuse has been found to be just as detrimental to mental health as other types of abuse. In fact, Hoeboer et al. (2021, 5) found that parental emotional abuse is the strongest predictor of adults' PTSD symptoms, and that it increases the severity of these symptoms regardless of the original trauma. They propose that the increase can possibly be caused by the harm the abuse does to the child's general network of support and resources (ibid.). Therefore, emotional abuse is bad enough on its own, but together with other ACE, it will make recovery as an adult even more difficult. In her story, Carrie does not enjoy the same luxury as Clarice does, having at least some support in her childhood: Carrie truly has no one. Although in the novel there are characters, namely a classmate and Carrie's gym teacher, who do feel sorry for her and try to help in their own ways, Carrie's abuse is to such a level that the help they give is too little too late. Carrie's extended suffering in her mother's household through threats, accusations and reprimands makes her a miserable child and teenager, and no one does enough to get through to her in the end. A succinct quote to summarize Margaret's attitude towards raising Carrie: "Pray to God and your sins may be washed away" (*Carrie* 69). Margaret suffocates her daughter through religious oppression and social isolation; Carrie does not have the social life and bonds nor the security a child needs to develop into a healthy adult. By installing the fear of God in her daughter, Margaret tries to control her actions and thoughts, condemning anything she perceives as "bad" as sinful and against God. There is no community in Margaret's practices: "Momma was the minister, Carrie the congregation" (*Carrie* 65). This manipulation and isolation is to such an extent that it can be ultimately said that Carrie is brought up in a cult-like environment of conservative religious fundamentalism.

This kind of home life leads to Carrie's maladapted behaviour and poor social skills which do not serve her well in school. It is the only place Carrie gets to meet her peers, and other people altogether, and the environment treats her barely any better than home. Her schoolmates are cruel to her, a combination of the common trope of teenagers acting incessantly mean and Carrie's oddness triggering their negative responses. She is faced with verbal abuse and ostracization, and without no one to help her, she has no defences; always having experienced similar violence at home, she is not used to fending for herself, nor does she know why it is

happening to her. Her almost infantile disposition is telling of her trauma; she does not get to grow up and develop as a person, as her mother does not allow that. As a result, she seems quiet and naïve, an easy target for bullies. With an abusive and stifling home and no support, she is totally unequipped to handle the outside world and unused to human interaction. She has no models for a good relationships, romantic, platonic or familial, therefore she is also unable to form them herself. The emotional absence and abuse she experiences during her life functions to set up the foundation of trauma she has to deal with. With constant psychological abuse strengthening her other issues and symptoms, it is safe to say that she is in an extremely poor situation, not to mention the supernatural aspect and the disastrous end of her story.

### **6.3 Collective trauma**

Trauma is commonly understood primarily as a personal concern and its psychological effects have most thoroughly been studied on an individual level. While personal trauma is common, there is also the possibility of a traumatic event affecting large groups of people simultaneously. This is referred to as collective trauma or disaster trauma. Events such as wars, natural disasters and terrorist attacks have been categorized as collective traumas. Targeted genocide, abuse and aggression towards specific groups of people are also included, for example the Holocaust and slavery in the US (Garrigues 2013). This type of large-scale terror changes people's lives on a transgenerational level, and therefore can disturb people living beyond the age of the event. This has ties to the topics mentioned in section 5.3, as the transference of interpersonal trauma through PTSD onto one's children is to be considered. Specifically in the case of this kind of intergenerational trauma, it is the sense of the collectiveness of trauma that is transferred. In a study on intergenerational trauma regarding the Holocaust, the authors conclude: “[C]hildren of such families [...] attested to the constant psychological presence of the Holocaust at home, in some cases, reporting having absorbed the omnipresent experience of the Holocaust through ‘osmosis’” (Danieli et al. 2016, 10). This is the crux of collective trauma; the lingering effects experienced by later generations living in an environment altered by the trauma.

Bringing the topic again back to section 5.3, the transmission of personal trauma is to be considered alongside the phenomenon of collective trauma. As Hübl (2020, xvi; emphases added) says, it is not necessarily only extensive disasters that affect multiple generations, families and communities, and the act of inheriting trauma is not clear-cut: “[N]o matter how private or personal, trauma cannot belong solely to a family, or even to that family's intricate

ancestral tree. The consequences of trauma—indeed, the cumulative effects of personal, familial, and historical traumas—seep across communities, regions, lands, and nations.” The author asserts that regardless of the perception of trauma as private, it always has an extensive area of influence in both time and space. Therefore, considering this suggestion that all traumas cause an interpersonal chain or network of influence, it is not always easy, or even productive, to make a distinction between personal trauma and collective trauma. Nevertheless, collective trauma is considered a subcategory that encompasses specific traits that make it a worthwhile subject of study.

For the purposes of this thesis, I consider certain incidents that take place in *Carrie* and *Silence* as potential collective traumas. While these situations lack the scale of real-life collective traumas, often originating from nationwide issues, they still reach whole communities. The books’ primary disasters that I point to are the wide-scale destruction faced by Carrie’s hometown and the presence and crimes of the serial killer “Buffalo Bill” in *Silence*. In general, it is challenging to make absolute claims about whether the fictional events in question can be considered traumatic to their communities, as their effects and consequences are not necessarily the focal points of the novels. Despite this, I argue that the incidents mentioned can possibly have a wide enough reach and heavy enough impact on the communities to be considered at least minor collective traumas.

