UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL

INSTITUTO DE LETRAS

PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS

DIORGI GIACOMOLLI

THE DEVIL IN OUR HEARTS: A STUDY OF HOW EVIL IS PASSED ON IN STEPHEN KING'S *CARRIE*

PORTO ALEGRE

2023

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL – UFRGS

INSTITUTO DE LETRAS

PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS

DIORGI GIACOMOLLI

THE DEVIL IN OUR HEARTS: A STUDY OF HOW EVIL IS PASSED ON IN STEPHEN KING'S *CARRIE*

> Dissertação de Mestrado em Estudos de Literatura apresentada ao Instituto de Letras como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Mestre pelo Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS.
>
> Orientador: Prof. Dr. Claudio Vescia Zanini

PORTO ALEGRE

2023

Diorgi Giacomolli

THE DEVIL IN OUR HEARTS: A STUDY OF HOW EVIL IS PASSED ON IN STEPHEN KING'S *CARRIE*

<div align="right">

Dissertação de Mestrado em Estudos de Literatura apresentada ao Instituto de Letras como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Mestre pelo Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Claudio Vescia Zanini

</div>

Porto Alegre, 10 de março de 2023.

BANCA EXAMINADORA:

_____

Profa. Dra. Sandra Sirangelo Maggio
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)

_____

Prof. Dr. Marcio Markendorf
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

_____

Prof. Dr. Alexander Meirelles da Silva
Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG)

Ao Stephen King, por nos assombrar desde crianças, e esperamos que continue assim.

Ao heavy metal, que parece entender tão bem o que o Stephen King diz.

Ao Mal, pois sem ele talvez não conheceríamos o Bem. E nem esse trabalho.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Agradeço à Patrícia, por tantos motivos que, se fosse começar a escrever eles aqui, iria dar uma nova dissertação.

Agradeço à minha mãe por ser quem me iniciou no mundo das artes, das letras, dos livros, e, mais importante de tudo, no mundo do bom e velho rock 'n' roll.

Agradeço ao meu pai, por sempre acreditar em mim.

Agradeço ao meu orientador, Claudio Zanini, por abrir as portas da UFRGS para mim, pelo conhecimento compartilhado, pela paciência, apoio e parceria ao longo do processo de escrita desse trabalho.

Agradeço ao pessoal do GHOST, em especial ao Vitor, à Bruna e à Jéssica, que foram essenciais durante essa jornada desafiadora.

Agradeço à UFRGS pelo privilégio de realizar um sonho antigo meu, que era estudar na melhor universidade do país.

Ignorance is the root and stem of all evil.

(Plato)

RESUMO

O romance *Carrie*, do escritor americano Stephen King, publicado em 1974, oferece o retrato de uma pequena família disfuncional em que os ensinamentos da mãe, Margaret White, uma fundamentalista religiosa, resultam em uma filha despreparada para conviver em harmonia em sociedade. O presente estudo apresenta uma leitura dividida em três capítulos que visa mostrar, sob a luz da filosofia e da psicanálise, a transformação sofrida por Carrie White que, pela forma que foi criada, acaba virando alvo da sociedade, e como reação a tal perseguição, gradualmente deixa de ser alvo do mal para tornar-se perpetradora dele. O primeiro capítulo enfoca o fato de que o romance foi publicado em uma fase de significativas mudanças nas áreas política, científica e tecnológica nos EUA, com medos e ansiedades que se mantiveram atuais desde então, e estão presentes no romance através de uma narrativa de horror que apresenta elementos sobrenaturais e mórbidos capazes de simultaneamente gerar repulsa e atração. Adaptada mais de uma vez para o cinema, a obra é bastante popular, e a sua temática continua a ser relevante também por tratar do problema do bullying, um assunto vastamente conhecido pelas sociedades atuais. O segundo capítulo apresenta um breve recorte histórico de ideias de diversos filósofos e psicanalistas – com destaque para as teorias de John Kekes (2005) e Philip Zimbardo (2007) – que de alguma forma contribuem para corroborar a principal hipótese de trabalho aqui, qual seja, a de que o mal é passado adiante por meio de três modos básicos: a) o *mal doutrinante*, que pode ser ensinado e assimilado como se fosse o bem, b) o *mal congênito*, que se manifesta como uma predisposição adquirida através dos genes, e c) o *mal traumático*, que se dá através de uma série de ações violentas até que a pessoa acaba por reproduzir o mal sofrido, e começa a passa-lo adiante para outras pessoas. No terceiro capítulo se encontra a análise da maneira em que Carrie White se relaciona com os demais personagens do romance, sob a perspectiva de que ela sofre ações malignas até o ponto em que ela passa a ser perpetradora de ações semelhantes. As considerações finais ratificam a ideia de que, embora tenha potencial para ser uma heroína, a personagem Carrie White se transforma em vilã por ter sido vítima de um mal extremo, se configurando assim como um modelo de *mal traumático*.

Palavras-chave: *Carrie*; Estudos do Mal; Filosofia; Psicanálise; Horror.

ABSTRACT

The novel *Carrie*, by American writer Stephen King, published in 1974, offers the portrait of a small dysfunctional family in which the teachings of the mother, Margaret White, a religious fundamentalist, result in an unprepared daughter to live in harmony in society. This study presents a reading divided into three chapters that aims to show, in the light of philosophy and psychoanalysis, the transformation suffered by Carrie White, who becomes a target of society due to her upbringing; as a reaction to such persecution, she gradually ceases to be a victim of evil to become a perpetrator of it. The first chapter focuses on the fact that the novel was published in a phase of significant changes in the political, scientific, and technological areas in the US, with fears and anxieties that have remained current since then and are present in the novel through a horror narrative which has supernatural and morbid elements capable of simultaneously generating revulsion and attraction. Adapted more than once for the cinema, the work is quite popular, and its theme is still relevant because, among other reasons, it addresses the problem of bullying, a subject vastly known by current societies. The second chapter presents a brief historical cut of ideas from various philosophers and psychoanalysts – highlighting the theories of John Kekes (2005) and Philip Zimbardo (2007) – who somehow contribute to corroborating the main working hypothesis here, which indicates that evil is passed on through three basic modes: a) *the indoctrinating evil*, which can be taught and assimilated as if it were good, b) *congenital evil*, which manifests itself as a predisposition acquired through the genes, and c) *traumatic evil*, which occurs through a series of violent actions until the person ends up reproducing the evil suffered, and starts to pass it on to others. In the third chapter is the analysis of Carrie White's relationship with other characters in the novel, from the perspective that she suffers malignant actions to the point where she becomes perpetrator of similar actions. The final considerations ratify the idea that the character Carrie White, despite her heroic potential, becomes an outcast due to evil actions, and because she perpetrates the evil received, she configures as a model of *traumatic evil*.

Key words: *Carrie*; Studies of Evil; Philosophy; Psychoanalysis; Horror.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If it is true that literature was my first love, I can firmly state that horror was the second, and the curious thing is that it came to me through music. Classic Rock and Heavy Metal laid the foundations of what would one day become my master's thesis, and here I am writing this introduction thanks to Black Sabbath, Motörhead, Metallica, The Doors, Iron Maiden and so many others. Still, for that to happen, a lot of song and dance had to come first, including what I consider to be some long vacations I somehow needed to take from literature a whole decade ago.

During those ten years, I kept repeating to myself that I could barely wait to see its face again. College had been intense, which explains the necessary time apart. It was supposed to be four years long, but just like when in preschool I started pissing off everyone and they sent me straight to kindergarten, I finished college in three. Guess the full 9 months in momma's belly were enough waiting for a lifetime, and I came into this world in one hell of a rush. Those three life-changing years took a lot of studying and, at their end, I was then 21, holding a diploma and thirsty to see the world. I remember telling anyone who cared enough to know that college was the best thing I had done up until that point, but I needed a break. I was going to set forth into the universe.

Curiously enough, in the following four years after college, as I drifted away from literature, I started getting closer and closer to horror. My early fascination with obscure poetry, such as Blake's and Poe's, along with the strong effect classic rock and old school heavy metal music has always had over me culminated in my coming up with my own band. *Just Me & The Devil* was born in 2013, and two years later I took a plane to Europe with the objective of showing the world my music. For a good three years in the old continent, I would go with a multicultural band to small venues, play my own riffs and sing my own lyrics, which were heavily influenced by dark themes found in the writings of Jim Morrison, Geezer Butler, Lemmy Kilmister, among so many others.

The time I spent living in Dublin was decidedly the most fruitful time for me as an aspiring artist. Having always written loads of poetry and three unfinished attempts at novels, but never having actually sought to publish any of it, now was the time in which I could really express myself and put it all out there. Apart from the musical journey, I was lucky enough to travel around the continent looking for personal growth by exploring new cultures, making friends and exchanging ideas with anyone interested enough. I had many questions in my mind, mostly about myself, but mainly about human nature, and that experience was cathartic beyond

measure. As I grew older, I realized I had always struggled with evil, not only inside myself, but also the evil in others, which all of us on this planet seem to be tied to. The name *Just Me & The Devil* made more and more sense: as a human being, I am alone with my demons, and I must fight them. Either I win or they will.

As the lyrics of *Damaged Soul* indicate, one of my favorite Black Sabbath tracks, the seventh song of their 2013 album called *13*:

> The time, it is coming, when all life will end
> With doomsday approaching to Hell we'll descend
>
> Religion won't save me, the damage is done
> The future has ended before it's begun
>
> I don't mind dying 'cause I'm already dead
> Pray not for the living, I'll live in your head
>
> Dying is easy, it's living that's hard
> I'm losing the battle between Satan and God[1]

Seeing that the idea had always been with me, I started feeling the urge to gather more knowledge about it. Suddenly, I realized that the adventure was over, that Europe was nothing but a strange land, so I decided in 2018 that I had had enough of being a stranger. I came back home to try and put that more mature me now to good use in my own country, which more than ever seemed to be in need of people with the same intentions as I bore. The material for my band's third and last album was entirely written down and ready for recording, and I felt strongly that the musical tree in me had given its last fruit. As a project, I knew that *Just Me & The Devil* was over. I had expressed myself enough, now it was time to go back to Literature and start learning again, so I recorded that last album and immediately regained the habit of reading and studying.

In a way, *Just Me & The Devil* was not over, because that philosophical question lingered in my mind. Evil still interested me, and it did not seem as though I would stop wondering about it anytime soon. Searching in literature for authors that approached the subject, I came into contact with H. P. Lovecraft's cosmicism[2], and the idea of looking at evil from an angle other than the human one seemed enticing at first. I thought that if I could displace the point of view, I might be able to reach a new understanding of evil, since finding solutions for it had never been the objective. Cosmicism exposes the meaninglessness of human existence,

---

[1] Available at: <https://www.blacksabbath.com/discography.html>. Access on: January 14th, 2023.
[2] The philosophy of cosmicism states that "there is no recognizable divine presence, such as a god, in the universe, and that humans are particularly insignificant in the larger scheme of intergalactic existence." Available at: < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmicism>. Access on: January 14th, 2023.

as much as I wished to expose the meaninglessness of evil. As Lovecraft's beings from other realms look upon humankind in the same way the average city person considers ants on the sidewalk, I started making connections with other characters, literary or not, that could represent a type of evil so natural that it could even pass for innocent. Consider, for example, how *Satan* in Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger* lacks responsibility for the meanest of his actions, or how Clive Barker's cenobites are hard to categorize. Being from another reality, monsters fail at recognizing the Earthlings' notions of good and bad, so when they annihilate us, it has the same weight as when a baby breaks a doll's neck.

This scary but understandable aspect of evil puzzled me. Was it possible that evil could be justified by simply removing one factor from the equation – the familiarity between evildoer and evil-sufferer? It was as horrifying as it made total sense. Still, that was not motivation enough for me to start writing about evil, academically speaking. It was only when I watched Brian de Palma's adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie* that I knew in my heart what I wanted to study. It was precisely the presence of familiarity between characters which made evil so interesting. Margaret White, the mother of the protagonist Carrie White, epitomized the "combination of fear and repulsion with respect to the thought of monsters" which Noel Carroll talks about in his masterpiece *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990, p. 53). Carrie's storyline stood out for me in a way that by early 2020 I took it upon myself to revisit all of Stephen King's work, starting with watching all the movies in chronological order, corresponding to the year in which he released each of his books. It was supposed to be just another movie marathon, but it ended up being much more than that.

Because I was getting ready to write a project to run for a spot in the master's program at UFRGS, I was studying more than ever, and in search of a good line of thought for the project's theme, therefore especially open to new ideas. Thirsty to know more about Carrie White, I had no option but to go for the book itself and, with that restless question in my mind – what about evil? – that high school girl's story jumped off the pages even more vividly than Sissy Spacek did from the screen. It touched me profoundly, and I was overwhelmed at how Carrie's cavalry was the embodiment of the aspect of evil I wanted to talk about. I could not believe that I had never noticed before the power of that story not only in terms of how *normal* evil can seem, but also of how easily it can be assimilated, and how it can be dangerously passed on. It simply blew me away.

It is interesting to observe how closely to psychoanalysis King's characters are portrayed, and there is a unique power with which his plots transcend horror, due to a distinctive talent for channeling cultural fears. Unlike the movie, which according to King himself, "was

lighter and more deft than my own – and a good deal more artistic" (1987, p. 106), the 1974 novel contains an account of Margaret White's backstory, Carrie's polemic mother, which is essential to understanding the protagonist. It felt strongly right to me that writing a thesis on evil from the perspective of a family that went completely wrong was much more relevant to the present times than looking at non-human monsters.

On second thought, I was afraid for a moment that my idea could not be original, so I did a quick Google scholar research[3] under "Stephen King", which yielded almost three million results, being only the four first links about the man himself. Among these, all are links for books, one of which is *Danse Macabre* (1981a), written by him, and apart from these four, all other results comprised other "Kings"[4] out there, providing the evidence that there still is much to be said about such an extensive, meaningful body of work. In fact, if not totally indifferent to me, the fact that Stephen King does not receive the academic attention he deserves, just as horror is an overall underrated genre, only makes me like his work even more. I was decidedly sure that King deserved more credit than being put on the big screen for the simple fact that, as Jason Colavito says, "monsters (…) sell well in any medium" (2008, p. 91). By the way, it is undeniable that horror has been trending like never before as of late, making the past decade or so probably the genre's Golden Age.

In King's own words, when answering the question posed by himself – *what is a monster?* – in his book *Danse Macabre*, he argues that the reader should "begin by assuming that the tale of horror, no matter how primitive, is allegorical by its very nature; that it is symbolic" (1981a, p. 26). He goes further by claiming that:

> The element of allegory is there only because it is built-in, a given, impossible to escape. Horror appeals to us because it says, in a symbolic way, things we would be afraid to say right out straight, with the bark still on; it offers us a chance to exercise (that's right; not exorcise but exercise) emotions which society demands we keep closely in hand. The horror film is an invitation to indulge in deviant, antisocial behavior by proxy—to commit gratuitous acts of violence, indulge our puerile dreams of power, to give in to our most craven fears. (KING, 1981a, p. 27).

In this line of thought, the relationship between Carrie White and her mother changed the way in which I was used to seeing evil. I started to realize that so far I had been heavily influenced by a generally religious view, which in the Western world puts on the Christian garment and stipulates the basis for a general perception of evil – in the same way that our

---

[3] Research made by the author of the present work on Google as of August 23rd, 2022.
[4] Google Scholar seems to have been dominated by Stephen King, but not the one who wrote *Carrie*. Instead, he is a professor in the Health Center at the University of Connecticut. Available at: <https://scholar. google.com/citations?user=HAUhY9oAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>. Access on: August 23rd, 2022.

failing, corrupted politics collaborates with the media to spread its hysteria[5]. Now, instead of being concerned with what evil was, I was more interested in investigating the chain of events that connected evil actions. Knowing where all the evil in the world comes from would not suffice, for, if I refused to believe evil could come about for no apparent reason, I needed to analyze in what ways it kept being passed on.

Looking at Carrie's victims at the end of the novel, one cannot help but immediately feel a tragic relief, especially after having witnessed all those people had done to her throughout the story. Still, I wished to look even further, and wondered if that extreme capacity for harm that Carrie held could not be explained in the harm she received from her mother. The same could be said of Margaret, whose family experience had not been a healthy one and, if we could have any insight into the past of Margaret's parents, I dare say we could find many meaningful explanations for the way things were with that accursed family, and so on. Rather than verifying whether some action is evil by displacing the point of view before looking at it, at last I had come to a much more substantial question in my research. I felt strongly that my studies would make a lot more sense if I started looking at evil as some kind of contagious psychosis, that is, as a harm so serious that, in receiving it, one can only deal with it by finding a way to provoke that same harm onto others.

During childhood, Stephen King is reputed to have lived through traumatic hardships[6], including excruciating financial troubles that made his mother, a single parent, move around very frequently, as she struggled to provide for him and his brother David. When Stephen was only two years old, his father "Donald King, a vacuum cleaner salesman and merchant mariner, went out one night to buy a pack of cigarettes in 1949, leaving his wife, Nellie Ruth, and two small sons at home", as Tony Magistrale puts it in his 2010 book *Stephen King: America's Storyteller* (p. 2). That seems to have impacted a lot on King's work, seen as not only bad parenting makes up for a significant part of his stories, but specifically the horrors coming from parents into their kids.

Thus, having realized that there is a strong presence of psychoanalysis in King's work, I decided to take what little knowledge I had of the subject and to get deeper into it. Thus, not only Freud, but also Jung can be expected to appear very frequently in this research, mainly

---

[5] The word hysteria originates from the Greek word for uterus, *hystera*. The oldest record of hysteria dates to 1900 B.C. when Egyptians recorded behavioral abnormalities in adult women on medical papyrus. (…) Freud theorized hysteria stemmed from childhood sexual abuse or repression and was also one of the first to apply hysteria to men. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hysteria>. Access on: August 27th, 2022.
[6] Available at: <https://www.grunge.com/260583/the-tragic-real-life-story-of-stephen-king/>. Access on: August 27th, 2022.

because their theories deal directly with a wide variety of family fears and can enlighten the reader about the relationship between Carrie White and her mother. Additionally, having read both thinkers made me see King's characters under a different light, and I looked everywhere for evidence that indicated that psychoanalysis influenced his work, yet I must confess I could not find any. Still, the theoretical chapter of the present work shall demonstrate how not only King's work and psychology correlate, but also how both converse with the various theories of evil.

It would be quite a piece of hard work to read King's *It* (1986) and not think of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), especially when the backstory of pretty much any of the members of The Losers Club is presented to us. One of the most blatant examples would be Beverly Marsh, whose insane and abusive father Alvin represents her worst nightmares, and the relation between a person's extreme experiences in life and their dreams is explained by Freud in his work:

> the dreams of those suffering from diseases of the heart are usually short and come to a terrifying end at the moment of waking; their content almost always includes a situation involving a horrible death. Sufferers from diseases of the lungs dream of suffocation, crowding and fleeing, and are remarkably subject to the familiar nightmare (FREUD, 2010, p. 66).

Similarly, it would take a true effort not to think of Jung's archetypes while reading King's *Misery* (1987), a novel in which the main character Annie Wilkes, despite not having kids, is the paragon of a sadistic mother. In the words of Jung, about the mother's influence over a child's behavior:

> Under abnormal conditions, i.e., when the mother's own attitude is extreme, a similar attitude can be forced on the children too, thus violating their individual disposition, which might have opted for another type if no abnormal external influences had intervened. As a rule, whenever such a falsification of type takes place as a result of parental influence, the individual becomes neurotic later (JUNG, 1976, pp. 352-353).

It is precisely in that line of thought that the relevance for the present thesis can be explained. If evil is like a virus that can be passed on, there are a few things that can be inferred from that presupposition. The first is that this virus must have started in the body of someone, that is, there was at least one person at the root of this evil, and this person can transmit it at least once by simply coming into contact with others. Apart from this patient zero, another axiom about evil, if it is true that it behaves like a highly contagious virus, is that it might infect more and more people on the long run. In other words, if not stopped, evil actions might keep being passed along until they take such a huge proportion that it could be quite hard to stop

them, from the moment they reach a certain dimension. If we look at the political situation of the world today in face of a cruel and hazardous pandemic such as the Covid-19 one, one might be inclined to wonder why humankind still has not developed the so-called herd immunity when it comes to all that evil.

As interesting as analyzing the characters in *Carrie* under the light of psychoanalysis might be, it would certainly not be enough for the purpose of this thesis, which is to investigate in what ways evil is transported from one person to the next until it reaches catastrophic proportions. That is why philosophers such as John Kekes, Terry Eagleton, and Todd Calder have been brought into the research, so that the problem of evil can be discussed more properly. Even though a review of the earliest philosophers of evil shall appear in the theoretical chapter, a decision was made for a focus on more current thinkers instead of the classical ones. That is because modern philosophers seem to have a privileged position over the latter, in the sense that they have had the chance to review all of those who came before them, and therefore present readers of our time with a more current view of what evil stands for.

Kekes argues that "Plato, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Hobbes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Butler, Kant, Bradley, and Freud, among others, have offered historically influential answers to the questions of what causes evil and why there is so much of it" (2005, p. 135). Still, in the second chapter of the present thesis I review the main theories on evil by some of the philosophers cited by Kekes here, but I do not come any close to answering either of these questions, or even offer solutions for this greatest of human problems, "perhaps the most basic and most serious moral problem" (KEKES, 2005, p. xi). What I do, instead, is to raise awareness to the fact that some of the philosophical views are too outdated for the world of today, while hoping that the reader realizes the subject of evil is not, and possibly never will be. Also, in showing Kekes's more updated view of the matter, so to speak, and how he focuses on evil actions by humans throughout history to support his secular arguments, the main idea is to connect his concern with evil to how concerning the evil suffered by Carrie is.

While Kekes searches for examples of evil in the real world, Eagleton (2010) plunges into literature to talk about evil actions and characters, just like this thesis seeks to do. In analyzing Graham Greene's 1938 novel *Brighton Rock*, he uses characters Rose and Pinkie as examples of good and evil, respectively, and says that both share "a secret affinity" (p. 28). He cites a passage from the book to illustrate that, which says, "Good and evil lived in the same country, (…) spoke the same language, came together like old friends." In that vein, literature shares strong similarities with real life as well, in the sense that this passage from Greene's work cited by Eagleton could easily be used to describe the way politics is done nowadays. On

TV, they seem to be running *against* each other, an illusion which divides people while originating and feeding the hate among them.

Calder, in his turn, sets out to separate the notion of evil in fiction from religion and philosophy, and his theories are of great help for this thesis in the sense that a thorough investigation about the presence of evil in the human imaginary has made itself necessary so that a theoretical discussion can begin. He reviews many contemporary moralist philosophers in his 2013 *The Concept of Evil*, and much of the discussion in there has contributed to three hypotheses of passed-on evil developed for the present thesis. These hypotheses include a) *indoctrinated evil*, b) *congenital evil*, and c) *traumatic evil*, and they shall be developed in section 2.3 of chapter 2.

Another recurring subject in King's novels is the struggle between good and evil, and the best example would probably be the novel *The Stand* (1978), having become a TV series twice, first in 1994, and then in 2020, opportunistically enough. The post-apocalyptic plot circles around a highly contagious and lethal Flu virus that virtually erases the human race off the face of the Earth, leaving only a few immune people who split into two groups, the good side and the bad side. King's characters often seem to face the dilemma of which side to choose, and sometimes that division seems to be inside each one of them. *Carrie* contains a similar tale, and it can be said that the protagonist's internal battle between the two wolves[7] goes on for a good while, as she tries to give the good wolf as much food as she can. If it is true that she also let herself feed the bad one, it is also undeniable that many people, including her own mother, helped with quite a few snack donations, dessert and all.

With all that in mind, one of the main questions this argumentative thesis seeks to answer is in what ways evil gets to Carrie White, so overwhelmingly that she is then compelled to go ahead and give some of that evil back to the world. In chapter 2, a dialogue between philosophy and psychoanalysis will be at the center of the discussion, meaning that on one side there will be Kekes (2005, 2010), Eagleton (2010) and Calder (2013), along with others, laying the theoretical background in terms of evil studies. On the other side, Freud's (see references for various dates) psychoanalytical theories about family structure and sexuality, as well as Jung's (see references for various dates) archetype of the terrible mother, including a series of other theories by him shall be investigated. Some of Dr. Philip Zimbardo's (2007) philosophical insights have been included, due to his relevant study of how good people turn evil.

---

[7] This is a story of a grandfather using a metaphor of two wolves fighting within him to explain his inner conflicts to his grandson. When his grandson asks which wolf wins, the grandfather answers whichever he chooses to feed is the one that wins. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_Wolves>. Access on: September 20th, 2021.

After the discussion about evil, chapter 3 offers an analysis of the characters in the novel *Carrie*, with a focus on the protagonist and her relationship with friends, schoolmates and, most importantly of all, her mother. The objective will be to understand how an atmosphere of evil is created around Carrie as a means to engulf her and contaminate her, to the point of making her a byproduct of that evil. I will offer the reader an extensive analysis of the character Carrie's journey to support the argument that she could have been an agent of good, if it were not for the undeserved, ill treatment that she received from those who were supposed to love and befriend her.

Before all that can happen, the next section will contain chapter 1, which focuses on the historical background surrounding the makings of Stephen King's debut work, starting from an investigation into the rise of science that happened specifically in the twentieth century in the Western world. There seems to be an interesting connection between society's scientific advancements and the decline of humanity that found in horror's artistic expression a way to channel fears. The development of cinema and its hand in the growth of pop culture was also crucial to the sequence of facts that made it possible for King's creations to cause an impact onto the world. The wars as well as some of the main revolutionary movements of the twentieth century, including civil rights, feminism, as well as the hippie and musical ones, all make sense in cultural terms to understand what led to the making of *Carrie* in 1974. Finally, the reader might expect chapter 1 to look into horror for its monsters, especially the most silent ones, and therefore most evil ones, who cause the most harm, and who were supposed to defend us.

1. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

(…) the story of science and the story of horror are conjoined twins, one full of humanity's highest aspirations and the other its darkest nightmares. Though science may survive without horror, horror cannot survive without the anxieties created by the changing role of human knowledge and science in our society. (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 4).

1.1 Horror to channel modern fears

Much of what happened in the twentieth century in terms of cultural developments that contributed to the makings of *Carrie* (1974) has its roots in the previous century regarding humanity's existential dilemmas. While the novel explores a wide range of questions pertaining to fears considered modern today, including the fear of adulthood and of social rejection, its place in the horror pantheon is one of prestige also because it deals with other polemical matters that began to become popular in the nineteenth century, such as the possible horrors of parenthood, as well as the horrors of religion.

According to Stephen King, "such fears, which are often political, economic, and psychological rather than supernatural, give the best work of horror a pleasing allegorical feel" (1981a, p. 11), and Carrie White synthesizes well that idea by being such a contradictory hero, who saves the helpless victim, who is also her, by becoming herself an evil villain. The protagonist of King's debut novel manages to be doubly cathartic, because she not only represents a plethora of fears and horrors, but she also personifies the dual nature of human beings, who hold the capacity of going from good to evil, provided the right circumstances. It is as though Carrie burns out at seventeen as much as to stop being a misfit as to avoid being an adult, and even a mother.

Jason Colavito affirms in *Knowing Fear* (2008) that, because of "the battle between Darwinism and creationism", which "raged throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century", and which "continues under other names ("Intelligent Design", most recently) down to this very day" (p. 68), an interesting phenomenon happened in the world, in relation to how human beings started perceiving themselves. That is, if it is true that "evolution removed God from the equation and promoted atheism", a terrible question seems to have been posed – "Was man to be merely one of the beasts, a talking animal and nothing more?" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 68) – a question which horror literature does not fully answer but explores intensely. Colavito adds that "Even Darwin ducked the question" until his book *Descent of Man* in 1871, and that "it would be almost a century until believers in evolution outnumbered creationists world-wide" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 69).