The ultimate events in *Carrie*, as mentioned, consist of the protagonist destroying her school and other large parts of her hometown of Chamberlain. The fires, explosions and other destruction caused by her supernatural powers kill more than four hundred people in the end (*Carrie* 299). The sections written as news reports in the novel reveal and highlight the consequences of the events on the community: “But this New England pastoral lies on the rim of a blackened and shattered hub, and many of the neat houses have FOR SALE signs on their front lawns” (*Carrie* 297). The traumatic events faced by Chamberlain residents have a large communal effect; they do not only affect people personally, but they also negatively impact the local structures and systems in place. Saul (2013, 1–4) proposes that it is this kind of shared injury to the community’s different ecologies that is the primary effect of man-made or natural disaster. The denial of responsibility and the absence of apologies by the ones who caused the disasters is central in creating the loss of social trust in communities (*ibid.*). The events of *Carrie* destroy optimism, as mass-funerals overshadow any hope of rebuilding and people either try to leave the town as soon as possible or appear to just be waiting for the town itself to die out (*Carrie* 298–300).

There are a few personal perspectives relayed by townspeople in the novel, and the overall effect is described through the faux articles and personal letters. As they are, these articles are efficient in portraying the collective consequences of the events faced by the town, and they loosely reflect the results discovered by Ritchie (2012, 204–05) following the Exxon Valdez oil spill, another man-made disaster. According to their article, many people experienced weakening social connections and levels of trust in the aftermath of the oil spill, mirroring Saul's point of avoidance of responsibility having a great negative effect. Chronic stress and trauma caused the locals of the area to stop maintaining social relationships in the usual manner and to lose trust. This was partly seen as a result of people intending to move away, thus them not seeing reason to invest in a place or people they would not soon be close to (ibid.). As a whole, the devastating emotional and personal losses combined with resource and economical loss depicted in *Carrie* have a wide-scale traumatic effect on the general population of Chamberlain.

In the case of *Silence*, I examine the effects of the presence of an active serial killer on a community and its people. The anxiety, fear and restlessness experienced by the people of the community in a situation where a serial killer is on the loose is unique. In the 1970s and 1980s when serial killings were first recognized as such, several killers terrorized the public in numbers. *Silence*, written in the late 1980s, perhaps took inspiration from its era, as it incorporates these types of crimes in its story. In real life, criminals (especially serial killers) such as Ted Bundy had a tight hold on the communities they killed in. Even single cases of murder can have a lasting effect on smaller communities, where the death of a person can shock the whole area. The general society went through significant changes in the decades when serial killings first entered public awareness, and it is also during this time that *Silence* was written. To study the shifts in attitudes and reactions to crime, it is important to take into consideration the mark left behind by these serial killers. As Terranova (2020, 23) mentions, the acts of Bundy, for example, made the public more reserved and careful, as the murderer took advantage of the popularity of hitchhiking and general lack of caution. The concept of "stranger danger" was not strong during this period, but the uprise in these kinds of killings affected people and communities to a degree that changed the perspectives on openness and unreservedness towards strangers permanently.

In *Silence*, Buffalo Bill is actively committing crimes and terrifying the public. Bill kills six women during the course of the book and manages to kidnap a seventh. As typical for some serial killers, he has a certain type of victim whom he targets, which are white women of a

certain size.. TV broadcasts and news reports are responsible for displaying the events to the public, and not much is known about the case before Bill is caught. During the killings, most considerable is the horror experienced by people at the notion of the long period of holding of the victims before the murders (*Silence* 71). Bill's acts make him a truly monstrous person in the eyes of people; the extended period of torture and calculation separates Bill from murderers who commit so-called crimes of passion. A murder done in the heat of the moment, while still morally reprehensive, is more palatable to the public than a planned and thought-out act. Overall, a serial killer can cause their community great anxiety and fear.

## 7 Aftermath

Endings in literature are often set in stone, at least always more resolute than endings in real life. A large part of trauma is how one deals with it, how they manage to live with it and recover. Is there a true ending for trauma in reality? The idea of total healing is hopeful but perhaps unrealistic. It can be unreasonable to expect to be “cured” from the effects of trauma. Psychotherapy often emphasizes giving the patient the vital resources to manage their trauma, not to get rid of it. Coping with trauma is a challenge, but the process is crucial to how a person ends up thinking of and expressing themselves. Whether or not they seek outside help and support can be a deciding factor in how productively they can deal with their issues. This support can ultimately prevent an individual from harming themselves or others as a result of their traumatic experiences. If they receive absolutely no help (be it a failing of the system or themselves) they can end up causing harm, as described in section 5.3. Still, these kinds of positive or negative results are seldom referred to as “endings”. Though a question of personal ethics, the idea of everyone deserving and being eligible for psychiatric help and rehabilitation is thankfully common in society. This is most relevant in regard to criminals and prisoners, and their respective traumas and actions. Modern psychotherapy focuses on the betterment of mental health for all people, including those whose choices are questionable. Still, some people think that once a person commits crimes and ends up imprisoned, their chances at getting back to “normal” are at zero. This is one example of how one’s trauma can, in some eyes, lead to an ending.

How does this compare to the endings in horror literature? While there are no endings of an all-encompassing magnitude in the real world, there are smaller endings: The endings of eras, of institutions and of personal lives. In literature, endings are final and total. Although stories and characters can live on in imaginations and theories, there is significance in the actual depiction of the end. Even a binary sorting of endings into “good” and “bad” ones is valuable and can provide insight. Especially in the genre of horror, it is paramount to see how the author decided to end their story; does the plot end in tragedy, sorrow or fear? Or is there a lingering hope, something that allows the reader to feel some optimism? Each type appears in horror literature, and I assert that the choice is decided by what kind of emotion the author wants to leave the reader with. While total annihilation and tragedy is sure to go in accordance with the tone of a horror novel, the author can choose the contrasting option of having mercy on the characters and readers with an ending that provides relief. In this section I consider all

kinds of perceptions of endings, as well as their consequences. I study both levels; real-life trauma recovery and how this is reflected in the novels, as well as the effects of the portrayals in the fictional stories.

### 7.1 Trauma recovery and coping methods

An important goal in the treatment of trauma is to assure that the patient does not take part in retraumatization. This, according to Hübl (2020, 6), consist of unconscious actions that work to repeat the conditions of previous trauma on oneself or others. This retraumatization may be acted out as an unconscious coping method by the victim. Although I discussed the transference of trauma in more detail in an earlier section, this section focuses on the more positive outcomes; what does successful treatment of trauma look like? There are many different schools of thought and approaches to the issue, with some victims responding better to certain styles of therapy and treatment than others. Therefore, it can be difficult to treat one singular method as the best. Instead, I will consider the wider aspects of trauma recovery, studying the large-scale shared trends that characters may present. Herman (1998, 145) repeats the previously iterated idea that trauma is chiefly to do with power and the loss of it: “Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control over her own life; therefore, the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor.” This supports the discussion in section 5.3, where I considered the cases where the victim reclaims this power in a destructive way by using their power unjustly over others. Instead, their newfound power should be focused on the betterment of themselves and their ties to other people. Herman further implores that successful recovery demands focus on all three elements of health: biological, social and psychological (ibid.). As emphasized in this thesis, trauma is an all-encompassing matter, so it should come as no surprise that proper treatment should also be attentive to all aspects of a person.

In the novels I study, there are various depictions of how characters deal with trauma. In *Carrie*, the absence of treatment and psychological help and support is clearly apparent, as characters seem to take the worst paths possible in coping with their pasts and presents. Margaret retraumatizes herself and Carrie by way of religious punishment and delirious flashbacks to her past trauma. While it is ambiguous whether Margaret is truly incapable of acting better, her actions still have a horrible effect on her daughter. Carrie, while more sympathetic, still ultimately follows her mother’s path in her coping methods. In the beginning of the story, she deals with her suffering silently; she turns inwards and

disassociates from the events happening around, and to, her. Her manner is stoic, and she almost comes to expect the daily abuse she suffers at both home and school: “She stood like a patient ox, aware that the joke was on her (as always), dumbly embarrassed but unsurprised” (*Carrie* 8). This kind of acclimation to suffering is of course alarming and is largely a consequence of Carrie having no-one to support her. During her childhood and teenage years, Carrie receives no help or therapy, and is constantly in a state of retraumatization. All of this leads to her effectively losing her mind at the final prank pulled on her at prom. Her embarrassment and pain explode in waves of destruction. As unfortunate as Carrie’s story is, it has to be assumed that even within the supernatural context of the novel she was not beyond saving. Had things gone differently, one can imagine Carrie slowly recovering from her traumatic upbringing. But for that to have happened she would have had to have been plucked from her story pre-catastrophe and provided with extensive therapy. Cutting unhealthy social relationships and replacing them with healthy ones is one of the keys to trauma recovery (Herman 1998, 145). Especially given the cult-like environment of manipulation and shaming Margaret inflicted on her, Carrie’s hypothetical rehabilitation would be a long and hard process of rebuilding her understanding of femininity, sexuality and relationships.

Though psychotherapy is the most commonly assigned “fix” for trauma, it is still a fraction of the victims that manage to reach out and take part in the arduous collaboration between patient and therapist. This is limited by economic and personal reasons, as well as the fact that some people are not even aware of having trauma, despite possibly displaying trauma symptoms. In *Silence*, it is unclear whether Clarice has had any therapy or other psychiatric support for her problems. As mentioned, she is very reluctant to talk about her experiences. With Hannibal acting as a proxy therapist, she has to ultimately provide him with some information. Through the narration, the relationship between the two is framed as a sort of patient-therapist dynamic, though an undeniably unusual one. Therefore, it can be assumed that this effectively functions as Clarice’s therapy. It is clear through the descriptions of Clarice’s nightmares that she is still bothered by her past and has not had the chance to fully accept her past and present: “She bit the corner of the sheet and pressed her palms over her ears, waiting to find out if she was truly awake and away from it” (*Silence* 289). The dreams are serious and repeating, always taking Clarice back to her childhood. Despite all this trouble, she manages her trauma by pushing it aside. She focuses her pain into her ambitions in her working life; Clarice tries to help herself by helping others. This is directly referenced in the book through Hannibal’s desire to be let known if the lambs in Clarice’s mind stop

screaming. Hannibal states that the trauma that drives Clarice is unending, she will never be rid of it. He believes that she is rewarded only temporary respite when she helps others: “[Y]ou’ll have to earn it again and again, the blessed silence. Because it’s the plight that drives you, seeing the plight, and the plight will not end, ever” (*Silence* 366). The situation is paradoxical for her, as her actions both feed her trauma and complexes, but also act as her coping methods. Trying to rescue others is no replacement for actual therapy though, and as Hannibal asserts, Clarice will not be able to silence the lambs until she actively seeks assistance in dealing with her demons.