Thus, while "many in the Victorian era simply dispensed with the divine altogether (…) with the coming of evolutionary theory", and "twentieth century thinkers could (…) predict, as the Marxists did, the end of religion" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 115), it can be said that in a way human beings entered the new century as orphans. Now they were left to themselves, free to face all the horrors alone, without a super friend in the skies to defend them. Colavito even adds that "many feared that humanity would become wild and immoral, filled with license and debauchery if the fear of God and the authority of faith waned" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 115). Whether because of God's death or not, humanity certainly did seem to start deteriorating fast as soon as the Edwardian period started.

Colavito points out that,

> As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, a world of wonder and horror had opened up, when the walls between science and superstition seemed to fall apart, and when progress paradoxically seemed to reinforce ancient beliefs. From this mixture of rapid technological development and the renewal of faith in things unseen, late Victorian horror fiction developed a fascination with the ghost story, a trend that would continue for as long as Spiritualism itself. (…) In an age that forecast progress and imagined that technology would lead to continued improvements, ghost stories functioned as a medium through which the past could directly affect the present. (COLAVITO, 2008, pp. 126-127).

The rise of the ghost story is synonymous with the rise of horror in the arts, which could not be different since the horrors of real life throughout the twentieth century somehow managed to exceed the most haunting of horror plots. When Noël Carroll states that "monsters are not only physically threatening", but that "they are cognitively threatening", or "threats to common knowledge" (1990, p. 34) instead, a link could be made between, for instance, the economic crisis of 1929 and director Lewis Allen's 1944 movie *The Uninvited*. Being unable to pay the mortgage and losing one's property can be as frightening as having unknown forces living inside one's home, keeping one from having any peace.

As the advancements in science bring society new possibilities of comfort, they can also increase anxieties. To the human mind's capacity of collecting and refining fears, every new scientific invention is a contribution, and the horror genre functions as a form of inexpensive psychotherapy to the masses. As King puts it, "because books and movies are mass media, the field of horror has often been able to do better than even these personal fears over the last thirty years" (1981a, p. 11). At the same time as humans need to express their anxieties through art, seeing monsters on screen or reading about them on paper somehow helps to prepare people for the next monster, whether or not it is going to be a fictitious one. In Carroll's words, "works of horror (…) teach us, in large measure, the appropriate way to respond to them" (1990, p. 31),

and how to respond to the horrors of the real world as well.

There seems to be a connection between the happiness portrayed on Instagram by some of its users and the threat of nuclear war in Ukraine[8]. It is as though horror has become quotidian, if not pedestrian, so much the world has seen it, and one could even look at is as an old friend, it might be said with sarcasm. For evidence, one has just to compare the reaction of audiences at the premiere of Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960 to how shocked people are when watching any slasher movie nowadays[9]. Nevertheless, as much as contemporaneity has grown accustomed to horror to the point of evidencing its triviality, one should not overlook the importance of the monster in the horror genre. Whether supernatural or not, its presence is frightening mainly because of the evil it represents.

Similarly, Carrie White stimulates the reader's imaginary about the well-known fear of suffering in the hands of evil, as well as that of becoming it. As H. P. Lovecraft has famously said, "the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (1973, p. 1), and the fear of becoming evil fits perfectly into that category. That may be the explanation of why horror audiences tend to identify with some monsters, considered even canonical nowadays, such as Jason in the movie series *Friday the 13th*. About that, Carol J. Clover says that, as an audience, "we are both Red Riding Hood and the Wolf", because "the force of the experience, in horror, comes from "knowing" both sides of the story" (1992, p. 12). In the case of Carrie White, audiences must endure the humiliations the girl suffers while she is Red Riding Hood, and they cannot help but cheer when she turns into the Wolf. As stated by Victoria S. Harrison in *The History of Evil in the Early Twentieth Century* (2018):

> The century began with a highly optimistic view of science as a panacea for all individual and social ills. It was widely believed, especially by those influenced by Sigmund Freud and later by Bertrand Russell, that science would soon replace religion – such was its perceived power for the good (…) it became harder to sustain this rosy view of science in the face of its contribution to the suffering experienced by many during the twentieth century. Scientific advances were, in many cases, fuelled [sic] by the needs of communities in conflict (…) specific developments within science made possible the chemical warfare of World War I (HARRISON, 2018, p. 17).

The deception of science which, instead of saving humanity from evil threats, turns out to be just another evil, is like the horror trope of the failing authority, usually represented by a

---

[8] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/07/biden-warns-world-would-face-armageddon-if-putin-uses-a-tactical-nuclear-weapon-in-ukraine>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.
[9] Audiences responded as though trapped on a roller coaster through the spook house, with a convulsive mixture of screams and laughter. People bolted for the doors and fainted in their seats. The mayhem caused one New York theater to call the cops and others to call for censorship. For a few weeks, Psycho upstaged the presidential campaign. Available at: <https://www.villagevoice.com/2010/06/15/psycho-is-50-remembering-its-impact-and-the-andrew-sarris-review/>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.

cop, such as Sergeant Howie in Robin Hardy's 1973 *The Wicker Man*. In search of a missing girl, he arrives on an island called Summerisle and starts to suspect that the pagan islanders plan to sacrifice her, but they have only tricked Howie by indulging his heroic fantasies and, in the end, he is the real sacrifice. In failing to defend, the horror tropes of the foolish cop and the mad scientist share similarities, and it is not any wonder that the early twentieth century "was the high-point of the mad scientist movie", as Colavito (2008, p. 216) states. He also comments on how horror in real life reflects onto the arts:

> The "realistic" fiction of the era failed largely to address the important developments in science and society that contributed to the "unpredictable" quality of the new era; horror did this, and it did it for those most affected by the startling changes in society, the lower and middle classes who felt the wars and the Depression most gravely. It was not just an "escape" from the problems of the world; it was a way of exploring them in a symbolic way. This process began at the end of the Victorian era and continued through the Second World War, turning horror into a twisted mirror in which the disasters of war and science could find their literary reflection. (COLAVITO, 2018, pp. 198-199).

The great wars brought humanity a sense of extreme evolution, shown in the knowledge behind much of the war efforts, but at the same time the monstrosity of episodes like the holocaust proved how terribly human beings can fail at making their choices. The reflection of that reality into cinema, according to Colavito, is expressed in "a study of American and British horror films", which showed that "from 1931 to 1984 (…) nearly one in three had a scientist or his creation as villain, and nearly forty percent of horror threats came from scientific or psychological research" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 200). The rise of science and the decline of humanity walking hand in hand.

Not only in literature and cinema, but the horrors of the wars have also been reflected in the musical arts. Black Sabbath, a rock band known for capturing in their sound the essence of their hometown – the industrial, factory-filled, gray city of late 1960s Birmingham – has lyrics that express the anxieties of the generation born in the post-WWII era. In *Hand of Doom*, released in 1970, it is possible to notice how drug use can be a consequence of the depression in the face of yet another war: "First it was the bomb, Vietnam napalm. Disillusioning, you push the needle in. From life you escape, reality's black drape, colors in your mind satisfy your time"[10].

Metallica are another example of artists who often raise awareness to the war problem in their songs. Despite being from sunny California's Bay Area, many of their lyrics illustrate

---

[10] Available at: <https://www.blacksabbath.com/discography.html>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.

the horrors of losing friends in the battlefield, such as their classic *For Whom The Bell Tolls*:

> Make his fight on the hill in the early day
> Constant chill deep inside
> Shouting gun, on they run through the endless grey
> On they fight, for they're right, yes, but who's to say?
> For a hill, men would kill. Why? They do not know
> Stiffened wounds test their pride
> Men of five, still alive through the raging glow
> Gone insane from the pain that they surely know[11]

This song was released in 1984, a year envisioned by George Orwell as the year in which the American Dream would finally turn into a consummated nightmare. Published in 1949, Orwell's masterpiece *1984* inspired countless works of literature, as well as in cinema and music. David Bowie released a song of the same name in 1974, telling his listeners to "beware the savage jaw of 1984"[12]. Because of the year it was released, the novel *1984*, with its apocalyptic plot depicting a world dominated by a dictator whose telescreens keep the population under constant surveillance, it is inevitable to think that it might have been inspired by Nazi Germany. As Colavito puts it, "Hitler's government tended to view science as an extension of ideology" (2008, p. 226), and the terror of his rule naturally inspired countless artists to express the anxieties caused by the imminent end of freedom, should an evil man like that come to hold control over technologies.

Impossible to leave out of this discussion the importance of 1969's Woodstock, where Richie Havens screamed the lyrics to his most famous song, "Freedom, freedom! Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, a long way from home"[13]. The feeling of not belonging created by the wars is present in the artistic expression of all the twentieth century generations. If the governments of the world did not mind about devastating the only habitable planet that they know, the young people could not help but imagine new possible worlds. Whereas Aldous Huxley imagined, even before Orwell, that a madman would use science to exterminate individuality in his 1932 novel *Brave New World*, David Bowie responded in 1971 with his song *Life on Mars?* – in which the lyrics describe a failed world while wondering about alternative places to live.

Even if some of the works mentioned above are not considered horror *stricto sensu*, it is undeniable that their contents deal with the horrors witnessed by the populations of the world

---

[11] Available at: <https://www.metallica.com/songs/for-whom-the-bell-tolls/song-25906.html>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.
[12] Available at: <https://genius.com/David-bowie-1984-lyrics>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.
[13] Available at: <https://genius.com/Richie-havens-freedom-lyrics>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.

throughout the twentieth century. Still, there is no shortage of examples of horror works of art to have been inspired directly by the atrocities of war. According to Colavito, "the stark images of the Holocaust would be reflected in the depiction of zombies and victims in horror literature and horror arts" (2008, p. 230), which recalls any of director George Romero's zombie films. In 1985 *Day of the Dead*, Dr. Logan experiments on Bub, a zombie who shows friendly traits as well as rudimentary human behavior, making the doctor proud and soldier Rhodes upset. Rhodes just wants to exterminate the living dead creatures, but Dr. Logan believes science and knowledge will benefit from his tests on Bud. The imagery of the movie's gloomy scenario bears strong resemblance to Colavito's account of "what Nazi Germany's doctors had done to the condemned in the name of science" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 229):

> During the war, the concentration camps became sadistic playgrounds for a phalanx of Drs. Moreau, some three hundred fifty doctors in all. Prof. Heinrich Berning coldly recorded the symptoms of starving Soviet prisoners until they dropped dead. Other doctors froze their prisoners, or infected them with rare diseases to see how they would suffer and die. Still more experiments involved transplanting organs or deliberately infecting wounds the doctors had induced. Dr. Sigmund Rascher used a mobile pressure chamber to simulate the effects of falling out of an airplane. He repeated his experiments on one victim three times until he succeeded in simulating a fatal fall. Dr. Josef Mengele, the most notorious of the Nazi doctors, injected dye into victims' eyes to see if he could change their color. He conducted notorious studies on Jewish twins involving infections, mutilations, and, almost inevitably, death. (COLAVITO, 2008, pp. 229-230).

The history of humanity is the history of wars, and the history of wars is also part of the history of evil. One of art's main role is to document all of that, and horror offers a distinguishing helping hand in recording the evil done by human beings. Along with the wars that happened in the twentieth century, there was one war that did not happen, which did not keep it from leaving a permanent mark in people's minds. According to Colavito, it was the Cold War, whose "shadow of nuclear annihilation that could come at any time" shook the world to its very foundations, especially "during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1961, when for twelve days in October it was perfectly possible to believe that humanity might not survive until November" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 231). That war is documented in a song by Iron Maiden, in which the lyrics shout, "two minutes to midnight, the hands that threaten doom, two minutes to midnight, to kill the unborn in the womb"[14].

One of the world's best respected metal bands, Iron Maiden could be called a *horror* band in the context of the present thesis, judging by their imagery and thematic appeal. The song mentioned above was released in the iconic year of 1984, and while protesting politicians

---

[14] Available at: <https://genius.com/Iron-maiden-2-minutes-to-midnight-lyrics>. Access on: Oct 9, 2022.

who encourage the war effort simply because they profit from it, it alludes to the Doomsday Clock[15], functioning since 1947. Midnight on this clock represents the apocalypse, and the closest it had ever come to that mark was two minutes in September 1953, when the USA and the Soviet Union were reported to be testing H-bombs. In 2020, the clock reached an all-time scare of one hundred seconds, according to an official statement released by the Bulletin of the atomic scientists[16].

The purpose of this section has been to establish a relation between some of the historical facts of the twentieth century and artistic productions that might have been inspired somehow by real life horror. Whether in literature, cinema, or music, it is possible to observe a connection between the fears and anxieties of living in an extremely violent and decadent world, and the effects of human evil as a recurrent subject in the arts. In the case of horror, it is understandable why it is so popular and why so many people consume a type of artistic production that speaks directly to an emotion that seems to be a constant companion to humans. In a way horror, despite so often dealing with the supernatural – or precisely because of it – helps people understand better the sometimes-absurd reality around them. In the next section, an account will be offered about another known horror trope that is not restricted to the genre, and one which explores deeply the topic of fear and evil.

1.2 Parenting and monstrosity

To understand the boiling pot that cooked *Carrie* (1974), making it one of today's most recognizable horror stories, one would have to explore deeply some key historical facts set specifically in the 1960s. This decade seems to be plentiful with important factors that helped set the mood in relation to how aware the western populations are today in terms of perception towards the future of humanity, its risks, and the fears these create. It was in this decade that the Summer of Love[17] happened, which is curious, if not ironic, since it was certainly a decade of plenty of death as well.

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 23, 1963 was literally a

---

[15] The Doomsday Clock is a symbol that represents the likelihood of a man-made global catastrophe, in the opinion of the members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doomsday_Clock>. Access on: Oct 12, 2022.

[16] Available at: <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/2020-doomsday-clock-statement/>. Access on: Oct 12, 2022.

[17] The Summer of Love was a social phenomenon that occurred during the summer of 1967, when as many as one hundred thousand people, mostly young people sporting hippie fashions of dress and behavior, converged in San Francisco's neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury. More broadly, the Summer of Love encompassed the hippie music, hallucinogenic drugs, anti-war, and free-love scene throughout the West Coast of the United States, and as far away as New York City. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_of_Love>. Access on: Feb 10, 2022.

shot in the back of America, as well as the world. The young president, who made great promises but did not have the opportunity to live enough so that he could try and fulfill them, was a symbol of union for the global population. With a position clearly in favor of the Civil Rights movement, he was intent on minimizing as much as possible the power of segregationists in the country. Still, bearing in mind how affecting martyrdom is known to be, one may argue that Kennedy's death was precisely what facilitated the passage of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act.

If it is true that, sometimes, some people's greatest acts are achieved by dying – take Carrie White as an example – other times it takes a menace to bring resistance about. It is like evil, which, when getting closer and closer to taking over, has the power to produce a desire for good, its counterpoint. As Michiel Leezenberg states, in Islamic philosophy "the good that is possible in things (…) becomes good only after, and in virtue of, the evil that may occur in them", that is, "it is precisely because fire is capable of destroying things that benefits may also be derived from it" (2019, p. 372).

In that line of thought, a relation can be made between the Vietnam War, which reached its peak in 1968 after the Tet Offensive [18], and various social movements of expression surrounding that year, including the Woodstock festival. As the war effort opposed the peace that the hippies wanted, musicians and artists in general of that time gathered to escalate the peace protests, and it was precisely that escalation what made that music festival possible. Woodstock[19] is considered to this day to have been one of the most crucial moments in popular music history, not only because of the fantastic music played there, but also because of what it symbolizes for a generation highly identified with counterculture.

Martin Luther King Jr. was another great personality from the sixties who, despite having a strong potential for changing things for better in the world, was forced to leave it too early, when on the prophetic evening of April 4, 1968, a fatal gunshot killed him. Not only his deeds in life, but also his death has left a mark that will undoubtedly continue to inspire people into the indefinite future, mainly because of what he represented in terms of freedom and equality. In a decade of so many key developments in the fight against prejudice in the world,

---

[18] The Tet Offensive was a coordinated series of North Vietnamese attacks on more than 100 cities and outposts in South Vietnam, as an attempt to foment rebellion among the South Vietnamese population and encourage the United States to scale back its involvement in the Vietnam War. As a result, the American public support takes a huge hit after the Offensive. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/tet-offensive>. Access on: Feb 10, 2022.

[19] Woodstock Music and Art Fair, commonly referred to simply as Woodstock, was a music festival held August 15–18, 1969, in Bethel, New York, southwest of the town of Woodstock. Billed as "an Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music" and alternatively referred to as the Woodstock Rock Festival, it attracted an audience of more than 400,000. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodstock>. Access on: Feb 11, 2022.

the death of countless freedom fighters helped the cause almost as much as the things they achieved while living.

While the 1960s are considered a decade of multiple revolutions throughout the world, much can be said about the multiple deaths of parental figures shaping people's view towards life. If the progressive decline of religion in the nineteenth century had symbolized the death of God and the orphanhood of humanity, the twentieth century started to witness the death of hope through the fall of leaders who seemed intent on making this a better world. On June 23, 1960, the American FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved the sale of an oral contraceptive called Enovid, and that simple act changed the lives of thousands of women in their reproductive age. At the same time as it gave them more freedom by protecting them from unwanted pregnancies, which ultimately gave them a wider variety of choices in their personal lives, it also meant the death of many possible mothers. As the birthrate in the country fell almost 26 percent in just ten years[20], it only made sense that human beings stopped bringing so many new people into a godless, parricide Earth.

According to a fact sheet published by the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, "The cultural ramifications of the widespread use of the pill are nearly impossible to measure. Most women in the '70s believed the benefits of the pill far outweighed the risks"[21]. The text mentions the singer Loretta Lynn's 1975 hit called *The Pill*, whose lines read (p. 7),

> All these years I've stayed at home
> While you had all your fun
> And every year that's gone by
> Another baby's come
> There's a-gonna be some changes made
> Right here on nursery hill
> You've set this chicken your last time
> 'Cause now I've got the pill

Shouts of freedom are recurrent in the world of pop music, and these lyrics specifically talk of the new power women had now acquired. Despite the Civil Rights Act that took place in 1964[22], which, by forbidding employment and educational discrimination in the totality of the US territory, made it possible for women to go into professional fields, the contraceptive

---

[20] See the "United States – Historical Birth Rate Data" chart. Available at: <https://www.macro trends.net/countries/USA/united-states/birth-rate>. Access on: Feb 6, 2022.

[21] Available at: <https:// www.plannedparenthood.org/files/1514/3518/7100/Pill_History_FactSheet.pdf>, p. 6. Access on: Feb 6, 2022.

[22] In 1964, Congress passed Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Provisions of this civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing. Available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/civil-rights-center/statutes/civil-rights-act-of-1964>. Access on: Feb 6, 2022.

pill was also key. It gave women considerably more control over their fertility, and thus more control over their lives, for now they could manage their time better by postponing having children to whenever suitable, which might as well be never in many cases. For many, it meant that a career or a degree could be pursued, something that had never been a possibility before birth control pills came about, while for many others it was a way to deal permanently with the fear of parenting.

Many cultural changes happened in the 1960s around the world and, as it could not be different, they ended up leaving their mark in American society by altering the role of people. Now able to control their childrearing habits, women started joining the paid workforce more than ever before, and this improvement in their quality of life brought along a few problems with it. Huge disparities in payment related to gender along with numerous cases of sexual harassment at the workplace contributed to the dissatisfaction among women regarding their newly acquired place in society. Therefore, while all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy[23], all work and no *pay* tends to make Jackie an enslaved girl yet again, so now women had a whole new fight in front of them.

Along with popular music, literature and cinema also came into the picture to channel the horrors and fears of humankind in face of the new developments in society which directly approached the parenthood subject. In 1967, Ira Levin published *Rosemary's Baby*, which, according to Colavito (2008), deals with "anxieties surrounding reproduction, contraception, abortion, and Thalidomide" (p. 299), which boils down to something he calls "reproductive horror" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 300). He goes on by saying that the novel "turned pregnancy into its own horror story", and that it "launched a cycle of "demon child" books and films that lasted for more than a decade after the book's release" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 301).

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan discusses *the problem that has no name*, which, according to her, "was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States" (p. 11). She exposes how women had been taught during their entire lives how to embrace their femininity by following a set of rules and fulfilling a set of domestic tasks which were pre-programmed for them and ask for no more, and that all was going well until they started asking themselves

---

[23] In reference to Stanley Kubrick's movie released in 1980 *The Shining*, adapted from Stephen King's novel of the same name. In the scene when Wendy finds out what her husband Jack (played by Jack Nicholson) has been writing the whole time instead of his play, as he had claimed he was. The phrase "All Work And No Play Makes Jack A Dull Boy" appears on the typewriter over and over and, despite the fact the this is not originally in the novel, it is part of a group of things that were made up exclusively for the movie and which made it a cult success. Available at: <https://www.cinemablend.com/news/2474408/the-shining-10-big-differences-between-the-book-and-movie>. Access on: Feb 6, 2022.

the question, "Is this all?" (FRIEDAN, 1963, p. 11). Friedan elaborates her definition of the problem that has no name by exemplifying some of the things that would frequently happen to women in the middle of the 20th century:

> Sometimes a woman would say "I feel empty somehow... incomplete." Or she would say, "I feel as if I don't exist." Sometimes she blotted out the feeling with a tranquilizer. Sometimes she thought the problem was with her husband, or her children, or that what she really needed was to redecorate her house, or move to a better neighborhood, or have an affair, or another baby. (FRIEDAN, 1963, p. 16).

That feeling of emptiness seems unable to go away, no matter how she tries to fulfill herself, and the novel *Rosemary's Baby* addresses that incompleteness by imagining what it would be like to have the Devil's child inside one's womb. Colavito also discusses William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), saying that it is one of *Rosemary Baby*'s "most notable (…) successors", and that it tells the story of Regan MacNeil, "a little girl possessed by a demon and the fight to remove the satanic burden from her innocent soul" (2008, p. 301). More than pregnancy, now the plot is about an almost fully grown kid whose life turns into a living hell, turning her own mother's life into a nightmare on the side.

Ever since WWII brought the world new family configurations, it would not be too far off to read the character Chris MacNeil as prone to stigmatization for being a single mother raising a daughter all by herself. Margaret White, too, is a single parent trying to raise a child on her own in the American seventies, and what both women seem to have in common is that they are, in a way, punished for that. Furthermore, looking at *Carrie* and comparing it to *Rosemary's Baby* in terms of religion, it is possible to verify that in both cases its presence is strong. While Rosemary Woodhouse is "a lapsed catholic" whose family "no longer speak to her because her husband is a Protestant" (COLAVITO, 2008, pp. 300-301), Margaret White is a religious fundamentalist who considers that her pregnancy is a penitence from God because she had allowed her drunken husband to touch her in lust. Interestingly, the three novels approach the subject of monstrosity not only in the parents, but also in their kids, as if the process of simply continuing one's lineage was a horror plot.

About monsters, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says:

> The monster is that uncertain cultural body in which is condensed an intriguing simultaneity or doubleness: like the ghost of Hamlet, it introjects the disturbing, repressed, but formative traumas of "pre-" into the sensory moment of "post-," binding the one irrevocably to the other. The monster commands, "Remember me": restore my fragmented body, piece me back together, allow the past its eternal return. The monster haunts; it does not simply bring past and present together, but destroys the boundary that demanded their twinned foreclosure. (COHEN, 1996, pp. ix-x).

To better illustrate what Cohen says here about the monster, and to better understand it in terms of parenthood, it would make sense to fall back on horror for a sample. In Sean S. Cunningham's 1980 movie *Friday the 13th*, one of the slasher movie genre's forerunners, the killer who takes out one by one of the teenagers who are trying to reopen abandoned summer camp Crystal Lake, is Mrs. Voorhees, the mother of a kid who had died there in the 50s, Jason Voorhees. She is the embodiment of a past that refuses to be forgotten, and which haunts the future of anyone who happens to cross her path of pain and revenge. Additionally, while it is Jason who becomes widely known after his comeback in the subsequent movies of the franchise, the trail of horrendous killings was initiated by his mother, who could not cope with losing her kid. Mrs. Voorhees blames the camp counselors who had failed to look after Jason, who drowned while they engaged in sexual activities, and it is not hard to see similarities between her and Margaret White.

As a moral agent, Mrs. Voorhees punishes the lustful youth, and while she assigns blame to the people who were supposed to be on the lookout for Jason, she seems to be including herself, who also failed to keep the boy alive. The same can be said of Margaret White, who in terms of keeping her daughter healthy, fails more than miserably. The horror productions of the post-WWII era which deal with the anxieties of unattended infancy are abundant, and countless examples come to mind fitting under this umbrella, including Wes Craven's 1984 *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Freddy Krueger, the killer monster, molests some of the children from the school where he used to work as a janitor, returning years later as a haunting spirit to get revenge from having been killed by the kids' parents, who were seeking vengeance in their turn. That is, the parents fail twice in protecting the kids, and end up contributing to the making of the monster who comes to kill them all.

In talking about parenting and the protection that should come with it, one of the major symbols of father and mother that can exist is that of a government. One's nation could be said to be seen as one's macro family structure, where thousands, many times millions, of people shall stand under the rule of the authorities, as it is supposed to be when it comes to hierarchy in a family. The organization is quite similar in the sense that the governor is the one responsible for ruling the army, which can fight for its people should the need arise, and the government agents are also the ones responsible for keeping the welfare of the population by means of maintaining a relationship of mutual support with the neighboring nations. Failure in those responsibilities brings war, which brings instability, chaos, and death. Colavito talks a bit about what happened in the USA when the population started losing faith in that who was supposed to be their main protector:

> (…) the established authorities no longer commanded the same respect they once did, brought low by mismanagement, corruption, and scandal. The American presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon exhibited megalomaniacal tendencies that alienated them from the public and eventually cost both men their jobs. Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal, directly ordering the cover-up of a break-in he ordered against his rivals, is often said to have shattered the implicit faith Americans had in their government. Never before had an American president resigned office, or faced prosecution for criminal actions conducted while in office (COLAVITO, 2008, pp. 284-285).

In the same way that bad parenting can have a directly negative effect on the kids, a bad government can inspire a bad outcome in terms of its people. In literature, the anxieties about major-scale horror coming from paranoia finds its expression in novels such as Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954) and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955). Adapted to film, both works express the fear of not knowing who to trust in an apocalyptic scenario where there is nowhere to run. In Finney's nightmarish California, reports from all over the city of Mill Valley start spreading that people are no longer themselves, which is a strong expression of human hopelessness. In Matheson's vampire Armageddon, the total desolation of having been left behind is represented by the character Robert Neville, the only human being left that has not become a blood-sucking ghoul, contradicting John Donne's poetic insight that no *man's an island*.

As Colavito comments, "by the end of the 1970s, the world had more dictators than ever before" (2008, p. 285), which in horror is the same as saying that summer camp Crystal Lake has filled with an entire army of Mrs. Voorheeses, whereas one suffices to annihilate all the good guys in the movie. An increase in tyranny equals a decrease in freedom, which brings about evil, monstrosity, causing fear, anxiety and horror. Now, while thousands of angry parents in the figure of a slasher film killer is a scary enough picture, the total absence of parents can be equally dreadful. In cinema, a proper example would be David Robert Mitchell's *It Follows* (2014), where parents are scarce, while kids keep being punished for their sexual liberties by a shapeshifting creature. In one of the few scenes that a parent is seen during the movie, is when the monster disguises as the mother of one of the boys, just to lure him closer and slaughter him brutally.

This section has been occupied with establishing a connection between some of the historical developments of the twentieth century, specifically those from the 1960s and which had influence over works of art that talk about the anxieties surrounding parenthood. The next section shall focus on the literary universe of Stephen King, as well as some of the cinematic adaptations that his books have gained, and how his characters and plots explore well the

relation between horror and parenting. There is a vast space for psychological analysis about how King manages to approach monstrosity by saying not only that a monster is that which is the *other*, but also an extension of the *self*.