## 7.2 Endings in horror

In discussing the endings of horror novels, I return to the beginning parts of this thesis. In section 4.1 I asserted that what draws people towards horror is the experience of safely simulating fear and other strong emotions. How does this relate to different endings in these novels? What are the effects of “happy” or “sad” endings? Traditionally, it can be thought that any ending that features a good outcome for the protagonists and other sympathetic characters is a positive one. It presumably serves to alleviate the sense of dread or horror that was fostered in earlier parts. By giving the characters a “good” ending, the author is also telling the reader that everything is okay in the end, they can breathe a sigh of relief and relax. The reader can end their approximation of horror on a calm note, the simulation coming to a peaceful end. This is in contrast with a “bad” ending, where the characters’ suffering either is not even finished, or they are spent to the point of absolute despair, so that no future hope can be seen for them. This type of ending may leave the reader with a sense of sadness or emptiness, as the conflict may have had a permanent effect on the characters or the world they have to live in. This simplistic split into two types of endings has its fair share of grey areas, and some novels are ambiguous enough for it to be impossible to judge what kind of mood the ending is supposed to give the reader. Also, these types have nothing to do with the actual subjective quality of the ending, a “good” and a “bad” can both be equally as unsatisfying or fulfilling to the reader. After all, matters of taste cannot be judged. The poignancy of an ending can vary largely based on the experiences and perceptions of the reader.

Nevertheless, what can be studied are the impressions and effects that different endings have. What I specifically have been focusing on in this thesis is the image of trauma and women presented by novels. This also goes for this section on endings: What statements do novels attempt to make in their last pages? *Carrie*’s ending is inarguably a bad one, with the main

character dying and causing death around her. Overall, the novel paints a grim picture of trauma and womanhood. Carrie is doomed to a life of misery and shame, and the cycle of trauma works to perpetuate her anger and sadness. Her hometown is also destroyed by this, and the reader is reminded of the reach that trauma can have. The ending also makes it clear that this disaster will likely not be unique, as certain aspects of the incident, such as extreme religion, bad parenting and poor social situations for women are commonplace. A society ridden with untreated trauma and harmful behaviour cannot be fixed by a simple cleansing fire: “Found painted on the lawn of the house lot where the White bungalow had been located: ‘CARRIE WHITE IS BURNING FOR HER SINS [...] JESUS NEVER FAILS’” (*Carrie* 301–02). This type of pessimistic ending ultimately gives the reader quite a negative image of (among many other things) traumatized people. But it also sends the truthful message that multifaceted and intergenerational trauma is extremely hard to vanquish.

*Silence* is markedly more positive in its outcome and representation of trauma recovery. While the threat of Hannibal being out of prison is still lingering at the ending of the novel, the protagonist is at her most peaceful. Clarice is described sleeping peacefully in the bed of a man she is presumably seeing, in the “silence of the lambs” (*Silence* 368). It seems she has at least temporarily evaded the nightmares her trauma inflicted her with. Nevertheless, I share the suspicions that Hannibal puts forward (mentioned in section 7.1) regarding the temporality of Clarice’s peace. Untreated trauma has the tendency to not fade away on itself, and it often requires hard work and time to come to peace with one’s bothersome memories and issues. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the protagonist’s moment of relief is only that, a brief state of release Clarice experiences as the result of her succeeding in her case.

Throughout the novel she receives no true support or therapy, and her emphasis on work leaves her with no time to consider her life on a deeper level. It is only after the tough FBI case that she relaxes and allows herself to get involved with a man she is interested in. In another context this could be viewed as a relatively harmless trait of a work-oriented individual, and the want to separate her personal life from her job, but in the novel Clarice’s focus on her work in the “saviour” role is clearly a consequence of her trauma. The result is a person trying to deal with her issues with only the aid of her own capabilities.

As I have gone over in previous sections, this is ultimately a difficult way to navigate trauma in comparison to therapy, where the patient receives the assistance of a professional and all their knowledge to help them in their road to recovery. This is extremely important as many traumatized people may be self-destructive and in a majority of cases they are at least

incapable of adequate self-care (Herman 1998, 147). A full understanding of, and recovery from one's trauma is therefore often only possible through a successful and healthy therapist-patient relationship. These are the facts that support my view of Clarice's character being fundamentally unable to recover through her personal efforts only. It is significant to mention that the novel seems to also be aware of this. If I were to consider Hannibal a reliable character in terms of his psychological knowledge and statements (an understandably questionable decision to make), I would support his thoughts on the matter of Clarice's trauma. Spoken by Hannibal, the author makes the statement that temporary relief from trauma through coping methods may aid in the short term but may not truly solve the issue. Although Clarice is by no means healed by the end of the book, it is clear that she finds solace in some parts of her life and is not doomed to the fate of Carrie or other women with unfortunate fates. In the end, the book does present a relatively happy ending for its protagonist, at least in terms of how things usually go for women in the genre of horror.

## 8 Conclusion

My goal in this thesis was to figure out the relationship between the horror genre used literature and female trauma. I began by introducing my chosen field of theory, which included Caruth's trauma theory and general psychoanalytical literary theory. I studied the main characters of the novels as case studies, which allowed me to use trauma theory to analyse how real-life trauma was depicted in these characters. My study highlighted the modern, expanded definition of trauma to present the psychological function of it. This included different approaches towards trauma acquisition, coping methods and recovery. Throughout the thesis I analysed the main female characters of the novels *Carrie* and *The Silence of the Lambs* through the scope of trauma theory. I utilized real-life research in psychology to make statements on female anxieties and trauma and proved that several mentioned factors cause women (both in real life and therefore in literature) to be more prone to traumatizing events and PTSD. My findings conclude that common female anxieties are evidently reflective of real-life statistics and societal trends that are fundamental to how women are perceived in society. This causes women to be both extremely aware of the possible adverse situations they may face in life, and their depictions in horror literature to often be traceable to these anxieties and possible traumas.

My primary research focus was on the different depictions of trauma experienced by female characters, and how (or if) they were based in reality. I also discussed the matter of writing trauma and how traumatized characters were depicted in the novels. In my research I found that the representation, given to the main characters who had gone through trauma, was varied in quality and style. While the character of Carrie was ultimately a very negative depiction of what abuse and trauma transfer can lead to, Clarice's story in *Silence* was more hopeful and retained some positivity, even in a novel in the genre of horror. As I presumed, both of their stories were in essence trauma narratives, with their personalities having been largely affected by the traumatic experiences they went through. I found that female trauma is inherent to making these specific novels what they are; though not ultimately proven in this thesis, it is not a large leap to assume that a majority of portrayals of horror relies on the descriptions of the abundance of violence against women and their responses to it.

I took on quite a wide variety of topics and angles in my thesis, and therefore was not able to conduct an extremely detailed analysis on specific characters or their traumas. As a result, my discussion exists on a more all-encompassing level, while more detailed and thorough

research would surely also be in question regarding these subjects. Considering future studies surrounding the topic of trauma in literature, I could perhaps see more lucrative and specific results arising from scrutiny focused on just a single character and/or a specific trauma in their narrative. Trauma narratives can be studied from many perspectives and using a variety of theories. It can be a hurtful or sensitive topic to many, but as long as people live, trauma will also coincide. This assures the permanence of the need for the study of trauma in psychology and psychotherapy. Further, this persistence also has the effect of trauma remaining in literature and other art forms. Therefore, I am certain of the fact that there will never be a shortage of trauma to analyse in literature, as it has had, and likely will always have, an important role in stories of conflict.

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## Finnish Summary

Tämän tutkimuksen kohteina ovat kauhukirjallisuus, traumaa ja naisten asema, sekä mainittujen aiheiden keskinäiset suhteet toisiinsa. Tutkielmassa käsittelen traumaa psykologiselta sekä kirjalliselta näkökulmalta ja käytän analyysissä psykoanalyttistä ja melko uutta kirjallisuuteen sovellettavaa traumateoriaa. Päälähteinäni analyysissä ovat Stephen Kingin *Carrie* (1974) ja Thomas Harrisin *Uhrilampaat [The Silence of the Lambs]* (1988). Analysoin näiden kirjojen tapahtumia, päähahmoja ja kerrontaa traumateorian kautta. Selvitän päähenkilöiden traumahistorioita ja niiden yhteyttä todellisiin tapahtumiin ja tilastoihin trauman ympärillä.

Tutkielman alussa selvitän valitsemieni teorioiden historiaa, kauhugenren piirteitä ja naisille tyypillisten traumojen ja stressin lähteitä. Lähteideni mukaan lukijoiden kiintymys kauhua kohtaan nojaa mahdollisesti tietynlaiseen haluun simuloida äärimmäisiä negatiivisia tunteita. Kauhun kokeilu fiktion kautta auttaa lukijaa kehittämään tämän selviytymiskykyjä ja tunteidensäätelyä. Tällaiset välilliset kokemukset mahdollistavat pelon ja ahdistuksen turvallisen kokeilun hallitussa ympäristössä, joka ei johda todelliseen vaaraan. Puhuttaessa kuitenkin todellisista traumoista, naiset ovat useasti mm. merkittävän suuressa väkivallan uhassa. Tutkimuksessani käytettyjen lähteiden mukaan seksuaalisuuteen ja äitiyteen liittyvät vaiheet ja ongelmat ovat suuressa roolissa naisten tuntemassa yhteiskunnallisessa ja henkilökohtaisessa ahdistuksessa. Synnytyksenjälkeisellä masennuksella on iso osa negatiivisissa raskaus- ja vanhemmuuskokemuksissa, ja äidin kokemat menneet ja ajankohtaiset väkivaltakokemukset puolestaan nostavat masennuksen riskiä merkittävästi. Tutkielmassani tuon esille, että suuri osa äitien ja muiden naisten kohtaamasta väkivallasta on IPV-tyyppistä, eli puolison tekemää väkivaltaa (Intimate Partner Violence). Tämä liittyy olennaisesti naisten seksuaalisuuteen, ja yksilöiden sekä yhteiskunnan asettamat paineet toimivat taakkana ja jopa esteenä naisten terveelle ymmärrykselle ja toiminnalle oman seksuaalisuutensa kontekstissa.