1.3 Here comes Stephen King

The story of Carrie White is a story of monstrosity, and to represent that nothing better than the symbology of blood. Both as a hero and as a monster, Carrie is born in blood, first in the shower room scene, at the very beginning of the novel (KING, 1974, pp. 9-10), symbolizing the beginning of her calvary, and finally at the prom, when her adversaries force her to take a whole bucketful of pig's blood shower (KING, 1974, p. 75), marking her transformation into pure evil. In the shower room scene, when she menstruates for the first time and finally enters womanhood, she is not welcome there, not by her girl schoolmates, who promptly gather in mocking her for it, nor by her mother, who sees her menstruation as the equivalent of sin.

It is important to remember that *Carrie* (1974) comes along with one of feminism's rising waves, and the way menstrual blood is portrayed in the novel speaks to a long tradition of seeing it as impurity, with the special help of religion. As theologian Uta Ranke-Heinemann says in *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven* (1988), "in Antiquity both Jews and pagans were convinced that menstrual blood was, in effect, poisonous" (p. 21). She also says that "for [Pope] Gregory [the Great] menstruation is the result of sin" (p. 24), which is very much like what Margaret White tells her daughter when she finds out that Carrie has had her first period (KING, 1974, p. 28). Carrie's long process of monstrification starts with her mother, and blood acts as a symbolic vehicle that makes such transmission possible.

Stephen T. Asma's *On Monsters* (2009) has a subchapter called *Monstrous Mother*, in which he talks about Medea in a way that recalls the weight on Margaret White's conscience about her disturbed feelings towards her daughter. In Asma's analysis of the ancient Greek tragedy's character, Medea "wrestles with the virtual devil and angel on her shoulders, briefly contemplating an exile for her sons rather than death", but that she then "succumbs to the lust for vengeance" and "sinks to this monstrous echelon of infanticide" (p. 55). While Medea seeks revenge against her husband by killing her own kids to put him under the worst kind of torture imaginable, Margaret contemplates killing Carrie as if to get back at God for punishing her with an undesired pregnancy (KING, 1974, p. 92). However, Margaret meets her end through her daughter's hands, as if Jason's curse on Medea had spread to her: "May the avenging Fury of our children destroy you – may you find blood justice" (ASMA, 2009, p. 58).

Still, in King's own analysis of the novel, he avoids touching the mother-daughter

subject, which makes sense, considering that what the novel offers on the subject is more than sufficient. In *Danse Macabre* (1981a), he states, "For me, Carrie White is a sadly misused teenager, an example of the sort of person whose spirit is so often broken for good in that pit of man- and woman-eaters that is your normal suburban high school" (p. 106), which can be largely relatable for many people. He adds, "But she's also Woman, feeling her powers for the first time and, like Samson, pulling down the temple on everyone in sight at the end of the book" (KING, 1981a, p. 106), and here the moralist message of the novel is clear, even if he does not mention directly that Margaret White is inside that temple along with everyone else.

In comparing his novel to director Brian De Palma's adaptation to the big screen, King makes some insightful comments about the role of women characters in such an important time for the feminist movements:

> The book attempts to look at the ant farm of high school society dead on; De Palma's examination of this High School Confidential world is more oblique… and more cutting. The film came along at a time when movie critics were bewailing the fact that there were no movies being made with good, meaty roles for women in them… but none of these critics seem to have noticed that in its film incarnation, Carrie belongs almost entirely to the ladies (…) The novel views high school in a fairly common way: as that pit of man- and woman-eaters already mentioned. De Palma's social stance is more original; he sees this suburban white kids' high school as a kind of matriarchy. No matter where you look, there are girls behind the scenes, pulling invisible wires, rigging elections, using their boyfriends as stalking horses. Against such a backdrop, Carrie becomes doubly pitiful, because she is unable to do any of these things – she can only wait to be saved or damned by the actions of others. Her only power is her telekinetic ability, and both book and movie eventually arrive at the same point: Carrie uses her "wild talent" to pull down the whole rotten society. (KING, 1981a, p. 107).

King's admitted concern in coming up with strong female characters during one of feminism's strongest waves recalls Sandra M. Gilbert's comment on "male anxieties about female autonomy", sustaining that they "probably go as deep as everyone's mother-dominated infancy", so that "patriarchal texts have traditionally suggested that every angelically selfless Snow White must be hunted, if not haunted, by a wickedly assertive Stepmother" (1979, p. 28). The fears that Carrie's story encapsulates and the horrors that the evil surrounding her utilize to provide the reader with an extremely cathartic experience are in line with the angst of that time, including the possibility of catastrophe resulting from the struggle between capitalism and communism by the end of the 1970s. Furthermore, it is undeniable that such fear persists, well into the 2020s, and one example to prove that is the hate-ridden polarization in Brazil's current political scenario.

Commenting about "a whole generation of war babies", that is, King's own generation, he says that "These were – we were – children who knew about the psychic distress that came

with The Bomb, but who had never known any real physical want or deprivation", so he asks, "where are the monsters?" (KING, 1981a, p. 32). The anxieties of parenthood of the first half of the twentieth century walked hand in hand with the arts, and the arts spoke to those feelings directly. While, according to King, the 50s "was a decade when every parent trembled at the specter of juvenile delinquency", he explains how with time things can develop from art to reality as well: "pop in James Dean and/or Vic Morrow here, wait twenty years, and heypresto! out pops Arthur Fonzarelli" (KING, 1981a, p. 32). Hence, the importance of what the arts absorb from what the world is going through, because if it is true that history tends to repeat itself, art tends to repeat what history puts forward, and it can influence what history comes to say tomorrow. As King adds, "the newspapers and magazines of the popular press saw young JD's everywhere, just as these same organs of the fourth estate had seen Commies everywhere a few years before" (KING, 1981a, p. 32), and whether that is paranoia or not, maybe that was paranoid era with good reason. Colavito gives an example of how fictional literature and reality got mixed up during those chaotic decades:

> The counter-culture movement of the late 1960s – its hippies and tie-dyed idealists – had explored the occult as a legitimate path toward knowledge. Satanism was a way of negating traditional values, opposing the tyranny of imperialism, government, and whatever else one disliked. In the 1970s, New York was the hub of the occult, where a man pretending to be a Greek Orthodox priest published what he said was the genuine Necronomicon, H. P. Lovecraft's fictional tome, made up of bits and pieces of Sumerian mythology sprinkled with the names of Cthulhu and Mythos creatures. Though a hoax, some followers of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan began to use the mass-market paperback as an occult text to conjure demons and probe the mysteries of existence. The book was the brainchild of Peter Levenda and followers of the early twentieth century Satanist Aleister Crowley. The Church of Satan later had to explain to its members that the Necronomicon was not real (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 288).

He goes on to explain that "Charles Manson, inspired by Satanism and San Francisco's hippie culture, attracted a group of twenty-five mostly female followers, his "family," who held him to be the reincarnated Christ" (COLAVITO, 2008, pp. 288-289). In his psychotic mind, "Manson predicted the coming of the apocalypse based on his idiosyncratic combination of Satanism, Beatles music, Nazi occult beliefs, and science fiction", and the fact that some confused people decided to follow him is not a total shock, in view of how confusing those times were. Consequently, perhaps a good way to start looking for an answer to King's question – where are the monsters? – would be to look at King's own monstrous literature, beginning with his parent characters. It would also be helpful to bear in mind the clue offered by Cohen, which defends that "the monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us", and that it "is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as

distant and distinct but originate Within" (COHEN, 1996, p. 7).

Apart from the novels by Stephen King that were mentioned in the introduction of the present thesis, there are many others worth mentioning when it comes to the subject of evil parents. In other words, anxiety about parenting in the form of monstrous upbringing that manifests itself in evil actions by parent figures is a recurring theme in King's plots, whether he does it consciously or not. Sometimes this theme appears in his stories blatantly, and other times it is more hidden, or metaphorical, so to speak. Therefore, it is safe to say that Carrie is not totally alone as regards to being a victim of evil, especially an evil that comes from a place where safety should be.

Probably the most famous example of a plot where cursed parents ruin it for their kid is the novel *The Shining* (1977a), where it is possible to observe how capable Jack Torrance is to inspire the most gruesome fears in Danny, his child prodigy. Wendy, the boy's mother, thinks at a certain point of the novel, "Oh we are wrecking this boy. It's not just Jack, it's me too, and maybe it's not even just us, Jack's father, my mother, are they here too? Sure, why not? The place is lousy with ghosts anyway, why not a couple more?" (KING, 1977a, p. 340). The novel also contains thorough account of how troubled Jack Torrance's relationship with his father was, and the way he was raised explains plenty of the problems he has throughout life, including his struggle with anger as well as with alcohol addiction. In the words of the narrator about Jack's father, saying that the man "had been the foulest-talking man Jack had ever run on" (KING, 1977a, p. 85) explains a lot of Jack's yelling at his own son. In the case of Danny, the evil coming from his grandfather and passing into his father, apparently stops there, while Carrie does not share in the same luck.

In *Rage* (1977b), which King published originally under his pseudonym Richard Bachman, the protagonist Charlie Decker seems so troubled by his parents, that the whole book feels like a psychotherapy session. As the book's name suggests, Charlie seems moved by repressed feelings of pure rage, as the evil he perpetrates seems motivated by his childhood fears, which no other than his father managed to put into him. He takes a gun to school and, after being expelled by the principal, uses it to kill two teachers and hold his classmates as hostages for more than three hours. During that time, he engages in a wide range of revealing conversations with the twenty-four boys and girls, telling them a series of stories that explain a lot of his criminal motivations. One of these stories say that one day he was out hunting with his father, as "Part of Dad's never-ending campaign to Make a Man Out of My Son" (KING, 1977b, p. 9), and the man got very disappointed in him, because Charlie could not stand the look of a bleeding deer which his father had just killed. He then concludes the story by saying

that his father "was looking at me. He never said anything, but I could read the contempt and disappointment in his eyes. I had seen it there often enough" (KING, 1977b, p. 15). This is only one little example that Charlie gives to his colleagues and that makes it easy for the attentive reader to identify both Freudian and Jungian theories. In fact, there is so much psychoanalysis in this book that it might even come across as the main character in the plot, rather than Charlie Decker himself.

In King's 1983 novel *Pet Sematary*, Louis Creed manifests a lack of patience towards his wife and kids and fantasizes about abandoning them, and then he is forced to witness the disintegration of his family due to a plethora of disasters that start happening to them. At the same time as Mr. Creed seems to be paying for not being careful about what he had wished for, we can see in his character a strong representation of the fear of being a bad parent. It is possible to find in Freud's work a parallel between his superego theories and King's characters, in the sense that the psychological attitudes between parents and their children stand out as central in the novels:

> The super-ego is (…) not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You ought to be like this (like your father).' It also comprises the prohibition: 'You may not be like this (like your father) – that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.' (FREUD, 1960, p. 30).

In *Cujo* (1981b), Stephen King introduces a St. Bernard dog as the literary version of a slasher movie killer, and although Lewis Teague's 1983 adaptation to the big screen is known to have pleased King a great deal[24], the movie misses out on most of the novel's content about parenting psychology. The fact that a movie must focus more on the action rather than a story's philosophical content is not anyone's fault, it is simply a matter of which characteristics pertain to certain kinds of industries. Although the present thesis' intention is far from emitting any sort of judgment about cinema, it is certainly relevant to literature's cause to state certain truisms, such as the one that says that if a movie gets too philosophical it would be doomed to be a box office failure. On the other hand, as interesting as a book that raises awareness about parenthood anxieties might be, the killer dog is the one element keeping the novel from being monotonous.

In tracking vestiges of bad parenting influencing the plot's main characters in their own turn to be parents, the Trentons in *Cujo* are worth looking at. Vic Trenton represents a distracted

---

[24] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/feb/03/stephen-king-delivers-very-mixed-review-of-film-adaptations>. Access on: Oct 29, 2022.

father whereas his wife Donna is mostly impatient, and while the monster of the story is supposed to be Cujo, it is Vic's and Donna's recklessness that ultimately contribute to their son Tad's death. The novel does not offer a lot of material on Vic's background, but the little it does shows how some traits of his own childhood affect not only his adult life's role as a father, but also as a worker:

> He had spent the morning writing ads for Decoster Egg Farms. It was hard going. He had hated eggs since his boyhood, when his mother grimly forced one down his throat four days a week. The best he had been able to come up with so far was EGGS SAY LOVE ... SEAMLESSLY. Not very good. Seamlessly had given him the idea of a trick photo which would show an egg with a zipper running around it's middle. It was a good image, but where did it lead? Noplace that he had been able to discover. Ought to ask the Tadder, he thought, as the waitress brought him coffee and a blueberry muffin. Tad liked eggs. (KING, 1981b, p. 33).

Tad probably *liked eggs* because his father did not spoil them for him, but there were other things Vic managed to ruin, the main one possibly being the failure at looking after his marriage, which resulted in Donna's infidelity. The estrangement between the couple keeps Vic away when Donna takes Tad to where Cujo lives, and his removal from the picture turns out fatal when his wife and son most need him. Additionally, she had decided not to take Tad along in her trip to the auto shop, the killer dog's den, but the boy manages to convince his mother not to leave him with the babysitter, and she felt "that she was being shamelessly manipulated by her four-year-old son" (KING, 1981b, p. 73), which shows how her authority is undermined.

The reason why Tad "didn't want to be left with Debbie" and go with Donna to the auto shop instead was because "Debbie was mean to him" (KING, 1981b, p. 72), which can be seen as another failure on the parents' part, for putting their son in the hands of someone mean. Tad had been having problems with a "monster in his closet", and he thought that "Debbie Gehringer might not be strong enough to keep" it there, and in his desperate attempt to convince his mother, he "suggested ominously that Debbie might shoot him" (KING, 1981b, p. 72), which causes Donna to laugh at him. Conscious of how much her conduct might be disturbing Tad, Donna feels "sorry for her laughter, wondering how she could have been so insensitive", and she wonders, "isn't it possible he senses some of what's gone on between Vic and me?" (KING, 1981b, p. 73).

Tad is not the only kid in *Cujo* whose psyche suffers because of the bad choices made by their parents. Brett, Cujo's owner, is the son of Joe and Charity Camber, and "like most children, he could sense the vibrations between his parents, and he knew the way the emotional currents ran from one day to the next" (KING, 1981b, p. 51). Joe Camber is an abusive man, and his wife plans to run away with Brett because she is concerned that the boy's father might

end up ruining Brett for life. This is strongly resembling of Donna's concern with her own son, and she even thinks that "he's going to have some complexes out of this, oh God yes. Oh sweet Tad" (KING, 1981b, p. 78).

Firestarter (1980) is another of King's novels that channels the anxieties of failing as a family, this time not only as a parent, but also as their child. Charlie is an eight-year-old with pyrokinetic powers who carries around the trauma of having hurt her mother during a nervous breakdown, which is known to set her off:

> Charlie stood looking at them, and she was afraid. She was afraid because Daddy had told her again and again that she shouldn't do it… since earliest childhood it had been the Bad Thing. She couldn't always control the Bad Thing. She might hurt herself, or someone else, or lots of people. The time
> (*oh mommy i'm sorry the hurt the bandages the screams she screamed i made my mommy scream and i never will again… never… because it is a Bad Thing*)
> in the kitchen when she was little… but it hurt too much to think of that. It was a Bad Thing because when you let it go, it went… everywhere. And that was scary (KING, 1980, p. 28).

The monster here is within Charlie, recalling Cohen's view (1996, p. 7), and the one to teach her that is her own father, along with the experience of having hurt her mother. Charlie must deal with a lingering feeling of having been responsible for the loss of her mother, and that might be seen as a feeling that King himself could have had, because it is not very infrequently that kids think they are to blame for the bad things that happen to their parents. Another novel that seems to put kids in the place of wrongdoers is *The Long Walk* (1979), in which one hundred teenage boys participate in this insane competition where they are made to walk to their literal deaths as if they were being punished for something. The setting is a dystopian United States, and the death of 99 teenagers is one of the country's main forms of entertainment, implemented by a dictator who has absolute military power. Considering massacres such as the Columbine[25] and the Realengo[26] ones, just to cite two among countless examples, many of King's novels demonstrate his unique grasp on the modern world's real-life atrocities by means of art-horror.

If the world can produce Hitler, literature goes ahead and produces *Pennywise*, because

---

[25] On April 20, 1999, a school shooting and attempted bombing occurred at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado, United States. The perpetrators, 12th grade students Eric David Harris and Dylan Bennet Klebold, murdered 12 students and one teacher. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbine_High_School_massacre>. Access on: Jan 14, 2023.

[26] On the morning of Thursday, 7 April 2011, a World Health Day, 12 children aged between 12 and 14 were killed and 22 others seriously wounded by Wellington Menezes de Oliveira, who entered the Tasso da Silveira Municipal School (Escola Municipal Tasso da Silveira), an elementary school in Realengo on the western fringe of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rio_de_Janeiro_school_shooting>. Access on: Jan 14, 2023.

horror excels at reflecting what is already there. Sometimes it is hidden at the back of the mind, like an ancient child-eating entity, but other times it is screaming deliberately on the streets with the voice of a thousand panzers. Thus, if imagination can come up with a plot involving a sport where the population finds it fun to watch a hundred kids walking for their lives, that may be because adults are deep down frightened kids who know they might be living next door to Jeffrey Dahmer, and that justifies any childish fear. Charlie McGee, Ray Garraty, Carrie White, they are all real, as much as the monsters that they face, or that they are themselves.

Whereas Colavito states that "the false front of civilization masks deeper passions derived from our human, natural, and animal nature, which the Victorians assumed was evil since it stood against the values of traditional civilization" (2008, p. 94), it is safe to say that evil has become a much more familiar concept since then. Apparently, the same things that facilitate the realization of the American dream – that is, human evolution along with all it comprises – is precisely what paves the shortcut to the nightmare. Which is regrettable, because "that power could be used for immense good" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 94), just like Carrie's telekinesis. In that line of thought, the next chapter shall hold a philosophical and psychological discussion of evil so that the grounds can be established for the literary analysis that the present thesis proposes.

2. EVIL: PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

The evil that men do lives on and on (Iron Maiden, 1988).

2.1 A brief history of evil according to philosophy

Despite the countless views about evil in our world, human beings are equipped with the capacity to assimilate, react to, and act evil, given the adequate circumstance. Some people attribute evil deeds to a mental illness, and various trials are concluded in this fashion, in which the accused is sentenced to the loony bin, instead of going to jail. It as if the diagnosis stated that the convict's deed was so terrible that the explanation is that he or she could only be insane to have done it. Following this line of thought, it is possible that, by the end of this chapter, the reader will come to conclude that only a tiny minority of human beings are actually sane.

Now, are only humans evil? Is it an exclusively human trait? Research reveals that animals can be just as cruel, as Stephen T. Asma exposes:

> Reflect for a moment on the Rhizocephala or "root-headed" barnacle that lives its life feeding inside crabs and other crustaceans. This complex organism attaches itself to the shell of the crab, bores a hole through the shell, and deposits a tiny seed of itself into the crab's body, whereupon the outside attachment falls off the host's shell and the seed begins to grow inside. Next the seed begins to spread throughout the crab in a series of complex root systems, often infiltrating, like a creeping vine, every limb of the crab. This root system castrates its host (thus precluding the crab's continuation of the gene line), stops the crab's molting cycle, and keeps it alive, all the while feeding off it, for years. (ASMA, 2009, pp. 198-199).

For years being the key expression here, if it is possible to even pretend all the description that comes before that does not make one wince painfully enough. Imagining oneself in that crab's skin is sufficiently terrifying to make even someone without an adrenal gland – if that were possible – feel the deepest of fears. Asma goes further:

> Or consider the tarantula hawk, a giant wasp (Pepsis) that hunts tarantulas as a food supply for its larvae. The wasp paralyzes a tarantula with its powerful sting, then bites off its legs for easier transport and carries it back to a burrow, where it lays an egg on the spider's paralyzed body. When the wasp larva hatches, it feeds slowly on the still living tarantula, even carefully avoiding at first the consumption of working vital organs to guarantee extended freshness. Not even the most inventive Hollywood writers can spin tales this fantastic, yet it is the bread and butter of biology. (ASMA, 2009, p. 199).

Suppose that description was from a real scene, and somehow there could be people instead of a wasp and tarantulas, it is undeniable that most people would say that the person acting in the place of the wasp is evil. It is extremely hard for human beings not to pass judgment on the actions of other human beings, especially in cases where people are being harmed or

suffering in any way. Asma questions that by asking if we "should blame the virus that is breaking down our immune system and spreading through the host population", or if we should "thank the E. coli in our gut that helps us to digest" (ASMA, 2009, p. 199). Then, he adds that "these organisms are not evil or noble creatures, intentionally wreaking havoc or health; they are simply doing what comes naturally, surviving and reproducing" (ASMA, 2009, p. 199). Thus, if atrocities perpetuated by non-human forms of life against others of the same species do not have the capacity to shock anyone, why do humans insist on labeling atrocities in the human universe as evil, whether they are against other humans or even other species? Would it be too far off to say that our *evil actions* simply come naturally to humans and have to do with surviving?

Naturally, human beings are superior to other life forms intellectually, and atrocities in the human world affect the order of things by making life more difficult for everyone. Human evolution has brought about a level of consciousness that makes it impossible for people simply to overlook any sort of harm done to other people. That is, one could not simply see someone do to another person what the tarantula hawk does to spiders and just think that is not a big deal. Furthermore, one would inevitably go about thinking of ways to save that poor spider, and more, one would certainly find relief in seeing that spider break free and get revenge upon the giant wasp.

Among the many views about evil, it is common to see it being considered as something external to humans, as if it could not be generated inside a person's mind. For Plato, one of the most optimistic philosophers, so to speak, "there is only one god, who, being good, is the cause of everything that is good in the universe and is the creator of order in the *kosmos*" (SCUDIERI, 2019, p. 17). For him, "evil is a derivative concept as it is conceived as absence of good, a kind of imperfection and decline determined by the necessary circumstances present in our universe" (SCUDIERI, 2019, p. 16), which means that evil would be some sort of accident in a world that is majorly good. Plato's view of evil and its place in the cosmos can be better understood with a simple analogy:

> The Demiurge is absolute goodness and the good is the principle of the universe; however, imperfection and evil are present in the world because of the "region," the circumstances in which goodness operates. The Demiurge is like a carpenter who, while working on a piece of wood, finds a node which hampers his action: the execution is inevitably affected (SCUDIERI, 2019, p. 17).

While Plato has an optimistic view of how significant evil is in the human world, that is, as much as a node in the wood that merely affects the carpenter's work, Augustine of Hippo

shares his optimism in part, while taking a deeper plunge into the creator subject. A preeminent Catholic Doctor of the Church, as well as a saint, Augustine affirms that "we are men, created in the image of our Creator, whose eternity is true, and whose truth is eternal, whose love is eternal and true, and who Himself is the eternal, true, and adorable" (HIPPO, 2015, p. 266). His way of thinking is well elaborated in the words of Phillip Cary:

> (…) everything that exists is good, but everything other than God can suffer corruption, which is to say it can be deprived of goods that are appropriate or natural to it. This privation is the basic form of evil; it is in fact a lack of form, a deformation, such as the ruination in a ruined house, the illness in an unhealthy body, and the disorder in a wicked soul. Hence there can be no evil except in good things. Evil is the corruption in good things that, if it goes far enough, results in their destruction. So living things get sick and die, a house falls into ruin and collapses, human souls grow vicious and fail to acquire the virtues needed for a happy life, and communities become unjust and fall into internecine conflict that threatens their unity and thus their very being (CARY, 2019, pp. 30-31).

In relation to moral evil, Augustine sees it as "a corruption of the soul, specifically in the will", and that would mean that it "implies that choosing evil does not mean choosing an evil thing", but "choosing a good thing in an evil way" (CARY, 2019, p. 33). If on one hand everything that exists comes from God, then all the things in the world are good, albeit corruptible, including human beings. In this context, God's role would not involve saving people from becoming corrupted, because that would be the same as hindering them from learning anything from experience.

Specifically relevant to the analysis of *Carrie* to be made in the next chapter, is Augustine's take on sexual desire which, according to him, "after Adam was always concupiscent", that is, "every act of sexual intercourse was sinful, made possible by illicit lust rather than purely by the legitimate desire to beget children" (CARY, 2019, p. 38). King's *Carrie* presents the reader with a protagonist whose mother has an extreme view of human sexuality. As the aforementioned analysis will show, her opinion about the subject is even more extreme than Augustine's, according to whom "even within marriage sexual activity was always sinful, though it was a small sin that could be forgiven by ordinary daily prayers" (CARY, 2019, p. 38). For Margaret White, Carrie's mother, no praying can save a soul from lust.

Similar to Augustine's view, and similar to Plato's as well in its optimism, Aquinas contends that "We do not distinguish sins by the difference of good and evil, since the same sin concerns a good and its contrary evil" (AQUINAS, 2003, p. 324). Or, as Matthews Grant puts it, "what evil is must be known from the nature of good" (GRANT, 2019, p. 42). That is, if for

the medieval theist, then "everything actual is an object of desire", which means that "everything actual is good", therefore the conclusion is that "goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea" (GRANT, 2019, p. 43). Grant then explains that "if being and goodness are really the same, and evil is the opposite of goodness, then evil cannot be being (…) rather, it must consist in the absence of something" (GRANT, 2019, p. 43). In that line of thought, it is possible to affirm that evil is the absence of being, and that is precisely Aquinas's idea of evil as a privation.

Grant explains that it would be incorrect to affirm that in Aquinas's view "evil never plays any explanatory role in the cause of evil", or "to say that what caused the evil in the action is simply a privation" (GRANT, 2019, p. 45). He says instead that "what causes the evil of action is a *deficient cause*, something that exists and operates in virtue of its perfection, but which is deprived in certain ways that result in the operation's being defective" (GRANT, 2019, p. 45). In human beings, that would be like when a person has good intentions in his or her actions, but to achieve that good, the same person ends up causing harm to a third party. As the main aspect of evil that concerns the present thesis is the moral one, it is relevant to analyze Grant's explanation of what Aquinas thought on the subject:

> (…) Aquinas doesn't understand God's goodness to be *moral* goodness in the first place, and thus the question of whether God can be morally justified is not one Aquinas would think it makes sense to ask (…) morality is about what people ought to do, and the virtues they need to acquire, in order to achieve their fulfillment as human beings. Morality presupposes a gap, as it were, between the person and his full perfection, a gap that must be closed by action. But, for Aquinas's God, there is no gap – since he is pure act and has his end and fulfillment in himself. There is nothing God "ought to do" concerning evil or anything else. The "moral," so understood, is not a category that applies in God's case (GRANT, 2019, pp. 46-47).

In other words, in Aquinas's way of thinking, evil is not God's responsibility, but man's alone, and the very existence of evil presupposes a possibility for man to overcome it and improve himself. Likewise, "God permits evil because the universe as a whole is more perfect for containing it", which pertains to saying that "many goods would be taken away, were there no evil", and one example is "the beauty of the universe, which *arises from an ordered unification of evil and good things*" (GRANT, 2019, p. 48). Aquinas's optimism about evil goes as far as implying that it is evil that makes good what it is, not as if both were mutually complimentary, but more than that. When Aquinas states that, "the good is better known from its comparison with evil, and while we continue to suffer certain evils our desire for goods grows more ardent" (GRANT, 2019, p. 49), one might infer that there could be no good without evil.

For Machiavelli, a man known for "subvert[ing] traditional (Christian) morality" (GIORGINI, 2019, p. 55), evil is seen as something distant from the divine, and it takes a more human turn, per se. As Giovanni Giorgini elaborates, Machiavelli "is interested in evil as concerns human matters" and "quite uninterested in the metaphysical question of theodicy, namely the origin and existence of evil in the universe and the role of God in it" (GIORGINI, 2019, p. 56). As the statesman he also was, the Italian philosopher spent his life struggling with the notion of virtue, and how much of it a politician should possess in order to deal with the countless situations in politics where evil seems like a good choice. Some of his central ideas evoke Plato, when the Greek philosopher states that tyranny is "the worst political evil" (SCUDIERI, 2019, p. 15).

Despite affirming that Machiavelli "was not the bearer of a new morality for humankind" (GIORGINI, 2019, p. 55), Machiavelli himself seems given to contradictory ideas when it comes to morality. An example of that is his belief that "men, when they receive good from [a noble] of whom they were expecting evil, are bound more closely to their benefactor" (MACHIAVELLI, 2010, p. 63), as if professing that evil has a good side. However, Giorgini summarizes in the following passage the contribution that the Italian thinker gave the world by demystifying his general fame:

> (…) Contrary to the popular view, which sees him as the evil teacher of tyrants on how to keep their power, Machiavelli traced a hard and fast distinction between the prince and the tyrant: the prince aims at saving the state and therefore at the common good for his fellow citizens; the tyrant has only his personal interest in view. (GIOGINI, 2019, p. 60).

In terms of the difference between good and evil, albeit more at a political than a moral level, so far Machiavelli's view is the one that is the closest to the definition of evil to be worked with for the next chapter. That perspective becomes even clearer in the next passage, in which Giorgini answers the question made by himself – "who are the good men and the bad men according to Machiavelli?" (GIORGINI, 2019, p. 62):

> The good men are those who care for the common good and act accordingly, engaging in politics and working to preserve and aggrandize the state. On the contrary, the bad men are those who pursue selfish interests and thus divide and imperil the state or who, because of their sluggishness or ineptitude, destroy the political community. (GIORGINI, 2019, p. 62.).

Now, a look at the contradictory philosophy of Hobbes might be worth the reader's while in the regard of the present discussion of evil. The English philosopher denies the existence of free will up until a certain point in his career only to reconsider as he approaches

his later works, affirming that a person can commit a culpable evil act, nonetheless. In addition, he insists on the idea that the only way to achieve a decent level of morality is by obeying a ruler, even if blindly, an idea that is not difficult to counterpoint, one only must recall the holocaust to remember what can happen from that.

Moreover, as situated in a time when philosophical notions tended to be religion-oriented, Hobbes puts forward the idea that God would "be the introducer of all evil, and sin into the world" (HOBBES, 1999, p. 84), which scandalizes Bishop Bramhall, who soon becomes his adversary. Both engage in a long discussion on morality, in which Bramhall expresses his concern with the fact that Hobbes's statement would have "heretical implications" (APELDOORN, 2019, p. 79).

What is most dangerous in Hobbes's view is when he affirms that "if it were the case that God did authorize an action against the law, it would no longer be sinful" (HOBBES, 1999, p. 106). For, as much as one understands the context of such affirmation, it is not hard to imagine human beings copying that idea and putting themselves in the place of Hobbes's God. Apeldoorn exposes Hobbes's view on authority, when he says that, "if citizens obey their civil sovereign, they do not sin nor risk eternal damnation" (2019, p. 80), which might seem quite ingenuous through a present day's pair of eyes. Apparently, when he describes "God as a *Tyrant* who, by virtue of his omnipotence, can do no wrong" (APELDOORN, 2019, p. 81), he is also talking about anyone in society who is in a position of power, and here it is pertinent to recall Plato's contradictory view about tyranny.

Interestingly as well, when Hobbes affirms that "nowhere in Scripture, *which is all the warrant we have from God*, do we find an authorization to commit sins" (HOBBES, 1999, p. 175), it is hard to keep the curious mind from wondering about a few passages from the Pentateuch, which are scary, to say the least. Just to give one example:

> And he said to them: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Put every man his sword upon his thigh: go, and return from gate to gate through the midst of the camp, and let every man kill his brother, and friend, and neighbour [sic]. And the sons of Levi did according to the words of Moses, and there were slain that day about three and twenty thousand men. And Moses said: You have consecrated your hands this day to the Lord, every man in his son and in his brother, that a blessing may be given to you (Exodus 32:27-29).

Not only did the people obey Moses's orders, which came directly from God, but they were also rewarded for assassinating more than twenty thousand people. In that vein, when Hobbes affirms that, "God is the cause (not the Author) of all Actions" (HOBBES, 1999, p. 175), such a position might be highly questionable for some. That was certainly an intriguing

matter for Leibniz, who asks about God, "(…) how is it that he is not the author of sin, if he created everything in such a manner that sin followed?" (LEIBNIZ, 2005, p. 33).

Many of the German mathematician's efforts to elucubrate the subject of evil are relevant to the present discussion, including the fact that "Leibniz defines the original imperfection of the creatures as the root of evil" (ECHAVARRÍA, 2019, p. 86), which resembles Augustine's idea of privation or deformation. Tracing a parallel with sin, Leibniz establishes that evil is important to God's perfect world in the same way as "picture should be set off by shadows and that a melody should be enlivened by dissonances" (LEIBNIZ, 2005, p. 129). Echavarría further explains that idea, by saying that "evil has the role of a sort of ontological booster of harmony and, thus, of the perfection of the universe" (ECHAVARRÍA, 2019, p. 84).

A suitable example of that complementary dissonance can be found in the literature of J. R. R Tolkien, more precisely in *The Silmarillion* (1977). The book brings an account of the beginning of the universe, called Middle Earth, in which Ilúvatar, the most supreme entity, is creating the world through music. In spite of the environment of musical perfection, one of his creatures, called Melkor, apparently decides to go out of key, which disturbs the creator, but at the same time seems to intrigue him. It is also worth saying that – if the reader will excuse a little spoiler, although necessary – Melkor is the primordial source of evil in the universe of *The Lord of the Rings*. The following excerpts illustrate well how Melkor represents a dissonance that complements the harmony:

> But now Ilúvatar sat and hearkened, and for a great while it seemed good to him, for in the music there were no flaws. But as the theme progressed, it came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar, for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself. (…) being alone he had begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren. Some of these thoughts he now wove into his music, and straightway discord arose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to his rather than to the thought which they had at first. Then the discord of Melkor spread ever wider, and the melodies which had been heard before foundered in a sea of turbulent sound. But Ilúvatar sat and hearkened until it seemed that about his throne there was a raging storm, as of dark waters that made war one upon another in an endless wrath that would not be assuaged (TOLKIEN, 1977, pp. 4-5).

Within this context, Leibniz's thoughts on evil are summarized by the idea that "God allows evil in order to achieve some greater goods" (ECHAVARRÍA, 2019, pp. 91-92). In Leibniz's own words, "in the universe not only does the good exceed the evil, but also the evil serves to augment the good" (LEIBNIZ, 1965, p. 247), which makes him the most optimistic philosopher so far in this thesis. Optimism in the sense that when evil is analyzed under the

light of metaphysics, it is as though the origin of evil mattered more than actually facing the fact that evil might be something simply human. That is, whether it came from God or not, evil exists in the human world, and it is there that it is causing all the damage it is known for causing, not in the heavens.

When one merely compares evil to dissonance in music, it is extremely important to remember that real evil causes extreme harm, and that harm comes from human actions. There are mothers of murdered kids, or kids who have suffered such physical violence that they have to live the rest of their lives struggling with permanent brain damage, who would not take it very well if someone simply told them that the damage done was merely a dissonance in the wide world's harmonious perfection. Jason Neidleman alerts to the dangers of insisting on the idea that the nature of evil might lie beyond the physical realm:

> Here, we are speaking of what we might call metaphysical evil, understood as an immaterial, malevolent force. This understanding of evil, which I think it is fair to call the ordinary understanding, implies that individuals – when they act with malevolent disregard for the welfare of others – have somehow been overtaken by a metaphysical force. (…) When we construe evil as metaphysical, there is a perilous consolation with which we may be tempted to comfort ourselves, inasmuch as that construct allows us to distance ourselves from evil, to sequester it as something alien, an abnormality against which we are able to cast ourselves as "normal" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, pp. 105-106).

That distance that human beings tend to put between evil and themselves is often represented by a supernatural entity in horror narratives. One of the most supreme figurations of metaphysical evil, and possibly the most widely known worldwide, would be that of Satan, or, as it sometimes is called, Lucifer. Countless are the movies where it is possible to see any given character say that someone's soul has been taken by the Devil, or that some villain has been following direct orders from it. The Devil is such a popular character, that there is even a 2016 TV show called *Lucifer*[27] – a big hit among teenagers – depicting it as a handsome man who decided to abandon hell and move to Los Angeles. On a similar note, Phillip Cole says that:

> (…) the figure of the evil person in the contemporary discourse of evil is mythological. Just as Satan is a meaningful figure only in the context of the Christian mythological world history and makes no sense outside it, the evil figures that stalk our contemporary world have a similar role. When we describe someone as evil, we are not saying anything about their character or their motivations – we are instead making them a figure in a story in which they play a specific and prescribed role. And in making them such a figure we do away with any need to understand their history, their motives, or their psychology (COLE, 2019, p. 179).

---

[27] Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4052886/>. Access on: Jul, 8th 2022.

The Devil, in this view, would serve as a means to take responsibility for evil actions away from human hands. Jean-Jacques Rousseau defends that it does not make much sense to see evil as a metaphysical entity, having asserted that "the origin of evil lies not in nature (or, on the Christian account, in the Fall) but in society" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 98). That line of thought recalls Rousseau's best-known maxim, which states that "nature made man happy and good, but society depraves him and makes him miserable" (ROUSSEAU, 1990, p. 213). That is, by living in society, which is man's way of achieving great things, such as progress and comfort, among others, a person starts comparing his or her own life to that of other people, and instead of focusing on what they have in common, they focus on what sets them apart from other groups. That generates a sense of strangeness, which brings with it misery and leads to the will of perpetrating evil (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, pp. 103-104).

Rousseau's notion that *amour propre* is "the principle of all wickedness" (ROUSSEAU, 1990, p. 100) holds that by estimating oneself highly, one tends to hate others who might seem superior in some way. Therefore, "once in society, we become engaged in an ongoing battle for good and against evil" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019), because it is in society that humans are subjected to living with others and prone to comparing themselves to their fellows. Rousseau even identifies as evil things through which people can stand out, saying that, "it would have been best (…) if the arts and sciences had never been born, as they have a corrosive effect on public morality" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 104). In saying that "their effect is to cause reputation and talent to be prized over virtue and probity" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 104), it is as if Rousseau was exposing the human propensity to envy, which is, according to Kekes, highly connected with evil (KEKES, 2005, p. 175).

Although there will be a deeper account of Kekes's views on evil further on in this chapter, the moment seems appropriate to trace a parallel between Rousseau's and Kekes's concern with envy, as to how it can foster evil. Kekes says that human beings "tend to assess their lives, and if their assessment yields an adverse judgment, one response is ambition to improve it; another is to envy those whose lives are better" (KEKES, 2005, p. 185). Neidleman says that, "the capacity for evil, on the Rousseauean account, is always lurking in all of us and emerges every time we subordinate the welfare of another to our own" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 107). These positions serve to reinforce the argument in favor of the non-metaphysical view, which defends that evil is immanent to human beings, and that it comes from a person's capacity to nurture low feelings, not from the heavens.

If evil comes not from a divine realm, but from human beings themselves, that is, from

the communion with other human beings, would they then be free from all evil if they avoided society? That is a difficult idea to conceive. However, if society is human beings' way of achieving great things, and it is there that all evil is born, perhaps it would be correct to conclude that evil is a constituent part of human happiness. For Camus, "evil is necessary, so the good may shine" (CAMUS, 2007, pp. 119-123), which is close to Rousseau's view that "sometimes, lesser evils can save us from a greater one" (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 104). The present discussion seems now to have reached one of its pivotal moments, as the notion of evil starts shifting from divinity to humanity, pure and simple.

After centuries of moral discussions in which philosophers engaged to explore the idea that evil in people comes from a supernatural being, Rousseau finally came up with an alternative to that view, and Kant corroborates it. Although Kant admits that "God has an influence on the world, but the world has no influence on him" (2001, p. 383), he declares, in parallel, that "the human being is (by nature) either morally good or morally evil" (KANT, 2001, p. 71). In other words, Kant defends that "all theoretical attempts to reconcile human suffering in this world with the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect good are doomed to fail" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 110). Neidleman summarizes with precision what happens when people insist on seeing evil as something external to the human realm:

> (…) conveying inscrutability is part of the *raison d'être* of the narrow conception of evil. If we are motivated by a desire to believe that our world is governed by reason, we will need a category for that which we could not otherwise assimilate to a rational universe. For that we create a box, a repository, to which we can then assign a label (evil) and use for anything that we cannot explain or (more dangerously, as Nietzsche emphasized) prefer not to understand. This conception of evil satisfies the desire to distance ourselves from that which we cannot comfortably comprehend and to preserve a sense that the world is ordered. It names that which is unassimilable (NEIDLEMAN, 2019, p. 106).

By being against the metaphysical account of evil, called a *narrow view* here, Kant makes "explicit that good and evil are properties that pertain strictly speaking to actions or persons rather than to things or states of affairs" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 112). Furthermore, Kant claims that "the propensity to evil is here established (as regards actions) in the human being, even the best", going further by affirming that "the propensity to evil among human beings is universal" and that "it is woven into human nature" (KANT, 2001, p. 78). However, Kant refuses to see any difference between evil and "*ordinary* moral wrongdoing" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 109), and he also:

> (…) denies that the root of evil lies in our susceptibility to sensuous desires. The source of evil rather lies in our half-hearted commitment to morality. Although Kant

> claims that all human beings have a propensity to evil, this does not imply that we are all evil persons. It does imply, however, that our moral record may be relatively unmarred merely because we have been so lucky never to have found ourselves in dire circumstances. (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 120).

While Kant's view, on the one hand, distances itself slightly from the core of the present discussion, which seeks to understand evil as something more serious than moral wrongdoing, on the other hand he makes an interesting point about human nature, and one relevant to this thesis. Thus, the notion that a "person has never acted immorally merely because she was lucky never to have found herself in circumstances where doing the right thing requires substantial self-sacrifice" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 117), supposes that every human being has an immanent capacity for evil. A similar idea is found in the theories of the psychologist Philip Zimbardo, who said that "situational forces are more powerful than we think (…) in shaping our behavior in many contexts" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. x). A moral philosopher as well, Zimbardo and his account of evil will be of extreme importance for the next section of this chapter.

Kant rejects the general attempt at theodicy[28], a view shared by most moral philosophers who came before him, and according to him, "God could not prevent bringing about natural evils insofar as they are the unavoidable byproducts of the greater good of creation" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 110). Kant's secularism prevails, and his consideration of God with his supposed permission of evil implies that evil is as natural as existence itself. In other words, being is part of existence in the same measure as evil is part of being human, and that does not involve a deity.

It would be relevant to point out here that the religious view of evil was not extinguished when philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant started expressing their secular views. To this day, the opinion that human evil might have some connection with the divine is still widely spread. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, a prominent writer and religious leader, wrote on her book *Fallen Angels and the Origins of Evil* (2000):

> If evil angels used to be around on earth and, as Scripture seems to indicate, wore the guise of common men, why couldn't they still be around? Given the state of affairs on planet earth, where would we find them today? Do they manipulate our government? Mismanage the economy? Who are they anyway? Fourth-century men had some of the answers, preserved in little-known, hard-to-procure books, some of which have never been translated into English. A little digging into the archives of Christianity's early Church Fathers turns up the intriguing fact that they indeed knew

---

[28] The term *Theodicy*, coined by Leibniz (…), is a compound of "justice" (in Greek, *diké*) and "God" (in Greek, *theós*), meaning "the justification of God." (ECHAVARRÍA, 2019, p. 83). According to Wikipedia, "it is to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil, thus resolving the issue of the problem of evil. (…) Unlike a defense, which tries to demonstrate that God's existence is logically possible in the light of evil, a theodicy provides a framework wherein God's existence is also plausible". Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodicy>. Access on: Jul, 17th 2022.

> something about the incarnation of angels — knowledge so dangerous it was banned as heresy. (PROPHET, 2000, pp. 14-15).

She even uses apocalyptical religious texts, such as the Book of Enoch[29], as a main source of investigation to support her theories that evil in the world today come from the sexual intercourse between fallen angels and women, who have supposedly given birth to monstrous creatures. By citing the passage, "being numerous in appearance [the fallen angels] made men profane, and caused them to err; so that they sacrificed to devils as to gods (19:2)" (ENOCH in PROPHET, 2000, p. 28), she makes her argument and beliefs clear.

While some might believe that "human beings never wholly defy the moral law and choose evil simply for evil's sake" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 118), Prophet goes even further in her views about where evil in the present time came from:

> (…) the evil ones in our midst — the Hitlers past and present and nameless killers without conscience — might be of an entirely different psychological and spiritual makeup than other souls on planet Earth. Such killers have an extraordinary power. When angered, they respond with a bloodthirstiness that is inhuman, a depravity that derives from their godlessness devoid of the divine spark. For these "evil spirits," murder is sheer joy — some even refer to it as "the most intimate act." (PROPHET, 2000, p. 38).

In their secular views about evil in the human world, Rousseau and Kant are seconded by Sade, who "spent more than 30 years in confinement because of criminal behavior", and whose "name will forever be associated with a particular type of moral wrongdoing: sadism" (NYS, 2019, p. 122). Sade is one more philosopher who refuses to see the evil done by humans as something coming from a divine realm. While "many authors before him tried to justify the reign of an all-powerful and beneficent God causing or allowing evil, (…) Sade mounted his defense precisely on the ruins of the theodicy" (NYS, 2019, p. 123). About this modern notion of fall of the divine, Nys establishes:

> Nowadays, we are less vulnerable to the shock of atheism. We might therefore believe that the theodicies of Leibniz, Rousseau, and others are merely of historical interest, and that these thinkers were not really dealing with the problem of evil as it presents itself to us now. Such skepticism might be unwarranted (…), but at least Sade, we could say, puts an end to the "old problem" – from now on, we have to deal with evil in the *absence* of God. (NYS, 2019, p. 124).

He also exposes Sade's way of going as far as mocking the idea of God's presence in

---

[29] It is an ancient Hebrew apocalyptic religious text, ascribed by tradition to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah. *Enoch* contains unique material on the origins of demons and Nephilim, why some angels fell from heaven, an explanation of why the Genesis flood was morally necessary, and prophetic exposition of the thousand-year reign of the Messiah. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch>. Access on: Jul, 18th 2022.

the modern world, by constantly referring to the deity in his works, while claiming himself an atheist. That way, "God appears as an object of ridicule or insult; the mode of mentioning the supreme being is blasphemy", and that is how "Sade challenges God where he does exists (sic), namely in the hearts and minds of his believers" (NYS, 2019, p. 124). Therefore, it is by being blasphemous that Sade sustains his fame and gives meaning to sadism, and it is by disdaining that which is most precious for believers that he inflicts pain on them, which gives him pleasure and makes himself a sadist.

What is even more puzzling about Sade is that he not only rejects the idea of God's existence in a mocking fashion, but he also goes as far as to express the idea that the evil one is God Himself – that is, if He exists – and not the Devil. In Sade's 1791 novel *Justine*, the character Mme. Dubois says to Thérèse that, "if there were a God there would be less evil on earth", explaining that, "since evil exists, these disorders are either expressly ordained by God and there you have a barbarous fellow" – and here it is possible to identify Sade's own voice – "or he is incapable of preventing them and right away you have a feeble God" (SADE, 1965, p. 880). Mme Dubois's conclusion or, should it be Sade's conclusion, is merciless: "in either case, an abominable being, a being whose lightning I should defy and whose law contemn". Finally feeling hopeless, the character asks her friend, "Ah, Thérèse! Is not atheism preferable to one and the other of these extremes?" (SADE, 1965, p. 880) – making it inevitable to perceive that Sade is urging his reader to consider this point of view.

While in Sade's view, "the reality of evil simply belies the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent God", one might find it easy to believe that the polemic French philosopher "saw himself as a flag-bearer of a more radical type of Enlightenment where reason is no longer used in the service of faith but as a weapon to invalidate it" (NYS, 2019, p. 124). Within this framework, if it is true that, "with evil all around us, we can no longer defend God" (NYS, 2019, p. 125), then it is also true that there is no one left to assign blame to in the case of evil. With God out of the picture, human beings would have to deal with the evil that they do and its consequences on their own.

Sade's parallel reasoning in denying the existence of God, and then saying that He exists only to say that He would be the primary source of evil, might seem contradictory at first, but soon it is possible to see what he is getting at. He propounds through his character Saint-Fond that "there exists a God; some hand or other has necessarily created all that I see, but has not created it save for *evil*, is not pleased but by *evil*; *evil* is his essence" (SADE, 1968, p. 501). Here, his opposite views cancel each other out, and what results is that he is appointing men as the sole responsible for evil. Nys explains:

> Suppose that God is a criminal, making us suffer. What would follow from that truth? Perhaps that we should find a way to appease the Black God. Yet, clearly, moral innocence – i.e., good behavior – is not the key to our salvation, for, if it were, the good and God-fearing people of Lisbon would not have been buried under the rubble of churches and cathedrals[30]. So, we should instead be *less* innocent and follow in God's footsteps: we should destroy creation and wreak havoc on the innocent. In a telling passage, the same Saint-Fond imagines God scolding mankind for not being more like him: it is God's hate for man (instead of his love) that – in a perverse act of *imitatio dei* – should guide our behavior. We are created in the image of God, and this means that we should become criminals too (NYS, 2019, p. 125).

Going back to "Kant's account of evil, the Lisbon earthquake should not be understood as an intentionally imposed divine punishment for human sins but rather as a consequence of preceding causes in conjunction with the laws of nature" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 111). In Sade's view, without a divine being to assign blame to, humans would have no argument against perpetrating evil. Besides, if God were indeed *a criminal, making us suffer*, he would be no divine entity, but a man instead, one with too much power in his hands, and prone to making bad use of that power, like The Homelander[31].

The notion that evil actions perpetrated by humans are not a matter of choice, but something as natural to people as the good in them, resembles the Nietzschean view that "there is no free will to speak of" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 138). In Nietzsche's own explicit words on the matter, "our benevolence, pity, sacrifice, our morality rests on the very same foundation of deceit and disguise as our evil and egoism" (NIETZSCHE, 1980, p. 274). The German philosopher goes further by adding that, "the evil acts rest on the error that he who perpetrates them against us possesses free will, that is to say, that he could have chosen not to cause us this harm" (NIETZSCHE, 1986, p. 99).

Tongeren complements the pessimistic philosopher's thoughts by concluding that, "fictions like freedom and responsibility are themselves motivated by drives that are precisely

---

[30] the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 caused many philosophers to discuss whether that natural disaster was an act of God's vengeance upon men. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, it happened "on the morning of Nov. 1, 1755, causing serious damage to the port city of Lisbon, Portugal, and killing an estimated 60,000 people in Lisbon alone. Violent shaking demolished large public buildings and about 12,000 dwellings. Because November 1 is All Saints' Day, a large part of the population was attending mass at the moment the earthquake struck; the churches, unable to withstand the seismic shock, collapsed, killing or injuring thousands of worshippers". Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Lisbon-earthquake-of-1755>. Access on: Jul, 22nd 2022.

[31] The Homelander (John Gillman) is a superhero and antagonist in the comic book series *The Boys*. (…) The character was designed as an evil version of Superman and Captain America in terms of powerset and costume. (…) As interpreted within the television series, he (…) displays many sociopathic tendencies and is openly contemptuous of those he considers lesser beings. He is also possessive, paranoid, vindictive, insensitive, reckless with his powers, and incapable of accepting the possibility of any flaw in his person or decision-making. (…) [His] powers and sense of entitlement have led him to exhibit extreme megalomania, causing him to commit crimes against innocent people, including acts of rape and mass murder, out of the idea that he can do anything he wants because of who he is. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homelander>. Access on: Jul, 22nd 2022.

in conflict with morality: we "invent" these fictions because they enable us to take revenge on those who harm us" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 138). That is, if morality were merely an invention that allows humans to take evil actions against those who took evil actions against them first, morality would then be simply another product of evil. Nietzsche also discusses the distortion in definition that evil and good might suffer, depending on who is in charge. According to Tongeren,

> (…) the moral distinction allows a certain group, namely the masses or the herd, to enforce its power at the expense of the individual, which in turn allows the terms "good" and "evil" to have different meanings inside and out of the dominant group. Nietzsche will elaborate on that in his later genealogy of morals (…) The prevalent interpretation mirrors the interests of the prevailing group, which is in fact "the egoism of the *herd*" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 139).

Going further in interpreting Nietzsche's view, Van Tongeren says that "the condemned passions may be evil for the weak and for the herd, but they are virtues for the strong individual" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 142). In that line of thought, it is possible to have individuals perpetrating the cruelest of evil actions while believing strongly that what they are actually doing is giving evil people what they deserve. One can almost envision any given dictator consulting with Nietzsche's works just to learn how to manipulate the principles of morality, so he can better control a target people. In the context of struggle for power, human beings tend to hail as evil those who they want or feel that they need to destroy or conquer, regardless of whether their actions to achieve that destruction or conquest is, by definition, evil. Tongeren comments on that by mentioning that "Goedert (1981) points out the danger Nietzsche's thought on evil runs to be taken up in an elitist ideology" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 143).

Apart from exposing that the notion of good and evil is dictated by the strongest, Nietzsche seems to defend evil people when he affirms that they are "venerable as destroyers, for destruction is necessary (1980, p. 84), a thought that Tongeren consolidates by contending that "destruction is the necessary complement of creation" (2019, p. 143). In that sense, it does not mean necessarily that there is a good side to evil, only that evil is important to human development. Despite being known as the philosopher of pessimism, in this vein Nietzsche resembles some of Leibniz's ideas. A philosopher considered optimistic in the present thesis for believing humans are not to blame for the evil that they do, Leibniz attributes to another realm all that is not perfect in this world. Nietzsche, in his turn, rejects the idea of God, and believes that evil is nothing more than "what the weak call" to describe "that which they deem harmful or experience as painful" (TONGEREN, 2019, p. 145).

Hannah Arendt is an important member in the group of philosophers who bring evil to

the human side, away from the supernatural realm. While "she claims that evil is radical, tied to the systematic production of superfluousness", she also contends that "evil is banal, emerging out of the thoughtlessness of its perpetrators" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 148). The term *radical* here refers to a view that holds evil as being born out of political or social efforts, that is, that human actions that convey evil would be a response to some kind of government's oppression. Concurrently, *banal* refers to an individual's state of mind, which one would use in order to justify one's evil actions. Finally, that *superfluousness* would be created by the same dominant forces mentioned by Nietzsche, meaning in this context that a situation of extreme power has the potential to render the masses expendable and, according to Zimbardo (2007), the potential to produce villains, as section 2.3 will show.

Concerned with the irrevocable changes Nazism caused in the world by unleashing on it a kind of "evil [that] is extreme and is tied to the systematic political production of superfluousness" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 148), Arendt dedicated a good part of her life to studying human nature. In her words, "if it is true that in the final stages of totalitarianism an absolute evil appears, it is also true that without it we might never have known the truly radical nature of Evil" (ARENDT, 1951, pp. viii-ix). She still explains what she means by *absolute*, adding that the word implies an evil which "can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives" (ARENDT, 1951, p. ix).

One of Arendt's most interesting takes on evil is her analysis of potential psychopaths, such as Nazi employee Eichmann, whose "reversal of moral conscience (…) accounts for his thoughtless banality", which in its turn "emerges from the political-economic production of superfluousness" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 149). That is, in her view, men would make the world a terrible place to live, which trivializes the existence of the individual, who comes to repay that world with banal, evil actions that could not be justified, but at least explained in themselves. Arendt affirms that even though the Second World War ended with the fall of the Nazis, "extreme evil was not defeated with the defeat of totalitarianism and continues to be the fundamental problem of our age" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 149).

Furthermore, Hannah Arendt does not

> (…) attribute radical evil to demonic motives or some monstrous depth to the human soul. The totalitarian "hell on earth" is produced through a political production of superfluousness that has its roots not in the nature of the soul but instead in the "monstrous process" of expropriation that becomes increasingly *extreme* as it moves from imperialism's production of economic and political superfluousness to the perfect superfluousness of the death camps (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 155).