Vien nämä tulokset eteenpäin seuraaviin lukuihin, joissa käsittelen trauman vaiheita ja niiden erilaisia syntytilanteita. Luvussa 5 tutkin romaanien päähenkilöiden, Carrien ja Claricen, omakohtaisia traumakertomuksia psykoanalyttisen tutkimuksen kautta. Analysoin tarinoissa kuvattuja trauman syntytilanteita ja niiden vaikutusta hahmojen elämään. Luvussa 6 puolestaan jatkan analyysia erittelemällä trauman mahdolliset syntytavat fyysiseen ja

henkiseen väkivaltaan, sekä käsitteeseen kollektiivisesta traumasta, joka syntyy suuren mittakaavan katastrofeista. Tarkastelussa paljastuu, miten molempien hahmojen perhetaustassa ja lapsuuden tapahtumissa on aiheita traumatisoitumiselle. *Carrien* nimikkopäähenkilön väkivaltainen ja epävakaa lapsuus ja perheympäristö aiheuttavat teoksen tapahtumat. Carrieen kohdistuva jatkuva pahoinpitely ja nöyryytys ovat lopulta liikaa teinitytölle, ja hän päätyy yliluonnollisten voimien avulla kostamaan äidilleen ja koko kotikaupungilleen. Carriella ei ole tukiverkkoa eikä muuta apua, joten hän ei pysty käsittelemään traumaansa. Sen sijaan hän siirtää tuskaansa eteenpäin ja lopulta myös itse menehtyy.

*Uhrilampaiden* Clarice taas yrittää elää traumansa kanssa parhaansa mukaan, ja hänen työelämänsä toimiikin paradoksaalisena selviytymismetodinä; Claricen trauma rakentuu hänen isänsä väkivaltaisen kuoleman ja Claricen yleisen avuttomuuden tunteen ympärille. Siksi onkin ehkä poikkeuksellista, että hän ei aikuisiällä välttele väkivaltatilanteita vaan hakeutuu uralle, jossa joutuu kohtaamaan äärimmäistä väkivaltaa. Poliisityössä Clarice kuitenkin saa myös mahdollisuuden päästä valta-asemaan ja näin onnistuu palauttamaan kontrollin itselleen ja auttamaan viattomia, molemmat asioita joita hän nuoremmalla iällä kaipasi, mutta mitä hän ei vielä silloin kyennyt saavuttamaan. Claricen motiivit ja teot rakentuvat hänen ns. pelastajakompleksinsa ympärille; Päähenkilön elämää ohjaa suuri halu auttaa muita ihmisiä, ja hän selvästi saa siitä suurta nautintoa ja mielenrauhaa. Clarice kuvataankin ensimmäistä kertaa rauhallisena, ilman painajaisia tai murheita, vasta romaanin lopulla hänen napattuansa sarjamurhaajan ja pelastettua kidnapatun uhrin.

Puhuttaessa lisää lapsuuden traumoista, *Carrien* äiti Margaret on väkivaltainen äiti ja käyttää lapsensa kurinpidossa väkivaltaa, eristämistä ja heitteillejättöä. Hän myös hyödyntää kristinuskoa tapana painostaa ja pelotella lastaan. Uskonnollinen väkivalta saa aikaan kulttimaisen ilmapiirin *Carrien* kodissa, ja tämä kaikki heikentää hänen kykyjään kasvaa normaalien sosiaalisten ja henkisten mallien mukaan terveeksi aikuiseksi. Margaretin väkivallan taustalla on mielenterveydenongelmien lisäksi hänen omat kohtaamisensa trauman kanssa, sillä hän on myös itse kokenut seksuaalista väkivaltaa. Kirjan yksi suurista teemoista onkin taakkasiirtymä; ilmiö, jossa traumatisoitunut henkilö siirtää traumansa eteenpäin, tässä tapauksessa äidiltä tyttärelle. Tutkimuksessani esitän lähteideni avulla, että yksilön kykenemättömyys hallita omia tunnetilojaan (johtuipa se sitten sairaudesta, traumasta tai muista ongelmista) on yksi tärkeimmistä syistä vihan ja trauman syklille perheiden parissa.

Tähän aiheeseen keskityn erityisesti luvussa 5.3, jossa esimerkiksi selviää, että äidin väkivaltainen menneisyys ei yksioikoisesti tee häntä itseään alttiimmaksi käyttämään väkivaltaa lastaan kohtaan. Sen sijaan väkivaltakokemukset voivat saada äidin huomaamaan lapsensa ongelmakäytöksiä herkemmin ja reagoimaan tähän omaksumalla ankaria kasvatustapoja. Tutkimukset siis osoittavat, että äidin traumaattisella menneisyydellä ei ole suoraa yhteyttä tämän todennäköisyyteen pahoinpidellä lastaan, mutta sillä on muita epäsuoria vaikutuksia. Esimerkiksi äidin kokema masennus ja muut traumaperäiset ongelmat voivat johtaa mm. välinpitämättömyyteen ja poissaolevaan kasvatustapaan. Kuten aiemmin mainittua, Margaretin väkivallan ja kasvatustyylin taustalla on niin traumaa, mielisairautta kuin ääriuskonnollisia arvoja, eikä hänen suhdettaan tyttärensä voi selittää yksinkertaisin termein.