Despite not stating that the human soul is necessarily rotten, Arendt clarifies that *hell*

on earth is created by humans and their need to enslave, which means that these humans are the cause of evil, even if that evil can be considered banal. Inside that *hell* is where one shall find the "economic motivation that led ordinary citizens such as Eichmann to become part of the Nazi machine" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 156). Arendt also analyzes other Nazi officials, such as Himmler, who, according to her, "was ready to sacrifice his beliefs, his honor, and his human dignity (…) for the sake of his pension, his life insurance, the security of his wife and children" (ARENDT, 1994, p. 128). Furthermore, her psychological account of the Nazi general indicates that, "his attitude toward his wife and children, father and mother, sisters, friends, 'was not only normal, but most desirable'" (ARENDT, 1963, p. 26). In other words, a person's motivation to provide for family members might be powerful enough to drive one to commit the most heinous crimes.

Racism is seen by Arendt as one of evil's main magnifying weapons among the vast range of motivations human beings find to become evildoers. Still on Eichmann, while "she denies (…) that a virulent racism propelled him into the Nazi machine", Arendt strongly claims, "that racism is the haunting shadow of the nation-state manifested in the logic of inclusion and exclusion that animated the notion of a homogenous body politic" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 157). Evil utilizes distorted tactics, such as identifying a certain group as dangerously foreign, so that it becomes clear that what one must do is to consider as enemies those who do not belong.

Additionally, Arendt's comments on the logic of manipulating the facts and reorganizing them inside one's mind imply the possibility of creating a new reality where evil actions might be disguised as simply attacking the enemy. Even though "Arendt is often criticized for her use of the term "banality" to describe totalitarianism's evil" because that means "betraying (…) a lack of regard for the victims of this evil" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 157), the true "definition of the thoughtlessness that marks the banality of evil", for the German thinker, is "remoteness from reality" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 160). That is, Arendt is not excusing evildoers, or considering their victims as banal. On the contrary, she is calling attention to the fact that human beings are capable of distancing themselves from reality and creating a new one where definitions can be distorted limitlessly.

The human condition and the feelings that come with it are to be taken into account, according to Arendt, if one seeks to understand the role of uprootedness and superfluousness in the manufacture of evil:

> Loneliness, the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology or logicality, the preparation of its executioners and victims, is closely

connected with uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution and have become acute with the rise of imperialism at the end of the last century and the break-down of political institutions and social traditions in our own time. To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all (ARENDT, 1951, p. 457).

In his final considerations about Eichmann, Birmingham concludes that "joining the Nazi Party gave him a career, social standing, and a sense of historical significance", and "provided a remedy to his economic and political superfluousness" (2019, pp. 160-161). Furthermore, for assuming a position of importance after having been made superfluous, Eichmann was then given "the moral thoughtlessness necessary to become a functionary in radical evil's production" (BIRMINGHAM, 2019, p. 161). When a person prays to God and He does not answer, it seems that the Devil just might.

Albert Camus, in his own right, would struggle against the Augustinian idea that, "despite all works and appearances, nemo bonus (no one is good)", because "even unbaptized children are not innocent" (CAMUS, 2007, p. 123). For the French writer, Socrates was right when he said that "however horrendous their actions may be, human beings commit evil not out of the compulsion of a broken human nature but through forms of self-misrecognition and by misunderstanding their true, larger Good" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 167). A defender of the secular view of evil, Camus seems optimistic here, not in the sense that God is to blame for the evil done by men, but in the sense that he believes that evil is not immanent to humans. At the same time, when Camus says, "there is no God, thus everything is permitted" (CAMUS, 1971, p. 102), one might feel like he is partial to human wrongdoing.

What Camus really seems to be getting at here is that "natural evil and human injustice are necessary to the natural order" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 167), which seems another way to say that good needs evil so that it can run its course, that is, so that it can be itself. About Camus's philosophical optimism, Sharpe says that it:

does not suppose, in a utopian vein, that human beings could ever realistically end evil and suffering. It does however suppose that there is something in our condition which orients us toward this impossible end (…) Camus can thus write that "*parler, répare*": "to speak [is] to heal". Even the greatest crimes, on this view, are faulty attempts to commune with others. They presuppose and bespeak a longing for a "kingdom" of human solidarity as an ideal normative horizon. "In every word and in every act, even though it be criminal," Camus writes, "lies the promise of a value that we must seek out and bring to light" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 168).

Camus believes human beings are mostly good, and that even when they are perpetrating evil, in fact, they might be doing it seeking some end that they believe is good. Sharpe

comments that "Camus's response to the problem of evil up to at least 1951 and *The Rebel* was Socratic or tragic: evil involves forms of error, ignorance, excess, blindness, and partiality", and that for Camus "people always 'mean well,' even when their decisions license the physical killing of other human beings" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 170). In that scenario, if someone believes that what he or she is doing is good, the fact that they are perpetrating evil meanwhile would merely be of secondary importance. Taking all of this into account, what orients human beings is arguably the fact that "we cannot tolerate our limited, intermediary place in the order of things, between angels and beasts" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 170).

Therefore, would the question of "how human beings should respond to a natural order in which evil seems to be inescapably necessary" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 171) be simply a matter of abstraction? Later in his career, Camus responds to that question by saying that, "since I or we evidently are not virtuous, virtue itself must be the sham" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 172). The same logics works for the explanation of why evil is important for the natural order of things, in the sense that it would be impossible to tell what good is without its counterpart. In a world seemingly without the presence of virtuous people, nobody could be justly called sinful.

In that vein, Camus bitterly realizes that his optimism had been an illusion:

> I had been misled, solely the reign of malice was devoid of defects, I had been misled, truth is square, heavy, thick, it does not admit distinctions, good is an idle dream, an intention constantly postponed and pursued with exhausting effort, a limit never reached, its reign is impossible. Only evil can reach its limits and reign absolutely, it must be served to establish its visible kingdom, then we shall see, but what does "then" mean, only evil is present (CAMUS, 1956, p. 54).

Camus's optimism turns to an embittered pessimism in his later years, as if to prove that good does not always win over evil. Having been one of the only aforementioned philosophers to witness the holocaust, who can blame him when he affirms that "the problem of evil is *the* problem which should stand at the center of our thought" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 173)? By showing great concern with the idea that, "evil of the worst kinds can be rationalized when individuals (…) "leap" to the comforting but cynical assessment that everyone is equally guilty", Camus insists at the very end that, "the very ideas of virtue and goodness are cons, engendered by the weak to reign in the strong" (SHARPE, 2019, p. 173).

Unable to touch on a less heavy note, and aware of its limitations and arbitrariness, this is how the present thesis concludes its brief historical review of evil, having focused on the main aspects of how the secular view conflicts with the religious one. The next section shall be concerned with a selection of philosophers inside the realm of psychology, and their theories on the human behavior pertaining to how evil actions and their motivations might be connected

to possible tribulations in the human psyche.

2.2 A brief history of evil according to psychology

As mentioned before, the present section has been reserved to a discussion about the view of psychology on evil. Before some of the major names in the field are brought to the text, it is important to remind the reader that the previous section started out with a good dose of metaphysics, and that it could not be any different, as it comprised a historical view on the account of evil. As the text progressed, other philosophers brought a more secular view to the discussion, which made it more human per se. One might even feel as if some of those philosophers are outdated, but the religious view of evil is widely held to this day.

It is not by chance that philosophers tend to look at evil with more secular eyes as the twentieth century approaches, considering that it was then that humanity had the chance to witness, for example, the holocaust, an event that, in terms of evil, speaks for itself. Although it seems an overstatement to say that the more humans can be evil the more faith tends to lose strength, generally speaking, the predominance of the secular view also has to do with the growth of industrialism and the advancement of technology, as seen in chapter 1. It must be acknowledged how difficult it is for religion to remain relevant in a world that seems more and more devoid of any sort of divine protection.

Freud comments about a woman who he had been treating for hysteria, and to whom he said that "there is a whole multitude of indifferent, small things lying between what is good and what is evil – things about which no one need reproach himself" (FREUD, 2009, p. 63). He states then that she "did not take in my lesson (…) any more than would an ascetic mediaeval monk, who sees the finger of God or a temptation of the Devil in every trivial event of his life" (FREUD, 2009, p. 63). About said monk, he adds that he "is incapable of picturing the world even for a brief moment or in its smallest corner as being without reference to himself". Freud's apparent sarcasm indicates that when human beings rely too much on a metaphysical explanation of evil, they are expressing their own self-centered view of things. That is, if one refuses to analyze anything by looking at the physical world, it is as if they are trying not only to be free from blame, but it also might mean, psychologically speaking, that there is a great, overarching selfishness in charge.

It is important to realize that Freud's take on evil has never shown any concern with the problem itself. Instead, he seems more intent on analyzing that which his patients would inform him in terms of the evils surrounding them. In other words, Freud does not assume any position, either secular or metaphysical, about evil itself, as he prefers to focus on the person's mind, that

is, on the mind that claims to see evil. His neutrality in relation to evil as this individual, independent block in the human psyche, per se, feels as though it is tending more to a secular perspective, but it is more skeptical than anything else. One example of his theories that illustrates that is one of his takes on hysteria:

> Out of this persisting hypnoid state unmotivated ideas, alien to normal association, force their way into consciousness, hallucinations are introduced into the perceptual system and motor acts are innervated independently of the conscious will. This hypnoid mind is in the highest degree susceptible to conversion of affects and to suggestion, and thus fresh hysterical phenomena appear easily, which without the split in the mind would only have come about with great difficulty and under the pressure of repeated affects. The split-off mind is the devil with which the unsophisticated observation of early superstitious times believed that these patients were possessed. It is true that a spirit alien to the patient's waking consciousness holds sway in him; but the spirit is not in fact an alien one, but a part of his own (FREUD, 2009, p. 224).

In saying that the mind acquires hysteria from an innate disposition that can be treated with hypnosis, Freud posits that what would be called evil in the olden days is nothing more than outdated popular belief. Furthermore, he rejects the view that such innate disposition is originated because of a "psychical weakness", and is based on "the sex glands", which produce "a surplus quantity of free nervous energy available for the production of pathological phenomena" (FREUD, 2009, p. 217). The *split* – or disorder – that occurs in the mind of the evildoer, comes not from a metaphysical entity that would have possessed its victim, but from his or her own mind, which has been suffering from sexual frustration; it is as though the sex drive could be one of the pathways of the death drive.

Despite not assuming the position of a moral philosopher, Freud leaves the conversation open for the analysis of dreams as indicators of a person's morality. In analyzing a series of authors on the subject, including Kant, Pfaff, Spitta, Hildebrandt, and Haffner, Freud states that there is a "compelling logic of facts [that] forces the supporters of both the responsibility and the irresponsibility of dream-life to unite in recognizing that the immorality of dreams has a specific psychical source" (FREUD, 2010, p. 96). Especially interested in the ideas that Kant and Hildebrandt express about the potential that dreams have of revealing a person's moral inclination, Freud exposes:

> (…) Hildebrandt finds the source of immorality in dreams in the germs and hints of evil impulses which, in the form of temptations, pass through our minds during the day; and he does not hesitate to include these immoral elements in his estimate of a person's moral value. These same thoughts, as we know, and this same estimate of them, are what have led the pious and saintly in every age to confess themselves miserable sinners (FREUD, 2010, p. 97).

In commenting on Hildebrandt's theory on the contents of dreams and their relation to a person's evil tendencies, Freud alludes to how normal it is for human beings to *have evil impulses* occurring in their minds daily. He goes even further and implies that such evil tendencies can be so immanent to humans that even the most morally imbalanced people might acknowledge having it.

> A more revealing light is thrown upon the psychological position of these incompatible thoughts by another remark of Hildebrandt's, to the effect that dreams give us an occasional glimpse into depths and recesses of our nature to which we usually have no access in our waking state. Kant expresses the same idea in a passage in his *Anthropologie* in which he declares that dreams seem to exist in order to show us our hidden natures and to reveal to us, not what we are, but what we might have been if we had been brought up differently (FREUD, 2010, p. 98).

Here Freud elaborates on Kant's thoughts to hint at the idea that the evil in a person's psyche might be connected to that person's childhood and to the way that person was raised. Freud seems especially concerned with the sexual oppression that people suffer throughout their entire lives, and the consequences of that in adulthood. In the treatment of "young girls, who (…) are systematically brought up to conceal their sexual life", Freud mentions "the sexual factors that are hidden behind" the account given by these patients during the interview (FREUD, 1962, p. 266). These ideas are further explored in chapter 3 in connection to the development of evil tendencies in Carrie White.

Freud can be incisive when he says how important it is for the doctor "to interpret their neurotic complaints and to infer from them their operative sexual etiology" and emphasizes that "it is in the interest of all of us that a higher degree of honesty about sexual things should become a duty among men and women". From the point of view of medicine, if people could talk more openly about how they really feel towards their sexuality, more "toleration in sexual concerns should be attained", and that it would not "be anything but a gain for sexual morality" (FREUD, 1962, p. 266). He even expresses a certain amount of indignation and comes across as revolted when he affirms that, in terms of "sexuality we are at present, every one of us, ill or well, nothing but hypocrites" (FREUD, 1962, p. 266).

The direct connection between moral development and sexual trauma is manifested in countless other occasions throughout Freud's work. Consistently, such trauma can either originate in the form of harassment as well as in the form of oppression. As he comments, about his 1896 work, which was written in collaboration with his colleague and friend Dr. J. Breuer, called *Studies on Hysteria*:

> I have seen an abundance of cases of hysteria, and I have been occupied with each

> case for a number of days, weeks, or years. In not a single one of them have I failed to discover the psychological determinants which were postulated in the *Studies*, namely, a psychical trauma, a conflict of affects, and an additional factor which I brought forward in later publications – a disturbance in the sphere of sexuality (FREUD, 1964, p. 24).

These insights into human nature from the point of view of sexuality brought to the world by Freud were groundbreaking at the time of their advent, and many would confirm that they still are to this day. While enriching the discussion of evil, Freud's ideas on sexuality and morality also offer essential analytical power to the purpose of the current thesis, especially when one thinks about Carrie White and her traumatic upbringing. Bearing in mind Stephen King's debut novel's protagonist, one might even dare saying that it is about Carrie White that Freud writes about when he mentions "disgust, shame and morality" as being "forces which act like dams upon sexual development" (FREUD, 1964, p. 162). He explains that such forces "must also be regarded as historical precipitates of the external inhibitions to which the sexual instinct has been subjected during the psychogenesis of the human race" (FREUD, 1964, p. 162), which recalls Carrie's mother.

On the same line of thought, Freud brings forward a set of perceptive theories in relation to *perversions*, "which have been shown to constitute the aetiology of the psychoneuroses" (FREUD, 1962, p. 254). These perversions are, by definition, strongly connected to evil tendencies:

> As regards the origin of the perversions, (…) there is reason to suppose that, just as in the case of fetishism, abortive beginnings of normal sexual development occur before the perversions become fixated. Analytic investigation has already been able to show in a few cases that perversions are a residue of development towards the Oedipus complex and that after the repression of that complex the components of the sexual instinct which are strongest in the disposition of the individual concerned emerge once more (FREUD, 1964, pp. 162-163).

By originating in the Oedipus complex, these perversions are nothing but the fruit of inadequate sexual development, which means that they can be one of the factors that cause psychoneurosis. Therefore, one might conclude that more serious disturbances, such as evil traits in the behavior, possibly have their roots intricately connected to a kind of oppression suffered while growing up. In the case of Carrie White, instead of thinking about the Oedipus complex to analyze how a traumatic upbringing could have contributed to scar her irrevocably, it might be more adequate to consider Jung's Electra complex.

About both complexes, Jung explains:

> Both phantasy-complexes develop with growing age, and reach a new stage after

puberty, when the emancipation from the parents is more or less attained. The symbol of this time is the one already previously mentioned; it is the symbol of self-sacrifice. The more the sexuality develops the more the individual is forced to leave his family and to acquire independence and autonomy. By its history, the child is closely connected with its family and specially with its parents. In consequence, it is often with the greatest difficulty that the child is able to free itself from its infantile surroundings. The Oedipus- and Electra-complex give rise to a conflict, if adults cannot succeed in spiritually freeing themselves; hence arises the possibility of neurotic disturbance (JUNG, 1915, p. 89).

By centering his views about a child's development on the relation between the son or daughter and his or her parents, Jung manages to clarify on the troubles faced by the family when the time for separation approaches. As the child grows up and is about to reach the age of independence, he or she might have to face adverse reactions on the part of the parents, mainly because it fosters a conflict of authority between both sides. An imbalance that frequently shakes the foundations of the family structure, along with provoking in the parents a fear of losing their position of power, it might also cause the leaving child to develop serious psychological problems.

Merely a small family, composed by Margaret and Carrie only, the Whites seem to suffer with the imminence of change in the structure. As Carrie manifests her wishes to be her own woman, Margaret expresses her discontentment in many ways. Jung states that, "the place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother" (1953, p. 15), which can be a hard truth to face. About the mother archetype, he adds that it "(…) may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (JUNG, 1953, p. 15). With this choice of words, Jung might as well be describing the attractive force of evil to those who have a strong reason to abandon good.

Jung elaborates on the mother archetype by investigating various cultures, and he compares what he finds in many of them to what is more commonly seen through the western world's eyes. He claims that "the historical example of the dual nature of the mother most familiar to us is the Virgin Mary", and then he offers an interesting insight by saying that she "is not only the Lord's mother, but also, according to the medieval allegories, his cross" (JUNG, 1953, p. 15). Here, a *cross* might be understood as something to be carried throughout life with the mission to honor it, as much as with the mission to finally drop it some day and be free from the arduous task.

Jung goes on by saying that, "in India, the loving and terrible mother is the paradoxical Kali", and that "Sankhya philosophy has elaborated the mother archetype into the concept of *prakrti* (matter) and assigned to it the three *gunas* or fundamental attributes: *sattva*, *rajas*,

tamas: goodness, passion, and darkness" (1953, p. 16). It is interesting to notice how at least one obscure element is always present, as Jung shows that there are "three essential aspects of the mother: her cherishing and nourishing goodness, her orgiastic emotionality, and her Stygian depths" (JUNG, 1953, p. 16).

Freud also comments on how a complex that comes from the mother is connected to the way a child's disposition might develop according to how severe the upbringing trauma has been. Although Freud's take has a more sexual approach than that of Jung's, the former's views on sexual independence represent the person's search for freedom in its strict sense. In his words,

> When a mother hinders or arrests a daughter's sexual activity, she is fulfilling a normal function whose lines are laid down by events in childhood, which has powerful, unconscious motives, and has received the sanction of society. It is the daughter's business to emancipate herself from this influence and to decide for herself on broad and rational grounds what her share of enjoyment or denial of sexual pleasure shall be. If in the attempt to emancipate herself she falls a victim to a neurosis it implies the presence of a mother-complex which is as a rule over-powerful, and is certainly unmastered. The conflict between this complex and the new direction taken by the libido is dealt with in the form of one neurosis or another, according to the subject's disposition. The manifestation of the neurotic reaction will always be determined, however, not by her present-day relation to her actual mother but by her infantile relations to her earliest image of her mother (FREUD, 1968, pp. 267-268).

Carrie fits in that scenario, especially in relation to Freud's theory that the person's adult problems are rooted in the childhood traumas rather than in his or her current troubled relationship. Although it must be stated that in Carrie's case, her mother has never stopped treating her ill, the novel offers a widely explanatory account of some of the girl's early problematic experiences with her mom, including a virtual murder attempt, as the analysis in chapter 3 will show.

Jung adds to the idea that the harsh consequences for a woman who has problems with her mother are imminent. He sustains that "only in the daughter is the mother-complex clear and uncomplicated", and that it might lead "either [to] an overdevelopment of feminine instincts indirectly caused by the mother, or [to] a weakening of them to the point of complete extinction" (1953, p. 20). Jung's ideas in that line make even more sense if the evil that Carrie ends up perpetrating is taken into consideration, mainly when he defends that either "(…) the preponderance of instinct makes the daughter unconscious of her own personality", or her "instincts are projected upon the mother" (JUNG, 1953, p. 20).

While the moralist philosophers occupy themselves with discussing whether evil comes from God or it lies somewhere inside the constitutional basis of human nature, both Freud's and

Jung's theories can be linked directly with evil from a mental health perspective. If on one hand Freud's approach tends to bear exclusively sexual explanations, on the other hand Jung's take comes out as more direct, so to speak, in associating childhood traumas to undesired consequences in the traumatized person's future life. He states that, "(…) a "mother-complex" is a concept borrowed from psychopathology", and that "it is always associated with the idea of injury and illness" (JUNG, 1953, p. 21). Nowadays, that theory can find strong scientific basis in various studies, such as the one published in 2009 by the National Library of Medicine[32], called "Cumulative Childhood Stress and Autoimmune Diseases in Adults", which demonstrates that:

> Childhood traumatic stress increased the likelihood of hospitalization with a diagnosed autoimmune disease decades into adulthood. These findings are consistent with recent biological studies on the impact of early life stress on subsequent inflammatory responses. (…) The long-term health effects of childhood traumatic stress are well documented. For example, childhood abuse, neglect, and related forms of household dysfunction increase the risk of substance abuse, mental illness, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide attempts, and other health outcomes[33].

If childhood with traumatic stress can cause a great many serious diseases, it could be stated that Carrie's development of telekinesis is a metaphor for that. Additionally, it is relevant to point out here that Carrie uses her powers to cause extreme harm to other human beings. In other words, the consequences of the disease that she develops by suffering evil manifest in the spread of that evil, that is, the spread of that same disease. Her evil actions, while monstrous, might be seen as the expression of a contagious psychosis that she inherited from her mother – who, in her turn, received it from her own mother – and which she continues to pass along to others.

It is also important to remember that Carrie also suffers from the evil done by people at her school, which, as the analysis in chapter 3 will show, are considered evil actions as well. More importantly still, it is the evil actions perpetrated by her classmates, which could have been but were not prevented by her school's staff, that set off Carrie's final transformation into a monster herself. What the analysis in the next chapter will also show is that some of the people at Carrie's school joined in causing her harm by means of social occasion. In that light, the theories of psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2007) shall be relevant at this moment for the purposes of the present thesis.

---

[32] National Center for Biotechnology Information. Article originally published by The Official Journal of the American Psychosomatic Society. Available at: <https://journals.lww.com/psychosomaticmedicine/ Abstract/2009/02000/Cumulative_Childhood_Stress_and_Autoimmune.13.aspx>. Access on: Sep 3rd, 2022.
[33] Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ pmc/articles/PMC3318917/>. Access on: Sep 3rd, 2022.

For Zimbardo, for a good man to do evil, all it takes is the right situation – or should it be, the wrong situation? He contends that depending on the way a system is organized, human beings within it might be led to act in unpredictable ways, and that includes becoming perpetrators of evil. Zimbardo affirms that his "curiosity about human nature (…) especially its darker side" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. xii) came from the earliest phases of his life. He adds that his book "*The Lucifer Effect*" [had] been incubating in [him] for many years", and that it "has led [him] to ask big questions and answer them with empirical evidence" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. xii), hence the Stanford Prison Experiment. In it, he separated 24 voluntary college students into two groups, guards and prisoners, and all they had to do was to maintain order for two weeks. So simple, but simple hardly ever means easy, and things started to go terribly wrong already on the second day.

To answer the question – "Could we, like God's favorite angel, Lucifer, ever be led into the temptation to do the unthinkable to others?" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. xii), Zimbardo had to see the young people in his experiment, with no criminal priors, turn into sadistic, bestialized creatures very fast. The question that tortured him had been replaced with the haunting answer – yes, anyone can simply turn bad with no real motivation. Apparently, human beings respond to an evil-tending situation with their natural evil tendencies. In his words:

> A set of dynamic psychological processes is outlined that can induce good people to do evil, among them deindividuation, obedience to authority, passivity in the face of threats, self-justification, and rationalization. Dehumanization is one of the central processes in the transformation of ordinary, normal people into indifferent or even wanton perpetrators of evil. Dehumanization is like a cortical cataract that clouds one's thinking and fosters the perception that other people are less than human. It makes some people come to see those others as enemies deserving of torment, torture, and annihilation (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. xii).

Many of the college students who took the role of guards in the experiment reported to have felt superior to those participants who had taken the role of prisoners. The fact that they had a function to fulfill made it easy for them to ignore the well-being of others, inasmuch as the orders they gave these others failed to be obeyed. Guard Varnish, reported during the self-assessment session that happened after the experiment was over, "I was surprised at myself... I made them call each other names and clean out toilets with their bare hands. I practically considered the prisoners cattle" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 187). Zimbardo comments that "one of the worst things that we can do to our fellow human beings is deprive them of their humanity, render them worthless by exercising the psychological process of dehumanization", and that this process "occurs when the 'others' are thought not to possess the same feelings, thoughts, values, and purposes in life that we do" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 222), one of evil's most

effective triggers.

Guard Vandy's self-assessment reports a similar type of self-disappointment to Guard Varnish's: "My enjoyment in harassing and punishing prisoners was quite unnatural for me because I tend to think of myself as being sympathetic to the injured, especially animals" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 222). Realizing that he might have always had a hidden capacity to do evil actions bewilders him, and he adds: "I think that it was an outgrowth from my total freedom to rule the prisoners, I began to abuse my authority." (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 222). Guard Vandy's insight into the excess of freedom as a possible cause for the evil he ended up doing recalls Kant's conclusion that, "if human agents are to be morally responsible for evil, the source of evil must lie in freedom itself" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 114).

The report from another student who took the guard role indicates that the fact that the prisoners were smelling badly made him see them as animals (although their bad smell had come precisely from an order issued by the guards that they could no longer take showers). In his words: "I was tired of seeing the prisoners in their rags and smelling the strong odors of their bodies that filled the cells. I watched them tear at each other on orders given by us" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 223). By looking at this scenario, one can conclude that human beings hold the capacity to create a situation that bestializes other humans, and then to hate them for having become like beasts.

Although the study made by Dr. Zimbardo *was only an experiment*, many of the reports on the transformation of human character that his book *The Lucifer Effect* (2007) contain have a strong resemblance with things that happen in the world outside. The holocaust, just to cite an example, had a similar characteristic with the report mentioned in the paragraph above. In a nutshell, the Nazi put people in concentration camps, underfed them, and then burned walking corpses alive.

Another aspect of the experiment that shows how strong an evil situation's transformative capacity is can be found in the additional report by Guard Vandy, in which he says that he "had caught himself bossing his mother around at home" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 187). A person can take his or her role so seriously and derive such a strong sense of importance from it, that he or she might find it difficult to step down, especially if that role involves a position of power. As Guard Hellman, another student from the experiment who received the guard role, says in his self-assessment report:

> Once you put a uniform on and are given a role, I mean, a job, saying 'Your job is to keep these people in line,' then you're certainly not the same person if you're in street clothes and in a different role. You really become that person once you put on the khaki uniform, you put on the glasses, you take the nightstick, and you act the part.

That's your costume, and you have to act accordingly when you put it on (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 213).

The power of the situation in turning people into evil agents described by these college students has a strong resemblance with what happens to Sue Snell in relation to Carrie. As the analysis in chapter 3 will show, Sue Snell – one of Carrie's high school colleagues – would not have come up with the idea to harm Carrie on her own, but once she saw others doing it, it became easy for her to convince herself that it would not mean anything if she did it as well.

Jason Colavito states that Social Darwinism was "a popular misunderstanding of evolution [that] held that individuals are in constant competition, and only the best will survive" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 77). In terms of evil situations making evil beings, that description sounds staggeringly accurate, especially when analyzing the terrible things that happened during the Stanford Prison Experiment. The evil actions recorded in that experiment, which was supposed to have lasted two weeks, but had to be terminated in six days, might say as much of those students as of anyone who could have been in their place. In Zimbardo's (2007) very words:

> (…) over time, this experiment has emerged as a powerful illustration of the potentially toxic impact of bad systems and bad situations in making good people behave in pathological ways that are alien to their nature. The narrative chronology of this study, which I have tried to re-create faithfully here, vividly reveals the extent to which ordinary, normal, healthy young men succumbed to, or were seduced by, the social forces inherent in that behavioral context – as were I and many of the other adults and professionals who came within its encompassing boundaries. The line between Good and Evil, once thought to be impermeable, proved instead to be quite permeable (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 194).

Student Hellmann, while in the position of a guard, said that he "wanted to see just what kind of verbal abuse that people can take before they start objecting, before they start lashing back, under the circumstances" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 194). He then adds, "it surprised me that no one said anything to stop me" and criticizes the prisoner-participants by saying that "they're supposed to be together as a unit in jail, but here they're abusing each other because I requested them to and no one questioned my authority at all" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 194). Although Hellmann confesses that he had been conducting little experiments of his own, he apparently never ceases to discern what is right from what is wrong. In tears, possibly due to guilt, he asks, "Why didn't people say something when I started to abuse people? I started to get so profane, and still, people didn't say anything. Why?" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 194).

The startling revelations from Zimbardo's prison experiment are not restricted to the demonstration that good people can suddenly become perpetrators of evil depending on how

powerful certain social settings are (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 210). They also include an account of how much help that perpetration of evil can get from those who, despite not engaging in those actions, stand by and do nothing to stop them. That configures what Zimbardo calls the *evil of inaction*, which consists of "situations where evil is being practiced", and "observers of the ongoing activities (…) know what is going on and do not intervene to help or to challenge the evil and thereby enable evil to persist" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 317).

In chapter 3, the analysis will show that Carrie's case is aggravated by these which Zimbardo describes as "pathologically passive victims", who probably behave in such a way due to the "situational forces acting on them" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 210). Until she finally reacts, at the end of the novel, Carrie might have been considered one of these as well, but she breaks apart from the victim group by becoming an evil perpetrator herself.

Here are some of Zimbardo's theories about good people, human nature and character transformation:

> Good people can be induced, seduced, and initiated into behaving in evil ways. They can also be led to act in irrational, stupid, self-destructive, antisocial, and mindless ways when they are immersed in "total situations" that impact human nature in ways that challenge our sense of the stability and consistency of individual personality, of character, and of morality (…) most of us can undergo significant character transformations when we are caught up in the crucible of social forces. (…) Any deed that any human being has ever committed, however horrible, is possible for any of us – under the right or wrong situational circumstances (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 211).

Thus, in saying that evil can be done by anyone, including the good people who used to be around their victims, and perhaps even knowing them well for a considerable time, Zimbardo's take on evil moves away from Freud's theories, but at the same time aligns with them. He moves away in the sense that his take seems to indicate that someone who never suffered any trauma might become evil overnight; and he aligns with Freud's ideas if one considers that the *good people* that he mentions are not necessarily those who were lucky not to have a troubled childhood in any sense – though it is hard to believe that such people even exit. In other words, Zimbardo points out in *The Lucifer Effect* that he selected participants with no criminal records, but that does not mean that those college students were one hundred percent free of childhood traumas, for no information about that type of background check is given in the book. That is in line with Colavito's claim that when someone harms other people seriously, it "sums up the horror of it all: Bad things happen without logic or reason, and no knowledge can protect against them" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 278).

Zimbardo (2007) goes on in his conclusions:

> (…) people can do terrible things when they allow the role they play to have rigid boundaries that circumscribe what is appropriate, expected, and reinforced in a given setting. Such rigidity in the role shuts off the traditional morality and values that govern their lives when they are in "normal mode." The ego-defense mechanism of compartmentalization allows us to mentally bind conflicting aspects of our beliefs and experiences into separate chambers that prevent interpretation or cross talk. A good husband can then be a guiltless adulterer; a saintly priest can then be a lifelong pederast; a kindly farmer can then be a heartless slave master. We need to appreciate the power that role-playing can have in shaping our perspectives, for better as well as for worse, as when adopting the teacher or nurse role translates into a life of sacrifice for the good of one's students and patients. (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 214).

This passage recalls Hannah Arendt's aforementioned remark about Nazi employee Eichmann being a perfect family man, while at work his main function was to send crowds of people to their deaths. About various other employees in the Nazi regime, Zimbardo (2007) says that many of them "had to utilize every possible psychological defense against avoiding the reality of their complicity in [the] murders", including "psychic numbing", which is described as a "detaching affect from cognition", and "a schizophrenic solution of doubling" (p. 215). This *doubling* meant a sort of strategy utilized by some of the killers, which involved a different attitude at work from the one assumed in other social contexts. Zimbardo adds that "these twin tendencies shifted back and forth from day to day" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 215), which can be extremely scary. Otto Rank (1971) explains "the confrontation of the double-image as a personification of one's own evil impulses as an attempt to form an ethical contrast" and says that it "is especially evident in the cases of double-consciousness" (p. 40), citing R. L. Stevenson's masterpiece *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) as an example.

Zimbardo (2007) discusses other ways that evil perpetrators find to justify their actions, as if they were worried about excusing themselves morally, while curiously not caring about the extremely harmful consequences of their immoral actions to others. He cites parts of the testimony given by Nazi SS employees during the Nuremberg Trial, such as "I was only following orders" and "I was only playing my role at that time in that place – that isn't the real me" (ZIMBARDO, 2007. p. 218). Still, Zimbardo is more concerned with the macroscopic aspect of evil, i.e., the context in which the person is inserted, than with the individual's behavioral reaction to it. For, in his opinion, if the context allows for one person to turn evil, then it must be reviewed (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 226). In the following passage, he raises a series of relevant questions in that perspective:

> The most important lesson to be derived from the SPE is that Situations are created by Systems. Systems provide the institutional support, authority, and resources that allow Situations to operate as they do. After we have outlined all the situational features of the SPE, we discover that a key question is rarely posed: "Who or what made it happen that way?" Who had the power to design the behavioral setting and to

maintain its operation in particular ways? Therefore, who should be held responsible for its consequences and outcomes? Who gets the credit for successes, and who is blamed for failures? (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 226).

He then adds, "the simple answer in the case of the SPE is – me!" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p, 226), to illustrate that for every evil action, there are situational forces at play, and the responsibility for these is infallibly held by people. Zimbardo contends that "the bad apple-dispositional view ignores the apple barrel and its potentially corrupting situational impact on those within it", and that he is interested in "a systems analysis [that] focuses on the barrel makers, on those with the power to design the barrel", because "it is the 'power elite,' the barrel makers, often working behind the scenes, who arrange many of the conditions of life for the rest of us" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 10).

In conclusion, Zimbardo's research shows that "the potential for perversion is inherent in the complexity of the human mind" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 298), and that includes good people. Therefore, "any of us could as easily become heroes as perpetrators of evil depending on how we are influenced by situational forces" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 486). Now that a historical review has shown a discussion of evil by moralist philosophers according to religious and secular views, and that psychology has joined the conversation by adding its points of view according to childhood traumas and complexes, as well as situational forces, the next section shall bring the theories of more contemporaneous philosophy.

2.3 Three basic ways to pass evil on

According to Terry Eagleton, "the modern age has witnessed what one might call a transition from the soul to the psyche", which he clarifies with other words, "from theology to psychoanalysis" (2010, p. 17). Although he is right in observing that it has been a while since religions were the main opinion makers, and people tended to think evil actions were the work of the Devil, or, that God allowed them to happen for a number of reasons, the political discourse in the modern world performs a similar role by motivating masses toward a wide range of atrocities. In Colavito's insightful words, "even today some Satanists and occultists believe in the Necronomicon and Cthulhu as legitimate antiquities or unholy revelations of eternal truths" (2008, p. 193), and it would not be totally equivocal to affirm that the sly manipulation of the media contributes immensely to that scenario of alienation.

Thus, as some of the world's major thinkers started to look at the human mind rather than to metaphysics, the view that humans might be responsible for the evil that they do became more and more popular, which might be coincidental with what is commonly considered

religion's loss of ground to secularism in a global scale. In no way is the present thesis intent on saying that the number of religious people in the world has decreased. Instead, it simply seeks to call attention to the fact that, as Colavito states, "Western science developed its theories and knowledge base independent of religion, faith, and the supernatural" (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 114), and that has affected the general understanding of evil. As the world grows more faithless, evil becomes more popular, though it is hard to say which precedes which.

Eagleton's *On Evil* (2010) offers a thorough account of the subject, and he relies on fiction to develop his main ideas. Although his approach is chiefly centered on Freud's ideas, Eagleton believes that both theology and psychoanalysis complement each other in explaining evil, for "both are narratives of human desire" (2010, p. 17). He contends that "evil is about the death of the evildoer as much as that of those he annihilates" (EAGLETON, 2010, p. 18) and dives into a series of classic novels to illustrate his arguments. Similarly, the present thesis relies on Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974) to investigate how evil is passed on from one person to the next – which is shown in the next chapter.

About the danger of resigning to the idea that evil exists and that "we just have to live with it", Eagleton claims that "it does not follow that because something is a persistent feature of the human condition, there is nothing to be done about it" (2010, p. 38). Of course, after evil actions have caused all the catastrophic harm it is capable of, there really is not much to do but to endure the suffering. Still, what Eagleton seems to be getting at is that one can study evil as a means to understand it better, and once sufficient knowledge has been gathered about it, perhaps humanity might grow wise enough to start working on eliminating it.

As said before, the objective of the present thesis is not to investigate the origins of evil, nor to be as pretentious as to seek its elimination from the world. Although, if knowledge about evil is what humanity needs to eradicate it, it would not be terrible news if this thesis came to help in that direction. Instead, the objective of this study is to shed light on how evil is passed on from one people to the other by analyzing how the characters in Carrie White's social and family circles treat her ill until she breaks bad. For, whether evil is or not part of human nature, the inconclusive debate between religion and secularism cannot deny that evil is done by human hands, and there seems to be a series of things in this world capable of triggering it.

A distinction between bad and evil makes itself necessary at this point, so that the present thesis can follow a more definite direction when the time comes for the analysis of *Carrie* (1974). If an answer to the question – *what is evil?* – is hard to find, it shall be simpler to separate something merely *bad* or *wrong* from something evil. One example is when Thomas Nys (2019, p. 126) argues that "perhaps some readers would even follow Sade in proclaiming

that sex should not be laden with moral taboos, because, after all, it is *only natural*". With a hint of sarcasm in his tone, he adds that, "as it stands, the argument is rather perplexing", because "if all desires are natural, then so is the desire to condemn liberal sexual morality" (NYS, 2019, p. 126). His line of thought becomes even more confusing when he states that "nature does not condemn anything: it does not prevent us from performing actions that society would consider wrong or even evil" (NYS, 2019, p. 126).

Clearly, if sexual freedom is considered by some to be evil, it is nothing but a matter of opinion, normally based on ideological orientation. Margaret White, for one, partakes that view, and she makes her daughter suffer a great harm on account of her own beliefs. That is why a more complete definition of evil is necessary so that it does not get mistaken for things that are simply bad in the eyes of a single individual or group, and that seems to excuse them for fighting against these things by perpetrating evil.

Scholten says that "in contemporary English, we commonly distinguish between merely bad or wrong actions on the one hand and evil actions on the other" and adds that "evil is understood to apply only to the worst kind of wrongdoing and the worst kind of wrongdoers", that is, "evil is essentially wrongdoing plus" (2019, p. 109). He then exposes how the account of evil from most of the old philosophers are outdated when compared to today's standards, by citing Kant as an example, arguing that he "uses the terms "morally evil" and "morally wrong" synonymously" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 109). Furthermore, he posits that "Kant may turn out to be a disappointment" for those who believe his account of radical evil deal with "most extreme forms of wrongdoing", because "by means of the adjective *radical*, Kant refers to the source of evil (in Latin, radix means *root*) rather than to the most extreme forms of evil" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 109). Finally, Scholten states that "evil may seem such a fascinating topic partly because of its extremity" and reminds the reader that "the German word *böse* (evil) did not yet have any connotation of extremity in Kant's time" (SCHOLTEN, 2019, p. 109). That reinforces the argument that, in the last two hundred years, evil has evolved in unimaginable ways even for a brilliant mind like Kant's.

Todd Calder (2013) also joins in the contemporary movement of moralist philosophers who come to demonstrate how obsolete the older accounts of evil are in the face of today's sophisticated evil. He says that "although hurricanes and rattlesnakes can cause great harm, they cannot perform evil actions because they are not moral agents" (CALDER, 2013, p. 17). However, it is John Kekes' 2005 *The Roots of Evil* that provides the definition of evil that most aligns with the framework of this thesis. He summarizes what evil is in a way that it is pertinent to contemporary thought:

> The evil of an action (…) consists in the combination of three components: the malevolent motivation of evildoers; the serious, excessive harm caused by their actions; and the lack of morally acceptable excuse for the actions. Each of these components is necessary, and they are jointly sufficient for condemning an action as evil (KEKES, 2005, p. 2).

While Eagleton goes into literature searching for examples of evil, Kekes revisits a series of historical facts and figures to prove his point. Based on the principle that "to rob someone at gunpoint is morally bad, but after having gotten the money, to torture, mutilate, and then murder the victim is evil" (KEKES, 2005, p. 2), the first example Kekes gives of evil is the war waged by the Catholic Church on the Cathars during the Crusades. He says that they derived their name "from the Greek *katharoi*, meaning *the pure ones*" (KEKES, 2005, p.10), and that most of them "were simple, unreflective, illiterate, and scrabbling hard to make a living" (KEKES, 2005, p. 11). The mistake they made was being "unaware of the unorthodox implications of their beliefs", and the church "was moved to take action" (KEKES, 2005, p. 11).

Saying their name "derived from the Latin *catus*, meaning cat, which is the form in which Lucifer appears to them and whom they adore by kissing the cat's anus" (KEKES, 2005, p. 11), they used a series of strategies to otherize the Cathars and to paint them as "Devil-worshipers who believed that Satan was the creator and ruler of heaven and earth" (KEKES, 2005, p. 11) in order to justify annihilating them. Known as "the Albigensian Crusade, named after the town of Albi, where many Cathars lived" (KEKES, 2005, p. 12), it began in 1209 and "the last mass murder of Cathars took place in 1244" (KEKES, 2005, p. 14). Kekes describes it as follows:

> The fortress of Montsegur surrendered, and the two hundred Cathar Perfects sheltered there were given two weeks to renounce their beliefs or be burned. Not one chose renunciation. All died in the fire that was lit to defend the faith against these harmless people whose belief in the material world being evil was so well confirmed by the church (KEKES, 2005, p. 14).

What is more puzzling about Kekes's analysis of what the Catholic Church did to the Cathars is not that it was obviously evil, once it consisted of "serious, excessive, malevolent, and morally inexcusable harm caused by human beings to other human beings" (KEKES, 2005, p. 15), but that "the crusaders (…) seem to have believed sincerely that what they did (…) was good, not evil" (KEKES, 2005, p. 15). As Calder puts it, "there is a strong causal connection between bad upbringings and deviant behaviour" (CALDER, 2013, p. 18), which explains that the Crusaders acted and thought that way because they were taught to. This line of thought and

behavior is precisely what Kekes associates with faith, and which the present thesis shall use as its first hypothesis of how evil is passed on – the one which comes to a person through careful instruction, normally at the earliest stages of a person's life. That is a kind of evil which is methodically taught under the pretense that it is, in fact, good, and it shall be henceforth called *indoctrinated evil*.

In the words of Neidleman, following that line of thought, "demanding too much from the world might itself furnish a justification for evil", which he says in relation to the fact that "Rousseau's political thought was deployed in favor of the Terror in France, an event now frequently invoked as a paradigmatic example of evil and one, it must be acknowledged, motivated in large part by a quest for purity" (2019, p. 107). Kekes defends that the evil done during the French Revolution had its roots in ideology, which can be seen here as another example of indoctrinated evil. Led by Robespierre, the Terror was "the replacement of the prevailing corrupt absolute monarchy with a regime that secured the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity" (KEKES, 2005, p. 30), which means that it had the best of intentions. In Neidleman's words, "evil may result from the overzealous pursuit of its eradication, from a rigid insistence on moral purity and from a politics that demands the same" (2019, p. 107).

Kekes alerts to the fact that the "historical distance and revolutionary rhetoric must not be allowed to obscure the horrible savagery of the Terror" (2005, p. 31). He then cites Robespierre's biographer, who says that the French leader was to blame for doing nothing to stop the massacres, thus recalling Zimbardo's notion of evil of inaction. Kekes goes on, saying that Robespierre was guilty "not merely of condoning [the massacres] as an execution of popular justice upon criminals who had escaped the law, but of trying to use them as a cloak for political assassination" (KEKES, 2005, pp. 31-32). Some of The Terror's atrocities are presented in the following excerpt:

> A number of the condemned (…) were executed in mass shootings… As many as sixty prisoners were tied in a line by ropes and shot at with cannon. Those who were not killed outright by the fire were finished off with sabres, bayonets, and rifles. (…) Prisoners were (…) with their hands and feet tied and the boats were pushed into the center of the river… while victims helplessly watched the water rise about them… Prisoners were stripped of their clothes and belongings… young men and women were tied naked together in the boats (…) Women were routinely raped, children killed, both mutilated… At Gonnard… two hundred old people, along with mothers and children, [were forced] to kneel in front of a large pit they had dug; they were then shot so as to tumble into their grave… Thirty children and two women were buried alive when earth was shoveled onto the pit (KEKES, 2005, p. 32).

The revolutionary predator's biographer adds that, in face of all that carnage, "Robespierre had rejoiced that a river of blood would now divide France from its enemies".

(KEKES, 2005, p. 32). Motivated by "an ideology that progressively dehumanized its adversaries" (KEKES, 2005, p. 32), Robespierre is reported to have said: "Let us recognize that there is a conspiracy against public liberty… It derives its strength from a criminal coalition… [that] aims at the obstruction of the *patriotes* and the *patrie*. What is the remedy? To punish the traitors" (KEKES, 2005, p. 33). Indoctrinated evil, either through faith or ideology, disguises as good and leads its perpetrators to harm those who they arbitrarily identify as opponents. What is scariest about this type of evil, is that it is highly contagious, and spreads as fast as the Flu in the winter.

It is common with this type of evil to see evildoers justifying their actions as if the evil they have done was the only way to salvation. Kekes discusses *the dirty war* in 1970s Argentina and the horrors perpetrated by the country's "military forces" against "Argentinean civilians suspected of being or supporting urban guerrillas" (KEKES, 2005, p. 83). The following excerpt contains part of a testimony given by one of the victims, showing "the horrors of the dirty war (…) in mind-numbing detail" (KEKES, 2005, p. 84):

> For days they applied electric shocks to my gums, nipples, genitals, abdomen and ears… They then began to beat me systematically and rhythmically with wooden sticks on my back, the backs of my thighs, my calves and the soles of my feet. At first the pain was dreadful. Then it became unbearable… This continued for several days, alternating the two tortures. Sometimes they did both at the same time… In between torture sessions they left me hanging by my arms from hooks fixed in the wall of the cell where they had thrown me… On two or three occasions they also burnt me with a metal instrument… not like a cigarette, which gets squashed, but something more like a red-hot nail… One day they put me face down on the torture table, tied me up… and began to strip the skin from the soles of my feet. I imagine, although I didn't see it because I was blindfolded, that they were doing it with a razor blade or a scalpel. I could feel them pulling as if they were trying to separate the skin at the edge of the wound with a pair of pincers… I'm not sure when, they took me off to the 'operating theatre.' There they tied me up and began to torture my testicles… I'd never experienced such pain. It was as though they were pulling out all my insides… as though my throat, brain, stomach and testicles were linked by a nylon thread which they were pulling on, while at the same time crushing everything (KEKES, 2005, pp. 84-85).

During the trials, officers of the Argentinean armed forces were interviewed and, even those who repented, explained the extreme evil they had done as "a barbarity, but that's what war is" (KEKES, 2005, p. 88). These accounts reveal how humans hold the ability to consider evil as merely a choice to be made, managing to give their own minds the right to go ahead and crush others so that their own, personal objectives can be accomplished. All a person needs is the right ideology to excuse them from any blame or impediment that would keep them from committing atrocious crimes. As Colavito points out, "psychological manipulation deprives us of our humanity every bit as much as totalitarianism in government" (COLAVITO, 2008, p.

246), which is ultimately to say that humans are susceptible to evil through manipulation, rather than evil being inside humans immanently. Kekes reinforces that idea by saying that for the Argentinean evildoers of the dirty war, "the political was personal", that is, "politics formed an important part of their psyche, and they defined themselves, as well as their victims, in political terms" (KEKES, 2005, p. 83). Other testimonies by officers include:

> (…) we did it so others didn't suffer more. As a good Christian I have problems of conscience… If you want to combat subversion, you get down in the mud and get dirty (…) If you don't look at it as a war, it makes no sense. We had to fight in the enemy's camp. If the enemy was in civilian clothes that was where we had to go (…) When you think about the 'enemy,' it's depersonalized. But it isn't that way… You have to get used to it (…) At first, I'll be honest, it was hard to accustom ourselves to put up with torture. We're like everyone else. The person who likes war is crazy. We all would have preferred to fight in uniform (KEKES, 2005, pp. 87-88).

Wars are in general moved by ideologies, in the sense that these are needed in order to feed the hunger for the destruction of the enemy, that is, the *other*. By the way some of the phrases in the testimonies above were delivered, it feels like the evildoers were forced to do those atrocities. Still, there are alternatives to doing evil, which makes the rationalization for doing it nothing but cheap justification for not pushing oneself harder and finding those alternatives. It is like humans surrender too easily to choosing the evil path. By analyzing the personality of Treblinka's Nazi commander Franz Stangl, Kekes concludes that Stangl's evil actions were fueled by a personal ambition to be successful in his career (KEKES, 2005, p. 63). Nevertheless, the Nazi ideology serves as one of indoctrinating evil's paragons, inasmuch as it taught Germans to hate Jews and other so-called minorities so that annihilating them would not be an issue for Hitler's supporters.

The present thesis' second hypothesis for how evil is passed on shall be called *congenital evil*, which is described by the kind of evil that is considered to have been born with the person. An example of this can be found in Colavito's mention of "Dr. Henry Howard Holmes, born Herman Webster Mudgett, considered himself born evil, and his childhood enjoyments include dissecting and cutting up animals he killed himself" (2008, p. 75). In this case, evil is passed on by no means other than merely being born. Interestingly, if evil can come about even in good people, as Zimbardo (2007) points out in *The Lucifer Effect*, then in the case of people such as H. H. Holmes, the natural predisposition for evil is remarkable. As Kekes highlights, "evildoing often requires talent, strength, and self-reliance, and evildoers often enjoy engagement in what they are good at, just as much as other people" (2005, p. 101).

Calder argues that "moral knowledge only requires an intellectual capacity to identify right and wrong, and not the ability to care about morality", and he adds that, when it comes to

psychopaths, they "are not intellectually deficient", which means that there is no "reason to believe that psychopaths cannot tell the difference between right and wrong" (2013, p. 18). Therefore, it is possible that, in a way, psychopaths "do not truly believe, or understand, that what they do is morally wrong", in the sense that, even if they "might believe that their harmful actions break societal conventions" (CALDER, 2013, p. 18), those evil actions do not make themselves feel guilty in any way, and that is what matters for them.

Kekes raises an interesting discussion about John Allen, whom he describes as someone who "enjoys doing evil [and] finds [it] a welcome relief from an otherwise mundane life [because] doing evil makes him feel fully alive, and he relishes the danger and risks he is taking" (2005, p. 101). This view echoes Terry Eagleton's claim about "how evil has much to do with a sense of futility or meaninglessness" (2010, p. 13), as if to say that, with so much to do in the world, out of so many options with which to occupy one's time, it is appalling that people like John Allan must choose the pain of others as their favorite sport. In discussing Rousseau, Eagleton affirms that he "was mistaken to believe that human beings are born free" and adds that "we are born self-centred as an effect of our biology. Egoism is a natural condition, whereas goodness involves a set of complex practical skills we have to learn" (EAGLETON, 2010, p. 36). If the first section of this chapter presented some philosophers deemed optimists, this view here could not be more opposite.

Kekes offers an insightful account of some of John Allen's thoughts, where it is possible to observe how the psychopath's way to see life was totally devoid of any consideration for other human beings. Intriguingly, John Allen's words seem as though they had been described by Eagleton's idea of being born self-centered:

> I know how to steal. I know how to be hard on the broads. I know how to stick somebody up better than anything. I know how to take a small amount of narcotics and eventually work it way up and make me some money. Fencing property or credit cards, I know how to do all that. But society says all that's wrong… I was getting what I wanted out of street life, and I was doing better than what I thought I would actually do (…) It was really something, but it was a lot of fun. I know one thing: out of all the things I've done – and I done more bad than good – I done some cruel things, I done some unnecessary things, but I am not really sorry for maybe three things I done my whole life. 'Cause I like to have fun in my life (…) And when I am hurt, I strike out. Always. There's no other way for me to get relief but to strike out. Then, when I do strike out, I am relieved (…) Sometimes in my lifestyle, the way I live, people got to be hurt, so you accept that as part of your business, part of your life (KEKES, 2005, pp. 102-103).

At 33 years of age, when he spoke these words into a tape recorder, in a wheelchair due being shot during an unsuccessful armed robbery, John Allen adds, "what I really miss (…) is the excitement of sticking up and the planning and getting away with it" (KEKES, 2005, p.

105). Diagnosed as a psychopath (KEKES, 2005, p. 103), he comes across as someone with the natural talent for destructive actions, and one can conclude that the only thing keeping him from continuing with his life of crimes was jail when he was alive. If it were not for these two things, he would probably still be out on the streets doing what he knew best, that is, to be evil.

There is a strong possibility that some of the people around Carrie, especially those who caused her the worst kinds of harm, fit into the category of congenital evil, though the great majority fit into the indoctrinated one, as the analysis in chapter 3 will show. Still, as the main goal of the present thesis is to analyze Carrie herself as a perpetrator of evil after having suffered a series of humiliations and severe mistreatment, the moment has come for the third and final hypothesis of how evil is passed on. It will be called *traumatic evil*, which consists of one or multiple violent episodes which a person goes through, but cannot overcome, and the result is a drastic character transformation. This violence can be either physical, mental, or even spiritual, and it ultimately turns the victims of this evil into evildoers themselves.

Kekes talks about Charles Manson and demonstrates how he fits the case of the present thesis' traumatic evil, saying that when he was eight years old Manson's mother "formally declared herself unable to look after him, and thus began his many years in institutions" (KEKES, 2005, p. 67). Kekes describes the man's experiences in those places:

> His record in all of them was uniformly bad. He was described as "dangerous," "not [to] be trusted," having "(…) assaultive tendencies," "safe only under supervision," "unpredictable… requir[ing] supervision both at work and in quarters," and "criminally sophisticated" (…) He escaped whenever he could, but he was always caught. As a result of his escapes and record, he was transferred to increasingly more severe institutions until he ended up in the Federal Reformatory at Chillicothe, Ohio. During his time there he was often badly beaten and raped. In 1954, at the age of nineteen, he was released. He had had no education and was virtually illiterate. (KEKES, 2005, p. 67).

Were that narrative about an apple, it would be the metaphorical equivalent of throwing it as a seed into a blender, no water, pressing button number 5, and then expecting to have a beautiful ripe fruit as a result. Not that the atrocities committed by Manson could ever be justified by the fact that he was the victim of traumatic evil, but what happened to him at an early age explains a lot of his predispositions and inclinations. Only crushed fruit will come out of that blender.

Susan Wolf (1987) contends that "it is unclear whether anyone with a [bad] childhood (…) could have developed into anything but the twisted and perverse sort of person that [he or she] has become" (pp. 47-48). In the case of Charles Manson, it is hard to imagine him growing up to be a sweet, benevolent man after having no reason to see the world with good eyes.