Konkreettisen fyysisen väkivallan lisäksi henkinen väkivalta on merkittävä ilmiö niin romaaneissa kuin todellisuudessa. Lapsuudessa koettu henkinen väkivalta vahvistaa uhrin todennäköisyyttä kärsiä PTSD:stä (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; traumaperäinen stressihäiriö), sekä vahvistaa PTSD:n oireita. Tietysti myös aikuiset kohtaavat väkivaltaa, erityisesti parisuhteissa. Eräs lähteistäni esittääkin aviomiesten käyttävän henkisen väkivallan olevan yleistä huolimatta siitä, onko tilanteessa läsnä fyysistä väkivaltaa. Lähde nimittää ilmiötä, jossa miehen käyttämä väkivalta eskaloituu henkisestä fyysiseen ja voimistuu intensiivisyydessä, *patriarkaalisesti terrorismiksi*. Käytöksen tarkoitus ja lopputulos on naiskumppanin alisteinen asema, sekä suurentunut henkinen ja taloudellinen riippuvuus väkivaltaisesta puolisoista.

Kuten mainittua, *Uhrilampaissa* Claricen trauma lapsuudesta esiintyy vahvasti hänen halussaan pelastaa ihmisiä aikuisena, ja hän hankkiutuukin poliisityöhön, jossa pystyy toteuttamaan tätä. Clarice ei itse ole ollut suoran väkivallan uhri, ja kerronnan perusteella hänen perheensä kohteli tätä hyvin. Clarice kuitenkin joutuu urallaan kohtaamaan useasti seksististä kohtelua niin rikollisilta kuin kontakteiltaan työmaailmassa. Hän joutuu niin seksuaalisen ahdistelun, kuin vähättelyn ja sivuutuksen kohteeksi. Vaikka nykypäivänäkin naiset joutuvat ajoittain kärsimään syrjinnästä tai ahdistelusta työpaikalla, Clarice on poikkeuksellisen ikävässä asemassa miesvaltaisella ja juuri tietynlaista ”miehisyyttä” korostavalla alalla. Romaani onkin helposti sijoitettavissa sen kirjoitusajankohtaan 80-luvulle, jolloin tietyt urat eivät olleet yhtä hyväksyttäviä naisille kuin nykyään. Clarice tekee parhaansa ongelmien sivuuttamiseksi ja pyrkii keskittymään omaan urapolkuunsa ja ihmisten pelastamiseen. Kirjassa painottuvat vahvasti traumalta pakenemisen mahdollisuus ja menetysten seurauksen välttämättömyys.

Trauman henkilökohtaisuus on itsestäänselvyys monelle, ja se onkin aiheensa erittäin yksilökohtainen ja monimutkainen asia. Jokaisen kokemus tilanteista ja tapahtumista on erilainen, ja joillekin merkityksetön tapahtuma voi olla traumaattinen toiselle. Myös varsinaisen trauman seuraukset voivat olla hyvin erilaisia ihmisestä riippuen. Lähteeni PTSD:n ilmenemisestä luokittelee sen fyysiset ja henkiset oiretyypit neljään kategoriaan:

1. Traumaattisen tilanteen kokeminen uudelleen muistojen tai painajaisten kautta; Fyysiset oireet kuten nopeutunut hengitys ja kohonnut syke ja verenpaine mahdollisia.
2. Traumaan liittyvien asioiden välttely.
3. Yliaktivoituminen, selviytymiskeinoihin turvautuminen (ns. taistele-pakene-lamaannu-reaktio).
4. Ongelmat kognitiivisissa toiminnoissa ja mielialassa.

Luokittelu paljastaa kuinka monimuotoisia PTSD:n kärsijöiden kokemukset voivat olla. Useasti yleisimmät traumat voidaan nähdä johtuvan pahoista henkilökohtaisista kokemuksista esimerkiksi menetyksen tai väkivallan kanssa, mutta trauma on myös laajemmin ymmärrettävä ilmiö. *Kollektiivinen trauma* on traumatyyppi, jossa jokin tapahtuma on vaikuttanut useampaan yksilöön, yleensä kokonaiseen yhteisöön, mittavalla skaalalla. Yleisiä ja tunnetuimpia kollektiivisen trauman syitä ovat sodat, luonnonkatastrofit ja tiettyihin ihmisluokkiin kohdistuva sorto ja väkivalta (esimerkiksi holokausti ja orjuus Yhdysvalloissa). PTSD itsessään kehitettiin diagnoosina vastauksena kotiin palaaville yhdysvaltalaisille sotilaille, jotka osallistuivat Vietnamin sotaan. Sota voidaan nähdä kollektiivisena traumana niin yhdysvaltalaisille sotilaille, kuin erityisesti paikallisille, jotka joutuivat kärsimään sodan seurauksista monien sukupolvien ajan. Juuri tämä on olennaista kollektiivisille traumoille; Tietty tapahtuma jättää yhteisöön niin suuren jäljen, että sen psykologiset vaikutukset kulkevat sukupolvelta toiselle. Nuorempien sukupolvien ei tarvitse olla edes ollut elossa itse tapahtuman aikana; He silti kokevat trauman vaikutuksen epäsuorasti.