According to Kekes, Manson thought that "women had only two purposes in life… to serve men and to give birth to children" (2005, p. 70). Such appallingly misogynistic ideas might as well have come from the trauma of being abandoned by his mother as a child, for, in a way, Manson's misfortunes started as soon as he became devoid of a legal guardian to provide for him. It is possible to get a strong sense of self-loathing from his own words:

> Rejection, more than love and acceptance, has been a part of my life since birth… I realize I am only what I've always been, 'a half-assed nothing' (…) My ego has been crushed… With all my experience of people turning their backs on me, I should have known better than to trust anyone but myself. Still, I had hoped – and was again rejected (…) I never went to school, so I never growed up to read and write too good, so I have stayed in jail and I have stayed stupid… You broke me years ago… My life has never been important to anyone (KEKES, 2005, pp. 75-76).

Manson was taught, not through indoctrination, but through a series of violent episodes, that people were worth nothing, not his mother, not even himself. Still, he could have chosen to do something else other than evil for, as Kekes contends, "people are not helpless, passive recipients of social influences. They can control their reactions and refuse to act on them" (KEKES, 2005, p. 79). Nonetheless, if it is known that humans are emotional beings, therefore a negative reaction should always be expected from someone who has been ill-treated. It does not mean that, if that person reacts to evil with evil, he or she shall be excused from the harm they come to cause. As Kekes concludes, "it was up to Manson to make what he could of the influences on him, and he is properly blamed for becoming an evil person" (KEKES, 2005, p. 79).

Now, to blame or not to blame, that is not the question here. As Kekes explains, "it would be wrong to conclude from this that Manson did evil for its own sake", because he "had his moral reasons for performing" his evil actions, albeit "utterly misguided" (KEKES, 2005, p. 78). furthermore, he believed "his private morality justified him in having and expressing hatred of his victims because they were corrupt, unjust, and against him, and thus they deserved the horrible deaths he inflicted on them" (KEKES, 2005, p. 79), and the same can be said of Carrie. However, "Manson may have been justified in hating those who maltreated him", but, unlike Carrie, "his victims were not among those who had" (KEKES, 2005, p. 79).

Also, it is worth mentioning that one of Manson's major reasons for feeling like he did, was that he saw "himself as a failure whose musical ambition had been scorned and who is unfit for normal life" (KEKES, 2005, p. 228). Kekes explains that, because he could not make his professional dreams come true in music, Manson projected his frustrations onto those who had what he did not, so he used his envy as the greatest fuel for his evil actions (KEKES, 2005, pp

81-82). That aligns with Nys' commentary on anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer's thoughts on the frustration of not being recognized:

> Geoffrey Gorer (…) believes that human beings typically have a desire to leave an impression upon the world. We all want to make a difference and to be acknowledged as the author of this difference. We want to be recognized as subjects, as agents, capable of acting upon the world. This might be the source of culture, art, science, and beauty in society, but, according to Gorer, the surest way to get such recognition, to be acknowledged as the source of difference, is to inflict pain upon another (NYS, 2019, p. 129).

That is certainly the case of Manson, who, according to Kekes, "had conspicuously bad reasons for the spectacular evil he caused", but who "was an evil person regardless of what he believed" (2005, p. 79). Manson wanted to use his musical talents to leave his mark upon the world, but once that was not possible, he used his zero reasons for loving it and became hell bent on destroying it. Kekes admits, "in a spirit of misguided reluctance to assign blame, that although Manson was an evil person, he was a product of his society" (KEKES, 2005, p. 79), which, again, recalls Carrie. The analysis of Stephen King's Carrie presented in the following pages sees the novel's protagonist as a character trapped inside an evil circle comprising her family and classmates who submit her to excessive violence both emotional and physical, which makes her irrevocably evil.

3. HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER

> *Good can be radical; evil can never be radical, it can only be extreme,*
> *for it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension yet – and this*
> *is its horror! – it can spread like a fungus over the surface of the earth*
> *and lay waste the entire world. Evil comes from a failure to think. It*
> *defies thought for as soon as thought tries to engage itself with evil and*
> *examine the premises and principles from which it originates, it is*
> *frustrated because it finds nothing there. That is the banality of evil.*
> *(ELON in ARENDT, 1963, p. xiii-xiv)*

3.1 Carrie's school relations

Even though the character Margaret White is central to understanding Carrie, a better way to start a close reading of the novel *Carrie* (1974) is to look at the protagonist's school friends and authorities. That is because of the moralistic tone of the novel in dealing with the problem of bullying as a figuration of evil. As Cohen puts it, "Monsters are our children" (1996, p. 20), to understand the one that Margaret White's child ends up becoming, a clear line of thought must be established before the analysis itself can commence. Under that light, in the following analysis it shall prevail that, a) Margaret's way of raising Carrie made her into a person with extreme difficulties to blend in with society and, b) that attitude learned at home is what puts up the barrier between Carrie and the outside world, which c) interferes with and frustrates Carrie's wish to lead a normal life.

It is important to keep in mind how Carrie is perceived by her social circle at school, due to the awkwardness that sets her apart from the rest, as well as the lack of motivation from the people around her to be kind to her and even include her in the basic social routines. A few key characters have been chosen for the purpose of this analysis, and the explanation for choosing each one of them is that the novel provides information sufficient so that their attitudes can be examined under the light of evil according to the theories discussed in chapter 2.

3.1.1 Sue Snell

Sue Snell plays a decisive role in the events that decide Carrie's fate, because not only she is there from day one, present in almost every major event that happened to the protagonist, but also because she exerts a strong influence over how things go at the fatidic prom. As soon as the story begins, there is the iconic scene of Carrie having her first period ever as she steps out of the shower in front of her female classmates, and the first one to laugh at the situation is Sue Snell, feeling an "odd, vexing mixture of hate, revulsion, exasperation, and pity" (KING, 1974, p. 9). To Sue, her reaction was only natural, because Carrie "just looked so dumb,

standing there, not knowing what was going on" (KING, 1974, p. 9).

Although she had already been through that, Sue could not help but feel "welling disgust as the first dark drops of menstrual blood struck the tile in dime-sized drops", and it even seems like she is trying to help Carrie by saying to her, "*For God's sake, Carrie, you got your period! she cried. Clean yourself up!*" (KING, 1974, p. 9). This ambiguity in Sue's behavior is seen throughout the novel, because at the same time as it seems that she is not acting out of sheer evil, she struggles to keep up with that tough attitude generally expected from a popular girl. "*You're bleeding!* Sue yelled suddenly, furiously. *You're bleeding, you big dumb pudding!*" (KING, 1974, p. 9). Probably not the best way to do it, but, seeing that Carrie is still lost, Sue continues to call the girl's attention to the fact that her period is running down her legs.

A clearer idea of Sue's character is given to the reader when the girls start throwing tampons at Carrie, while shouting at her to "plug it up (…) Sue was throwing them too, throwing and chanting with the rest, not really sure what she was doing" (KING, 1974, p. 10). Her sense of right and wrong is compromised by the mob mentality that takes over the girls suddenly, and then her will to be on good terms with morality finds a way to excuse her for taking part in the public humiliation of Carrie. As the following passage shows, "(…) a charm had occurred to her mind and it glowed there like neon: *There's no harm in it really no harm in it really no harm*" (KING, 1974, p. 10). When Carrie finally reacts, by collapsing to the floor and starting to groan, Sue realizes what is happening, and in a lapse of sympathy, she comments, as if sympathetically, "I think this must be the first time she ever –" (KING, 1974, p. 10).

When Miss Desjardin, the gym teacher who catches the girls in the act of throwing tampons at Carrie, is telling the assistant principal Mr. Morton about the incident, she gives him the names of the girls, adding, "And Sue Snell. (…) You wouldn't expect a trick like that from Sue. She's never seemed the type for this kind of a — a stunt" (KING, 1974, p.14). Sue's boyfriend, Tommy Ross, agrees that what she did was not something that matched her character, by saying to her, when she finishes telling him about it, "You're right (…) Bad news. Doesn't sound a bit like you" (KING, 1974, p. 25). Despite having no reputation for doing harm to other people, something stronger than herself made Sue join the other girls in acting mean towards Carrie. This is one example that might lead one to conclude that evil seems more contagious, and therefore stronger, when in numbers.

Sue Snell, out of all characters in the novel, is the paragon of the mindlessness of evil, seeing as she struggles with the fact that she has done harm to Carrie right after the shower room episode. She could have done something to defend Carrie, but it would be of no advantage

for her whatsoever, to simply choose to be the only one to go against the herd. "When they had finished making love, as she slowly put her clothes in order in the backseat of Tommy Ross's 1963 Ford, Sue Snell found her thoughts turning back to Carrie White" (KING, 1974, p. 24). She tries to move on, but her conscience keeps interfering even with her moments of pleasure, and she is aware that what she has done is far from morally acceptable:

> (…) and her thoughts turned to Carrie in this light. A wave of remorse caught her with all emotional guards down, and when Tommy turned back from the view of Brickyard Hill, she was crying.
> "Hey," he said, alarmed. "Oh, hey." He held her clumsily.
> "'S all right," she said, still weeping. "It's not you. I did a thing today. I was just thinking of it" (KING, 1974, p. 24).

In an effort to find explanations for her own transgression, Sue debates with herself about the stability of her character. The narrator says, "She was quite sure (or only hopeful) that she wasn't that weak, not that liable to fall docilely into the complacent expectations of parents, friends, and even herself" (KING, 1974, p. 24). She seems shocked at discovering her own capacity for harming someone without the least bit of motive, an idea reinforced by the narrator, who continues, "now there was this shower thing, where she had gone along and pitched in with high, savage glee" (KING, 1974, p. 24). A mixture of regret and impotence seem to bring her anger, which leads her to try to free herself from all responsibility by blaming the victim, thinking to herself, "Carrie, it was that goddamned Carrie, this was her fault" (KING, 1974, p. 25).

Sue Snell vents her distraught feelings to Tommy, who, after hearing the shower room story from her, tries to make her feel better by telling her about once when he hurt a boy in seventh grade. When Tommy asks her if she was going to apologize to Carrie, Sue counters with a question, asking him whether he had apologized to the kid in seventh grade. He answers that he did not, but then he adds that there is a difference between his story and Sue's, saying to her that, "It's not seventh grade any more. And I had some kind of reason, even if it was a piss-poor reason" (KING, 1974, p. 25). Tommy is not clear here about the reasons he claims to have had for harming his colleague in seventh grade, but whatever they were, he seems comfortable with having done to the kid whatever he did. His claims evoke Kekes's idea that "the problem of evil is deep because (…) basic human propensities both cause evil and corrupt attempts to cope with it" (2005, p. 7). Thus, evildoers might find distorted ways to justify to themselves the evil they have done, forgive themselves, and continue with their lives normally, as if they had never done anything bad to anyone.

Then, Tommy asks Sue, "What did that sad, silly bitch ever do to you?" (KING, 1974,

p. 25), which hits her right where it hurts, and this is the moment in which things take a turn for Sue, for it when she starts to realize that she must make amends:

> She didn't answer because she couldn't. She had never passed more than a hundred words with Carrie in her whole life, and three dozen or so had come today. Phys Ed was the only class they'd had in common since they had graduated from Chamberlain Junior High. Carrie was taking the commercial/business courses. Sue, of course, was in the college division.
> She thought herself suddenly loathsome. (KING, 1974, p. 25).

The conversation between the two continues, and Sue confesses to him, "I'm ashamed, see?" (KING, 1974, p. 25). Later, when they are about to part, Tommy asks her formally if she would go to the Spring Ball with him, which she accepts (KING, 1974, p. 26). The narrator does not mention here what the well-informed reader already knows will happen – that is, that Sue will ask Tommy to take Carrie to the prom instead, and that he will follow suit – but the way in which this part is narrated suggests that Sue is in doubt about the Spring Ball. What is decided, at this point, is that Sue deeply regrets the harm she has done to Carrie, and that she is considering how to mend it, which in a way atones for her monstrosity. "He asked her if she had decided what to do about Carrie. She said she hadn't. He said that it made no difference, but she thought that it did. It had begun to seem that it meant all the difference" (KING, 1974, p. 26).

From this point on in the novel, a change can be perceived in Sue's actions, making her a more tolerable character. First, she starts turning on Chris, the one who led the tampon-throwing movement against Carrie, and she even opposes Chris when she starts screaming at Desjardin about how she [Chris] wants to get Carrie:

> "Shut up, Chris," Sue said, and was shocked to hear a dead, adult lifelessness in her voice. "Just shut up."
> "This isn't over," Chris Hargensen said, unzipping her skirt with a rough jab and reaching for her fashionably frayed green gym shorts. "This isn't over by a long way."
> And she was right. (KING, 1974, p. 32).

When Sue next sees Chris, the once small crack right on the middle of their friendship seems to have grown considerably wider. They run into each other at the city's high school, and when Sue sees her, the narrator says that for her, "Looking at Chris was like looking through a slanted doorway to a place where Carrie White crouched with hands over her head" (KING, 1974, p. 36). Sue's conscience tortures her, and she struggles with understanding her own feelings, as to why she could not find a simple way to do the right thing. Sue responds to Chris' call for her to go to where she was sitting, and the narrator says that "predictably, she found her

own hypocrisy (inherent in the wave and the nod) incomprehensible and sickening. Why couldn't she just cut her dead?" (KING, 1974, p. 36). To Sue, everything associated with Chris now meant something wrong, and yet, she was still having a hard time taking a stand.

Sue ends up going over to the booth where Chris is sitting, and they inevitably start talking about the incident with Carrie. Chris complains that Sue and the other girls did not give her more support against Miss Desjardin's punishment, and when she calls Sue an *establishment pawn* (KING, 1974, p. 36), Sue decides not to accept it. She tells Chris, "I took the punishment because I thought I earned it. We did a suck-off thing. End of statement" (KING, 1974, p. 36). With that, Sue seems to have finally been able to make up her mind about what happened, as if she had decided at last that what they did was wrong, the next step possibly being to make amends. Chris then puts out an even angrier speech, and then Sue turns around to go away, but Chris still finds time to be sarcastic towards her:

> "Aren't you getting to be the Joan of Arc around here! I seem to remember you were in there pitching with the rest of us."
> "Yes," Sue said, trembling. "But I stopped."
> "Oh, aren't you just *it*?" Chris marveled. "Oh my *yes*. Take your root beer with you. I'm afraid I might touch it and turn to gold." (KING, 1974, p. 37).

It is clear now how much effort Sue is putting into freeing her own conscience. She makes herself believe that, even though she bullied Carrie, she managed to stop the attack and change her attitude. In Chris' distorted mind, Sue can now be ironically compared to Joan of Arc, as a means to insult her friend for wanting to be better, as though such turn of direction were a reason for mockery. The fundamentals of that mockery in this context are more based on the saintly aspect of the French heroine than on the hero aspect itself.

Having made up her mind about what happened to Carrie, Sue finally decides on what to do to make peace with the whole situation. She then tells Tommy that she would like him to take Carrie to the prom, and the conversation with him reveals all the guilt in her conscience, as the following excerpt evidences:

> "(…) maybe I still think I've got something to make up for."
> "The shower room?"
> "A lot more than that. Maybe if that was all I could let it go, but the mean tricks have been going on ever since grammar school. I wasn't in on many of them, but I was on some. If I'd been in Carrie's groups, I bet I would have been in on even more. It seemed like… oh, a big laugh. Girls can be cat-mean about that sort of thing, and boys don't really understand. The boys would tease Carrie for a little while and then forget, but the girls . . . it went on and on and on and I can't even remember where it started any more. If I were Carrie, I couldn't even face showing myself to the world. I'd just find a big rock and hide under it." (KING, 1974, p. 39).

Finally, Sue discloses her deepest feelings about Carrie's suffering, and she even demonstrates a strong empathetic capacity. In her pursuit to convince Tommy in acquiescing to her wish, his disposition shows resistance, and he tries to make her feel better by saying to her that the shower scene happened because all those involved were kids, and that "they [kids] have no empathy" (KING, 1974, p. 40). The next bit of the conversation is fundamental to understanding the role of Sue Snell in the plot in the sense that, out of all the other characters in the novel, she represents the kind of evil that comes about out of pure mindlessness, but then grows a conscience and seeks redemption:

> "But hardly anybody ever finds out that their actions really, actually, hurt other people! People don't get better, they just get smarter. When you get smarter you don't stop pulling the wings off flies, you just think of better reasons for doing it. Lots of kids say they feel sorry for Carrie White — mostly girls, and that's a laugh — but I bet none of them understand what it's like to be Carrie White, every second of every day. And they don't really care."
> "Do you?"
> "I don't know!" she cried. "But someone ought to try and be sorry in a way that counts… in a way that means something." (KING, 1974, p. 40).

Although Sue replies to Tommy's question, by saying that she does not know whether she actually cares about Carrie or not, it is easy to conclude that she does. Out of all other characters in the novel, she seems the only one concerned with correcting her mistake.

3.1.2 Chris Hargensen

While Sue Snell symbolizes the person who fails to identify evil and lets it take over out of pure ignorance, Chris represents the purely evil character who lacks compassion and does not mind never making the least effort to acquire any bit of it. She was the first one to see Carrie's menstruation blood running down the girl's legs, and she could not help but call everyone's attention to the fact. Her malevolent and dominant character shows its claws right at the novel's initial pages, and in the following passage it is possible to observe how manipulative she can be, as is evil's tendency.

> "Period!"
> The catcall came first from Chris Hargensen. It struck the tiled walls, rebounded, and struck again. Sue Snell gasped laughter from her nose and felt an odd, vexing mixture of hate, revulsion, exasperation, and pity.
> (…)
> "*PER-iod!*"
> It was becoming a chant, an incantation. Someone in the background (perhaps Hargensen again, Sue couldn't tell in the jungle of echoes) was yelling, "*Plug it up!*" with hoarse, uninhibited abandon.
> "*PER-iod, PER-iod, PER-iod!*" (KING, 1974, p. 9).

The humiliation of Carrie White is construed from the sparkle of herd behavior[34] ignited by Chris at the protagonist's symbolic moment of becoming a woman. Section 3.2 will show how Carrie's own mother did not welcome her daughter's womanhood, to reinforce the idea of the protagonist's isolation. If on the one hand Margaret White's reason for ostracizing her daughter is a religious one, for now the focus shall be on Carrie's school peers, whose reasons for excluding her are apparently based on the simple fact that she is *different*. Thus, Chris' role in taking ownership of the task of pushing Carrie out of her high school's social circle is key to analyzing the way evil, like a virus, is transmitted back and forth throughout the novel.

Chris's contagious capacity comes from the fact that she is a highly popular character, not only in Ewen High School, but also in the city of Chamberlain as a whole. People in positions of power can be extremely dangerous if their attitude is an evil one, because of their highly influential reach. She is known in her school for causing trouble, as it is possible to observe in the way Miss Desjardin refers to her when reporting the shower room incident to the school's assistant principal: "*Christine Hargensen appeared to be the ringleader . . . as usual.*" (KING, 1974, p. 14). Mr. Morton responds with the comment, "*Chris and her Mortimer Snerds*"[35], as though it was another reference to herd mentality[36].

As the present thesis seeks to identify ways in which evil finds to be spread, what little account the novel offers of John Hargensen, Chris' father, might help in understanding his daughter's behavior. When he comes to Ewen High School to confront the principal, Mr. Grayle, on his decision to punish Chris because of what she did to Carrie, it would not be an overstatement to say that Mr. Hargensen does not lack in arrogance. As a lawyer, he claims that Chris "had been manhandled by [the] gym teacher, Miss Rita Desjardin (…) and verbally abused" (KING, 1974, p. 33), and he threatens to sue the school if Mr. Grayle refuses to turn back on his decision to bar Chris from the prom. They argue inconclusively, and when the angry Mr. Hargensen finally leaves, Mr. Grayle thinks that it "wasn't hard to see where Chris

---

[34] Herd behavior is the behavior of individuals in a group acting collectively without centralized direction. Herd behavior occurs in animals in herds, packs, bird flocks, fish schools and so on, as well as in humans. (…) *Sheeple* (a portmanteau of "sheep" and "people") is a derogatory term that highlights the passive herd behavior of people easily controlled by a governing power or market fads which likens them to sheep, a herd animal that is "easily" led about. The term is used to describe those who voluntarily acquiesce to a suggestion without any significant critical analysis or research, in large part due to the majority of a population having a similar mindset. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_behavior>. Access on: May 1st, 2022.

[35] Mortimer Snerd was the secondary ventriloquist dummy of Edgar Bergen, and appeared with Bergen and Charlie McCarthy in episode 207 of The Muppet Show. Available at: <https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Mortimer_Snerd>. Access on: May 1st, 2022.

[36] Herd mentality, mob mentality or pack mentality describes how people can be influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviors on a largely emotional, rather than rational, basis. When individuals are affected by mob mentality, they may make different decisions than they would have individually. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_mentality>. Access on: May 1st, 2022.

Hargensen came by her self-willed stubbornness" (KING, 1974, p. 35).

Various other situations in the novel confirm Chris Hargensen's vindictive intentions as well as a few negative traits of personality, such as a profound disrespect for her own father who, despite her misconduct at school, went there to defend her. In a letter to one of her best friends, Chris writes, "So I'm out of the Prom and my yellow-guts father says he won't give them what they deserve. But they're not going to get away with it. I don't know exactly what I'm going to do yet, but I guarantee you everyone is going to get a big fucking surprise" (KING, 1974, p. 37). She makes it a point to express how wronged she feels for not being able to go unpunished after having wronged other people.

Evil finds a way to justify its own harmful actions by making itself believe that the evil it is doing is good in a way, according to the notion of indoctrinated evil discussed in section 2.3 of chapter 2. She finds many reasons to identify Carrie as someone unworthy of fair treatment, one of the main ones being the fact that she is from a religious family, and that turns into a malevolent feeling, which moves her towards harming Margaret's daughter. "*That goddamned Carrie White! I wish she'd take her goddam holy joe routine and stuff it straight up her ass!*" (KING, 1974, p. 36). The fact that Carrie never did anything against Chris would not be of any worth to the lawyer's daughter. Simply existing and having personal characteristics that she disapproved of was enough to make Chris hate the girl and want to harm her.

Chris tries to use her manipulative power to convince Sue Snell to support her in doing Carrie harm, but Sue is already repenting and wants to do the right thing, regardless of how convincing Chris' hateful speech might sound. "*That fucking Carrie runs around saying everyone but her and her gilt-edged momma are going to hell and you can stick up for her? We should have taken those rags and stuffed them down her throat.*" (KING, 1974, p. 37). Her strategy is to convert others to her cause by bringing to light Carrie's otherness, and it works on her boyfriend, Billy Nolan, but not on Sue anymore, although it worked at first.

Chris' extreme hate towards Carrie shows its true colors in a series of other scenes, in which she either screams or shouts angrily about how much she wants to see her antagonist go down. After Miss Desjardin informs the girls of their punishment and leaves the room, Chris says, "I'm going to get her! Goddammit! Goddammit! See if I don't!" (KING, 1974 p. 32), as if her evil plan to harm Carrie was already forming. Mr. Grayle had a feeling she did, and in venting his theories to his colleague Morty, he mentions Chris' boyfriend and his friends as if they were a threateningly criminal gang. "Chris (…) is going around with that Billy Nolan mess; he's got a zooful of friends, too. The kind that makes a career out of scaring pregnant ladies. Chris Hargensen has him tied around her finger, from what I've heard" (KING, 1974, p. 47).

The principal is afraid Chris might do something to get back at the school for banning her from the prom.

Chris Hargensen is a scary figure even for the school's principal, perhaps even to her own father. She has a powerful hold on some people, and she puts fear into many of them, if not all. Helen Shyres, who participated in Carrie's humiliation at the shower room scene, confesses to Sue Snell that she does not understand how she [herself] was capable of doing what she did to Carrie. She says, "I don't know what got into us, any of us. It makes me feel like I don't even know my own mind" (KING, 1974, p. 49), as if she was able to snap out of the herd mentality effect.

About Billy, Sue Snell mentions that "Chris Hargensen led him by the nose" (KING, 1974, p. 49), and she adds that Chris' "one and only object in view was the complete and total destruction of Carrie White" (KING, 1974, p. 50). The narrator reveals the sort of exaggerated fascination Chris exerts on Billy in the following excerpt: "It was for Chris Hargensen, just as everything was for Chris, and had been since the day she swept down from her lofty college-course Olympus and made herself vulnerable to him. He would have done murder for her, and more" (KING, 1974, p. 52). It is interesting to observe how common it is for evil to find trustworthy companions ready to obey their every order, no matter how destructive they are.

Other people also seem to notice Chris' powerful grip in terms of manipulation and evil intentions. The narrator introduces an excerpt of the book *The Shadow Exploded*, in which the author says, "I suspect that Christine Hargensen was the brains of the affair, but that she herself had only the most nebulous of ideas on how one might "get" a girl like Carrie" (KING, 1974, p. 51). Not only does a researcher reach the conclusion that Chris is evil, through studying the case, but he also goes further by saying, "I rather suspect it was she who suggested that William Nolan and his friends make the trip to Irwin Henty's farm in North Chamberlain." (KING, 1974, p. 51) – a mention of how Chris and her posse fetch the pig blood to pour over Carrie's head at prom. All of this only demonstrates that Chris had been known in her community as an evil character since she was very young.

The decision to destroy the protagonist only gains more strength in Chris's mind when she finds out that Tommy Ross and Carrie White are going to be prom night's King and Queen, respectively. "She could hardly believe it. Outrage made her tremble. Did they really think they would be allowed to get away with it? Her lips tautened grimly." (KING, 1974, p. 50). Anything remotely good that should happen in Carrie's life seems like a sort of insult to Chris. The irony here is that, in spite of the fact that she was the one who perpetrated the violence against Carrie, Chris was concerned with whether her victim would be able to *get away with it*, in this case, *it*

being overcoming her violence, perhaps.

No matter how strong a hold Chris seemed to have upon her retinue, she was so mean to them that they started leaving her side one by one. Even Billy Nolan, who "took this part of the conspiracy entirely out of Christine Hargensen's hands and acted on his own initiative" (KING, 1974, p. 62), started slowly to drift apart from her due to the terrible treatment she constantly gave him. Approaching the time of the prom, when thinking about the bucket of pig blood turning on the students' heads, the narrator reveals some of Billy's darkest thoughts towards his girlfriend:

> Chris said chances were good that Tommy Ross and the White bitch would be the ones under the buckets; she had been doing a little quiet promoting among her friends. That would be good, if it happened. But, for Billy, any of the others would be all right too.
> He was beginning to think that it would be all right if it was Chris herself. (king, 1974, p. 64).

A few hours before the prom, the couple of evildoers start to feel all the nervousness in the weight of what they are about to do. While they discuss the next steps at the parking lot, it is possible to notice the chasm between them becoming wider. "He squeezed her wrist tighter still and felt small bones grind. It gave him a grim pleasure. Still, she didn't cry out. She was pretty good" (KING, 1974, p. 69). It is as though their will to perpetrate evil has no defined target, as if what they really want is to cause some harm, regardless of who might receive it.

After they spill the pig blood onto Carrie's head and manage to flee the place, Chris and Billy enjoy a few hours of sexual pleasure, in celebration for their victory over Carrie White. Back at their hiding place, in a back room at the tavern called The Cavalier, little do they know what is happening in the meantime in Chamberlain. Eventually, they meet their end, as it often happens with evil in fiction, but this part of the analysis will be included in the section 3.3 of this close reading, the one about Carrie's trajectory.

3.1.3 Rita Desjardin

Nöel Carroll says that it is common to see in horror plots a resistance to "the discovery that a monster is at the root of recent evil (…), often by the powers that be" (CARROLL, 1990, p. 101). That is, after danger has been identified, "this information is treated skeptically by certain third parties, often authority figures such as the police, eminent scientists, religious leaders, government officials, or the army" (KING, 1974, p. 101). Considering that the evil that Carrie suffers in the hands of her school peers is monstrous, the school's authorities could have intervened in the girl's favor, perhaps to the extent that tragedies could have been avoided.