Trauman vaikutus yhteisöön voi olla äärimmäisen tuhoisa, ottamatta edes huomioon massiivisille katastrofeille ja konflikteille tyypillisiä korkeita uhrilukuja. Tutkimuksen mukaan erityisesti yhteisöissä, joissa tapahtunut katastrofi on ihmisen aiheuttama, esiintyy huomattavaa laskua yleisen sosiaalisen luottamuksen tasossa ja ongelmia yhteisön erilaisissa rakenteissa. Nämä ja muut vaikutukset pahenevat entisestään, jos tilanteen uhrin näkevät, että tilanteen aiheuttanut osapuoli ei ota vastuuta kärsimyksistä. Sovellan kollektiivisen trauman

teorioita analysoimiini romaaneihin, sillä näen että molemmissa kirjoissa esiintyy henkilökohtaisten traumakertomusten lisäksi potentiaalia pitkäkestoiselle kollektiiviselle traumalle. *Carrien* loppuosan tuhoisat tapahtumat, joissa Carrie sytyttää tulipaloja ja lopulta vie yli 400 ihmisen hengen, aiheuttavat pikkukaupungin yhteisölle mittaamatonta kärsimystä. *Carrien* teot tuhoavat monta elämää, ja pilaavat lopullisesti kaupungin hengen. Monet päätyvät muuttamaan pois paetakseen tilannetta ja kaupunki itse jää vain odottamaan lopullista kuolemaansa. Tällaisen tuhon ja väkivallan kohtaaminen on varmasti traumaattista, varsinkin ottaen huomioon monet kuolemat ja tiedon, että kaiken aiheutti yksittäinen, säälimätön ja traumatisoitunut ihminen.

*Uhrilampaissa* juonen pääosassa on poliisitutkinta, jossa Clarice yrittää päästä sarjamurhaajan jäljille. Rikoksen uhriksi joutuminen voi pahimmillaan aiheuttaa vakavia henkilökohtaisia traumoja, mutta *Uhrilampaiden* tapauksessa esitän myös, että sarjamurhaajan toiminta yhteisön sisällä voi olla myös kollektiivisen trauman juuri. Yksittäinenkin väkivaltainen murha voi varsinkin pienemmälle yhteisölle olla järkyttävä, tietyllä tavalla jaettu kokemus, mutta erityisesti sarjamurhaajan rikokset voivat aiheuttaa laajempaa paniikkia ja ahdistuksen tunnetta. Rikoksissa on myös tietty sukupuolinen elementti, sillä romaanin murhaaja etsii uhreikseen juuri naisia, joka vastaa oikean elämän sarjamurhaajien tendenssejä. Tämä saa erityisesti yhteisön naiset tuntemaan turvattomuutta ja pelkoa. Näen siis, että kollektiivinen trauma voi syntyä tilanteesta, jossa aktiivinen sarjamurhaaja terrorisoi ihmisten elämiä. Se voi muuttaa ihmisten elämiä rakenteellisella tasolla ja jopa aiheuttaa muutoksia kulttuurisissa trendeissä ja käytösmalleissa, joka on todettu tapahtuneen todellisuudessa mm. Yhdysvalloissa 70–80-luvuilla.

Romaaneissa esitetyt traumakertomukset poikkeavat toisistaan valtavasti. Ne myös antavat erilaiset kuvat traumasta ja mahdollisesta toipumisesta: *Uhrilampaat* kuvaa kykenevän naispäähenkilön päivittäistä taistelua oman menneisyytensä ja nykyhetkensä kanssa. Vaikka Clarice joutuu näkemään vaivaa hyvinvointinsa eteen, on hänen tukevaisuutensa silti kirkas. *Carrien* tarina sen sijaan ei anna toiveikasta kuvaa traumasta. Hahmo kuvataan toivottomaksi, ja tarinan päättyessä kuolemaan ja tuhoon ei Carriella anneta mahdollisuutta toipua. Päinvastoin romaani painottaa trauman sykliä ja yhteisönsisäisten ongelmien muuttumattomuutta. Tutkimuksen lopuksi totean, että naisille yleiset ahdistuksen ja trauman lähteet (niin kirjallisuudessa kuin todellisuudessa) ovat sidoksissa todellisiin ja valitettavan yleisiin, tilastojen tukemiin faktoihin naisten elämistä, kuten perheväkivaltaan, seksuaaliseen hyväksikäyttöön, synnytyksen jälkeiseen masennukseen ja suhteettoman korkeaan PTSD:n

esiintyvyyteen. Näin ollen naisille tutut traumat ja tapahtumat esiintyvät myös kirjallisuudessa useasti, ja voidaankin sanoa, että kauhugenre useasti nojaa naisten kokemaan väkivaltaan ja sitä seuraaviin reaktioihin.