Thus, if virtually every horror story plot has the representation of a crumbling institution, one that was supposed to protect the characters in the story, but fails miserably, in *Carrie* that one is Rita Desjardin, the gym teacher. The types of evil that she represents in the novel are more subtle in comparison to Sue Snell and Chris Hargensen, yet most of the harm Miss Desjardin does to Carrie comes either by means of inaction, or simply by showing a set of low feelings towards the girl, which the narrator reveals in a few occasions.

Right at the beginning of the novel, Carrie and her schoolmates are in the shower room after gym practice, when their teacher Miss Desjardin comes in and, out of all the girls who are having a shower, she picks Carrie to reprimand about taking too long. She says to the girl, "What are you waiting for, Carrie? Doom? Bell in five minutes" (KING, 1974, p. 8), to which Carrie, who is still washing herself, while trying to ignore the other girls' stare, because "They stared. They always *stared*" (KING, 1974, p. 8), only replies with an "Ohuh?" (KING, 1974, p. 9). Sue Snell, hearing the teacher's gruff tone of voice, tries to speed up, and "Miss Desjardin made an irritated cranking gesture at Carrie and stepped out" (KING, 1974, p. 8). Thus, in her first appearance, Miss Desjardin already demonstrates her overall impatience towards her students, especially Carrie.

Presented to the reader as "nonbreasted", with "legs not too curved but striking in their unobtrusive muscularity" (KING, 1974, p. 8), Miss Desjardin is supposed to be a hero in the school's chaotic scenario, and she does come to rescue Carrie when the girl most needs it, although her way of rescuing her is a tad contradictory. When the noise made by the girls in the shower room reaches Miss Desjardin, she enters the place and breaks up the group of bullies. She walks up to Carrie and, as the narrator says, "employed the standard tactic for hysterics", and she slaps "Carrie smartly across the face" (KING, 1974, p. 11). The narrator then offers a peek into Miss Desjardin's psyche, saying that the woman "hardly would have admitted the pleasure the act gave her", which indicates somehow that the gym teacher might have wanted to do that to Carrie for some time. Furthermore, the text goes on by saying that Miss Desjardin "certainly would have denied that she regarded Carrie as a fat, whiny bag of lard" (KING, 1974, p. 11), proving that more than having a negative disposition towards her profession in general, Miss Desjardin seems to have something against Carrie in particular.

Described as "a first-year teacher", Miss Desjardin comes across as an unexperienced professional who "still believed that she thought all children were good" (KING, 1974, p. 11), contradicting Camus's view that "even unbaptized children are not innocent" (CAMUS, 2007, p. 123). When she finally understands what is happening to Carrie, it is as if "a terrible and black foreknowledge grew in Rita Desjardin's mind", and she thinks that "it was incredible,

could not be" (KING, 1974, p. 11) that a seventeen-year-old girl had never been taught about menstruation. Her version of evil has a bit of unpreparedness in its roots, which is connected to Calder's idea that "ignorance can be a legitimate excuse for causing unjustified harm" (CALDER, 2013, p. 19). About the responsibility of evil, even if Miss Desjardin's actions "do not cause grievous harm", according to Kekes, she contributes to Carrie's suffering in the sense that "evil-doers (…) are held responsible (…) for what they did, not for who they are" (KEKES, 2010, p. 139), or, in Miss Desjardin's case, what she fails to do.

Still, contradictory as it may be, the gym teacher manages to show a kind side of her personality by trying to appease Carrie, saying to her, about the pain that the girl claims to feel, "*That passes*", while "pity and self-shame met in her and mixed uneasily" (KING, 1974, p. 11). Additionally, the gym teacher shows that she is fully aware of how difficult things are for Carrie, as the text indicates that "Desjardin had not been able to get the image of Carrie out of her mind all weekend" (KING, 1974, p. 31). She seems troubled by having witnessed "Carrie screaming, blubbering, a wet napkin plastered squarely in the middle of her pubic hair — and her own sick, angry reaction" (KING, 1974, p. 31). Even with a conscience, the reasons why Miss Desjardin acted towards Carrie in such a way are hard to define. However, her actions fit in the idea that evil can be passed on, and Carrie decidedly absorbs a relevant piece of it.

Rita Desjardin's actions trouble her in a way that, like Sue Snell, she starts seeking atonement. During a subsequent gym practice, she reprimands the girls who had attacked Carrie in the shower room: "Did any of you stop to think that Carrie White has feelings? Do any of you ever stop to think? Sue? Fern? Helen? Jessica? Any of you?" (KING, 1974, p. 31). She goes on, and it is interesting to notice that, when she says those things to the girls, it is as though she was saying them to herself: "You think she's ugly. Well, you're all ugly. I saw it on Friday morning" (KING, 1974, p. 31). Some of the girls start to protest, and Rita Desjardin once again shows her violent disposition by threatening them: "One more remark out of you (…) and I'll throw you across the room. Want to find out if I'm telling the truth?" (KING, 1974, p. 31).

Representing a symbolic mother for the girls at Ewen High, Miss Desjardin is the adult figure responsible for the girls' well-being and for managing their relationship while in a position of authority during her class hours. In the specific case of Carrie, her failure to protect the girl evokes Jung's theory of the negative mother-complex, which says that even though the daughter "gives up fighting the mother in the personal and restricted sense (…) even at her best she will remain hostile to all that is dark, unclear, and ambiguous" (JUNG, 1953, p. 36). That is, if Carrie wants to break free, she must reject the mother figure's bad side, and not mirror herself on an entity that instead of protecting those in need, simply forsakes them by failing to

see how much they need help. While at school, Carrie is incapable of feeling protected, since in that place she must endure "the chaos of the maternal womb, which is her greatest danger" (KING, 1974, p. 36), precisely because it is not a safe place. Carrie has a chance to save herself by "excelling her more feminine sister[s]", meaning her colleagues, and "in her objectivity and coolness of judgment, she may become the friend, sister" (JUNG, 1953, p. 36). Unfortunately, that is not how Carrie's story ends.

At prom, the gym teacher meets Carrie, and both are dressed up, so they compliment each other on how beautiful they look, and in a prophetic gesture, "Desjardin smiled and squeezed [Carrie's] arm. *You'll never forget it*, she said. *Never*" (KING, 1974, p. 69). She was talking about the night ahead of them, then she leaves while wishing Carrie "a lovely time", as Tommy comes back from getting two cups of punch, and he asks her "What did she want?", to what Carrie replies, "I think she wanted to say she was sorry" (KING, 1974, p. 69). Carrie is probably right in thinking that, although it is possible that she only wishes Miss Desjardin apologized to her somehow, for not having been a better mother figure.

Nevertheless, whether Miss Desjardin was sorry or not, Carrie does not seem to have forgiven her, and her punishment does not take too long to come. The novel offers an account by the character Norma Watson, who witnesses Carrie's revenge act at the prom, and ends up writing a book called *We Survived the Black Prom*, (KING, 1974, p. 75). In it, Norma describes what Carrie does to Miss Desjardin, saying that she "came running over to [Carrie], and she wasn't laughing any more. She was holding out her arms to her. But then she veered off and hit the wall beside the stage" (KING, 1974, p. 75). Norma does not seem to be aware of Carrie's telekinetic powers, and adds, "It was the strangest thing. She didn't stumble or anything. It was as if someone had pushed her, but there was no one there" (KING, 1974, pp. 75-76). The reader also has an account offered by the narrator:

> Miss Desjardin was running toward her, and Miss Desjardin's face was filled with lying compassion. Carrie could see beneath the surface to where the real Miss Desjardin was giggling and chuckling with rancid old-maid ribaldry. Miss Desjardin's mouth opened and her voice issued forth, horrible and slow and deep:
> "Let me help you, dear. Oh I am so sor–"
> She struck out at her
> *(flex)*
> and Miss Desjardin went flying to rattle off the wall at the side of the stage and fall into a heap. (KING, 1974, p. 81).

Even though Rita Desjardin can be seen as a symbolic mother for the Ewen High School students (as often is the case with teachers), she does not possess a great aptitude for the task. In an "Excerpt from a letter dated June eleventh from Rita Desjardin, instructor of Physical

Education, to Principal Henry Grayle", the gym teacher says, "I feel that I would kill myself before ever teaching again" and she seems tortured by a feeling of guilt, which, like *the evil that men do*, seems to live on and on: "Late at night I keep thinking: If I had only reached out to that girl, if only, if only…" (KING, 1974, p. 106).

3.1.4 Tommy Ross

Tommy Ross is one of the strongest reasons (if not the only one) why Carrie decides to attend the Prom. Concomitantly to the fact that he is virtually the only male character to have any influence in Carrie's tragic destiny, he represents a kind of evil that can be seen as inaction as much as meaninglessness. He is the traditional popular boy at school, every girl's dream, a Caucasian male in a comfortable position of privilege. Although he does not come across as arrogant, he takes fair advantage of the untroubled condition of not being involved in any of the sufferings of those less lucky than him. Incapable of protecting anyone, because everything in his favor is for his sole consumption, he goes from not being a hero to a collateral victim on Carrie's chaotic path.

Tommy's passive personality might give him the ability to come across as a pushover, mainly because he is told by Sue Snell to take Carrie to the prom (KING, 1974, p. 39). He resists at first by asking Sue what good it would do, to what she replies with an "everybody likes you", so he tries to reason with her by showing what his formed opinion about Carrie's character is: "We both know Carrie's got no reason to care much for people that everybody likes" (KING, 1974, p. 39). Carrie is a somewhat eccentric loner in his eyes, and the fact that he does not resist more insistently to Sue's wish proves that he also believes that taking Carrie to the prom would be doing the girl a favor. Although he tells Sue, "That popularity stuff is bullshit" (KING, 1974, p. 40), his opinion of himself counts since he may think of himself as a hero.

In her book *My Name Is Susan Snell*, another one among those introduced by the narrator, she says that "lots of people – mostly men" are not surprised that she "asked Tommy to take Carrie to the Spring Ball", but instead "they are surprised that he did it, (…) which shows you that the male mind expects very little in the way of altruism from its fellows" (KING, 1974, p. 40). It recalls what Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar say about "the human male's "transcendence" of nature", which "is symbolized by his ability to hunt and kill, just as the human female's identification with nature" characterizes "her role as a symbol of immanence", which in its turn "is expressed by her central involvement in that life-giving but involuntary birth process which perpetuates the species" (GILBERT and GUBAR, 1979, p. 14).

Symbolically, it is as if while women can give birth, men can give death, and Tommy brings that to Carrie, even if indirectly.

When Tommy agrees with Sue by saying to her that he will take Carrie to the Prom, both have a strange feeling, and the narrator says that "he had just time to wonder if this was doing a kindness or making things even worse" (KING, 1974, pp. 40-41). Later, when he goes to Carrie's house to pick her up, he is described in a way that a modern prince on a white horse would be, and Carrie, who had been waiting for him after quarreling with her mother, acts as if she was the damsel in distress waiting to be saved:

> Other cars had gone by, making her heart leap a little, but this one was going much more slowly.
> (o)
> She ran to the window, unable to restrain herself, and it was him, Tommy, just climbing out of his car, and even under the streetlight he was handsome and alive and almost . . . crackling. The odd word made her want to giggle.
> Momma had stopped praying.
> She grabbed her light silken wrap from where it had lain across the back of her chair and put it around her bare shoulders. She bit her lip, touched her hair, and would have sold her soul for a mirror. (KING, 1974, p. 58).

The following excerpt provides more description of Tommy's prince-like appearance, and it is possible to feel how Carrie, despite all her telekinetic powers, is helpless when it comes to how she feels towards him:

> She opened the door and he was there, nearly blinding in white dinner jacket and dark dress pants.
> They looked at each other, and neither said a word.
> She felt that her heart would break if he uttered so much as the wrong sound, and if he laughed she would die. She felt – actually, physically – her whole miserable life narrow to a point that might be an end or the beginning of a widening beam.
> Finally, helpless, she said: "Do you like me?"
> He said: "You're beautiful."
> She was. (KING, 1974, p. 58).

Tommy's effects on Carrie continue to incite the strangest feelings in the girl, strange in the sense that she had never experienced them before. She seems so happy with Tommy, that a sense of guilt comes to make her doubt whether she deserves even the smallest release from suffering. He parks the car at the prom, and "it suddenly came to her that she was living in a dream of hidden intentions and had just become aware of the fact. What could she be doing? She had left Momma alone" (KING, 1974, p. 61). They enter the party and George Dawson, one of Tommy's friends, approaches to greet him, but he acts in a way that Carrie fails to recognize what the boy is doing. Feeling tense due to the social occasion and thinking that he is a threat, a horrible thought crosses Carrie's mind, and she feels the urge to protect Tommy

and at the same time to destroy his friend: "Dawson lurched forward with his fists up, and for a moment Carrie felt stark terror (…), she came within an ace of picking George up and throwing him across the lobby. Then she realized it was an old game" (KING, 1974, p. 61).

It is difficult for Carrie to relax around Tommy, so strong is the hold that he has over her. He is her ticket to freedom, her initiation into a world of wonders, where dreams come true, where she is beautiful and able to go out and enjoy being young and powerful. Despite being new to that universe inhabited by popular people, she tastes it for the first time thanks to Tommy, and she likes it. For a moment there, "she felt something very old and rusty loosen inside her. A warmth came with it. Relief. Ease" (KING, 1974, p. 61). More of the analysis that could be in this section will be in 3.3, the one dedicated to Carrie alone. Still, a set of relevant questions shall be raised here, so that they can be answered then, such as a) could Tommy have done something to stop evil from taking over? b) If not, did he deserve punishment, that is, was he a villain as much as a victim? In the perspective of the story's moral message, it seems that he was killed as a means to drive Carrie ultimately mad, as if his demise served as a symbolic death to her dreams.

3.2 Margaret White

Understanding Carrie White's mother is paramount to the present work, in the sense that much of what Carrie becomes stems from the way she was raised. In fact, even the way and conditions in which Carrie was born are of relevance to analyzing the evil inside her as a young woman. According to the novel's narrator, "Carrie White's mother, Margaret White, gave birth to her daughter on September 21, 1963, under circumstances which can only be termed bizarre" (KING, 1974, p. 12). This citation is from a part in the novel that is supposed to be a published study[37], and the text adds, "Carrie was the only issue of a family as odd as any that has ever been brought to popular attention" (KING, 1974, p. 12). That is, Carrie is seen as a problem from the beginning of her life, mainly by her mother, which might explain precisely why Carrie was a problem, if it is true that she was one.

Margaret White, née Margaret Brigham, is presented to the reader as a widow who "had no friends to see her through her period of bereavement", and that would be explained "due to the Whites' near-fanatical fundamentalist religious beliefs" (KING, 1974, p. 12). When Carrie's father, Ralph, died, Margaret had been pregnant with Carrie for only two months. When

---

[37] Presented by the author as a book called *The Shadow Exploded: Documented Facts and Specific Conclusions Derived from the Case of Carietta White, by David R. Congress (Tulane University Press: 1981)* (KING, 1974, p. 9).

Margaret went into labor seven months afterwards, it was just after midday, and despite her screams for the entire afternoon, neighbors only decided to call the police four and a half hours later. The explanation for that may be because they "did not wish to become involved in a police investigation, or dislike for her [Margaret] had become so strong that they deliberately adopted a wait-and-see attitude" (KING, 1974, p. 12). That demonstrates the type of character that can be found in Carrie's mother, that is, someone with no friends, not even neighbors to worry about her well-being, even after a whole afternoon of screaming.

Thus, two main points are deserving of attention for those who wish to reach an understanding of Carrie White's evil deeds, under the light of a theoretical evil that is passed along. One of them is the fact that her mother was not the most pleasurable person in the world, and the other is that she considered her baby to be some sort of a curse even before she was born, as one can easily infer from the following excerpt:

> It staggers both imagination and belief to advance the hypothesis that Mrs. Margaret White did not know she was pregnant, or even understand what the word entails, and recent scholars such as J. W. Bankson and George Fielding have made a more reasonable case for the hypothesis that the concept, linked irrevocably in her mind with the "sin" of intercourse, had been blocked entirely from her mind. She may simply have refused to believe that such a thing could happen to her.
> We have records of at least three letters to a friend in Kenosha, Wisconsin, that seem to prove conclusively that Mrs. White believed, from her fifth month on, that she had "a cancer of the womanly parts" and would soon join her husband in heaven. (KING, 1974, p. 12).

Not only did Margaret think her own daughter was a problem from the beginning of Carrie's life, but she also compared her baby to a lethal disease, such as cancer. Furthermore, Margaret's belief that her husband had gone to heaven after passing away can be seen as contradictory, for she clearly condemned him for having sinned in putting a baby inside of her. She even says to Carrie, "I should have killed myself when he put it in me" (KING, 1974, p. 91), showing how much she blamed herself for having become pregnant. Margaret also blamed herself for enjoying the sexual act, and in her mind, Carrie would be an evil human being as a form of punishment.

In the same conversation, Margaret tells Carrie how she was conceived, telling her details about the night in which Ralph got drunk and came to her, saying, "he came in (…) I smelled the whiskey on his breath. And he took me. Took me! With the stink of filthy roadhouse whiskey still on him he took me . . . and I liked it!" (KING, 1974, p. 92). She goes on by adding, "I liked it o all that dirty fucking and his hands on me ALL OVER ME! (…) I almost killed myself, (…) And Ralph wept and talked about atonement and I didn't and then he was dead and

then I thought God had visited me with cancer" (KING, 1974, p. 92).

Margaret tells Carrie directly that, in her eyes, the girl means nothing more than some sort of disease and adds that she thought "that He [God] was turning my female parts into something as black and rotten as my sinning soul" (KING, 1974, p. 92). Imprisoned by her religious beliefs, it can be said that Margaret White managed to make both their lives a living hell.

Still, if the line of thought here is to look at the evil in Carrie's mother so that the evil in the daughter can be understood, looking at Margaret's parents might also be of relevance to the present study. David R. Congress, the character in the novel who wrote the book *The Shadow Exploded*, seems to agree with that view:

> Perhaps a complete study of Carrie's mother will be undertaken someday, when the subject of Carrie herself becomes more academic. I myself might attempt it, if only to gain access to the Brigham family tree. It might be extremely interesting to know what odd occurrences one might come across two or three generations back… (KING, 1974, p. 66).

Fortunately, the novel provides the reader with enough information on Margaret's parents, so that the evil in Carrie's mother can be better understood. Again, from the book T*he Shadow Exploded*, an account is given of the circumstances in Margaret's family home as she grew up. It says that after her father was killed in a shooting, Margaret "began attending fundamentalist prayer meetings" (KING, 1974, p. 30). Her mother, Judith Brigham, met another man, and Margaret never seemed to approve of such a reunion, probably because "they both wanted Margaret out of the house", or maybe they both wanted that because Margaret thought that her mother and the man, called Harold Allison, "were living in sin and made her views known frequently" (KING, 1974, p. 30).

The frustration of losing a parent, plus the disappointment in seeing her mother move on so quickly might have taught Margaret a distorted view of parenthood. On top of that, the fundamentalist religious indoctrination might have contributed to her severe judgment of her own mother's conduct. Following that line of thought, it is safe to say that despite leaving her mother's house at a fairly advanced age for a young person, Margaret's upbringing can be seen as having been traumatic in certain ways.

That would also explain the severe manner with which Margaret imposes her worldview on Carrie, who, besides suffering at the hands of other kids at school, must be punished at home as well. After coming back home from a Christian Youth Camp a week early for having been ducked repeatedly by bullies, Carrie hears from Margaret "that she should treasure the memory

of her scourging as proof that Momma knew, that Momma was right, that the only hope of safety and salvation was inside the red circle" (KING, 1974, p. 16). Not having been able to build healthy friendships throughout her own life does not give Margaret the right to plant that notion into Carrie's mind. Still, she does it, with biblical discipline: "*For strait is the gate*, Momma said grimly in the taxi, and at home she had sent Carrie to the closet for six hours" (KING, 1974, p. 16).

3.2.1 If it looks like a monster…[38]

Another important argument that must be made at this point is the way Margaret's looks are described throughout the novel, which contribute to planting on the reader' mind the image of a monster. Her stepfather describes her as having "a face like the ass end of a gasoline truck and a body to match" (KING, 1974, p. 16), attributing to her the grotesqueness expected to be seen in a creature like the one made by Victor Fankenstein. He adds, "Acted crazy as a bat in a henhouse, she did", another reference to classical monsters, this time bringing to memory horror culture's most renowned vampire[39] (KING, 1974, p. 16). Harold Allison "also referred to her as *a little prayin' Jesus*" (KING, 1974, p. 16), which could have contributed psychologically to her anger as a form of bullying, a common ingredient in any given monster-making recipe.

On the subject of things that contribute to the makings of a monster, trauma is also a strong factor. Margaret's mother suspected that her daughter "had gone through a miscarriage" (KING, 1974, p. 16), which is something traumatic enough to lead any sane person into some kind of madness, even if just a little bit. Fictional researcher David R. Congress argues in the book within the book that, "If so [if Margaret had really gone through a miscarriage], the baby was conceived out of wedlock. Confirmation of this would shed an interesting light on the character of Carrie's mother" (KING, 1974, p. 16). David's investigative instinct has a great deal to do with the present work's intention, for both share the belief that much of the harm done to parents reflects on the quality of their parenthood, and their parenthood is going to reflect directly on their kid's conduct.

Other parts of the novel reinforce the idea of evil being passed down from parents to their children. Chris Hargensen, one of the girls to take lead in humiliating Carrie when she had

---

[38] In reference to the usual expression: "If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck." Available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duck_test>. Access on: January 18th, 2022.

[39] [Bram] Stoker gave the impression that his [Dracula's] vampirism was demonic, underscored by the fact that 'Dracula' means 'the devil' in Old Romanian. It is this which allowed him to bend the laws of nature and transform into a bat. Available at <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/natural-histories/bats-out-hell>. Access on: January 19th, 2022.

her period in front of many of her female schoolmates, is portrayed as a naturally evil being. Along with many other girls, Chris threw tampons at Carrie as the latter cried, helpless, without knowing what was going on, thinking that the bleeding from her vagina meant that she was going to die.

When the school applied proper punishment to the girls who bullied Carrie, Chris' father, a lawyer, came to principal Grayle's office to confront the school in its decision. After some aggressive quarrel, the narrator says "Hargensen crossed the room stiffly, paused as if to add something, then left, barely restraining himself from the satisfaction of a hard doorslam". In words that seem to represent the principal's thoughts, the narrator adds, "Grayle blew out breath. It wasn't hard to see where Chris Hargensen came by her self-willed stubbornness" (KING, 1974, p. 35).

The narrator uses what seems to be Carrie's thoughts and impressions to describe monstrosity in her mother. When Carrie arrives home after suffering the aforementioned humiliation because of her period, Margaret punishes her as if her daughter had committed a crime. "Momma had been walking toward her, and now her hand flashed with sudden limber speed, a hard hand, laundry-callused and muscled. It struck her backhand across the jaw and Carrie fell down in the doorway between the hall and the living room, weeping loudly." (KING, 1974, p. 27). Margaret's physical strength resembles that of a man, and her masculine traits add to the idea of identity distortion. The less she is described with feminine characteristics, the more she is construed as a Terrible Mother, thus contributing to bringing her closer to the realm of the unnatural.

In the same scene, the narrator adds, "Her eyes were very large in the rimless glasses; they looked like poached eggs" (KING, 1974, p. 27), and that can be quite a frightening view for a girl to have of her own mother. Other passages of the novel attribute, at the same time, monstrosity, and masculinity to Margaret White, such as the following:

> She was a big woman with massive upper arms that had dwarfed her elbows to dimples, but her head was surprisingly small on the end of her strong, corded neck. It had once been a beautiful face. It was still beautiful in a weird, zealous way. But the eyes had taken on a strange, wandering cast, and the lines had deepened cruelly around the denying but oddly weak mouth. Her hair, which had been almost all black a year ago, was now almost white. (KING, 1974, p. 67).

Margaret put fear into Carrie, who thought "Momma's eyes were sharp" (KING, 1974, p. 22), in the sense that they were always watching her every step, controlling her, keeping her from being free to live her own life. In the passage, "The school had called Momma at the laundry and she had come home at noon. Carrie had watched her come up the walk, and her

belly trembled" (KING, 1974, p. 27), it is clear to see how Margaret haunts her daughter, like a troll or a ghoul, defying her sense of human.

The description goes on, saying that "Momma was a very big woman, and she always wore a hat", reinforcing the creepy imagery, and even more with the following, "Lately her legs had begun to swell, and her feet always seemed on the point of overflowing her shoes. She wore a black cloth coat with a black fur collar" (KING, 1974, p. 27). One could think Piper Laurie is the one featuring on the cover of Black Sabbath's eponymous album[40], which portrays a witch so phantasmagoric it is capable of fostering many a nightmare in music lovers' mind.

3.2.2 Religion: divine or demonic?

The novel portrays Margaret's religious fanaticism as an interestingly distorted and contradictory idea, worthy of analysis in this chapter. She acts as a sort of vigilante of righteousness, going around and correcting people's behavior by striking fear into them, speaking of hell as if she were the Devil himself. Mr. Morton, the assistant principal of the school where Carrie studies, says that "She told Mrs. Bicente, God rest her, that the Lord was reserving a special burning seat in hell for her because she gave the kids an outline of Mr. Darwin's beliefs on evolution" (KING, 1974, p. 14).

Views of this type, put forward by Carrie's mother, sustain the idea that she represents intellectual throwback, which is contradictory, for a lack of intelligence means cognitive imprisonment. Seeing as she spoke so much of the Lord, which according to the Bible is supposed to be the truth, and the truth shall set humankind free, Margaret's claim to love the divine might be interpreted as a love for things demonic.

Mr. Monton adds that Margaret "was suspended twice while she was here [studying at Ewen High] — once for beating a classmate with her purse. Legend has it that Margaret saw the classmate smoking a cigarette" (KING, 1974, p. 14). Her violent nature stands out as one of the characteristics that best define Carrie's mother, as can be seen from countless other passages throughout the book, especially when Margaret is enforcing the religious rule onto her daughter. At home, alone with her mother after the school menstruation episode, Carrie must undergo more humiliation at the hands of her demonic mother. In the passage, "Momma had

---

[40] Black Sabbath is the debut studio album by the English rock band Black Sabbath. It was released on 13 February 1970 in the United Kingdom. The cover photograph was shot at Mapledurham Watermill, situated on the River Thames in Oxfordshire, England, by photographer Keith McMillan (credited as Keef), who was in charge of the overall design. Standing in front of the watermill is a figure dressed in a black cloak, portrayed by model Louisa Livingstone, whose identity was not widely known until 2020. Available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sabbath_(album)>. Access on: January 20th, 2022.

opened the door and walked stolidly in. She and Carrie had stared at each other down the short length of the front hall for a moment, like gunfighters before a shootout" (KING, 1974, p. 27), the violent scenario is fully set and ready to explode.

The narrator reveals some of Carrie's thoughts – "(fear could it really have been fear in momma's eyes)" (KING, 1974, p. 27) – although in this case it seems that she is projecting her own fear onto her mother. The atmosphere of confinement and having nowhere to run increases with, "Momma clos[ing] the door behind her. *You're a woman*, she said softly" (KING, 1974, p. 27), and by this point Carrie already knows what is coming. "Carrie felt her face twisting and crumpling and could not help it. *Why didn't you tell me?* she cried. *Oh Momma, I was so scared! And the girls all made fun and threw things and —*" (KING, 1974, p. 27), but she could not finish this sentence, as Margaret hit her on the face so strongly as to throw her daughter onto the floor. She did not admit that her daughter should become a woman, and perhaps the fear that Carrie detected in Margaret's eyes was the fear of not being the only adult in the house anymore, meaning a loss of authority.

It is when Margaret is preaching that she most seems scary and monstrous, because she synchronizes the uttering of biblical words with the physical aggression, resembling some sort of warden from the underworld. "*And God made Eve from the rib of Adam*, Momma said. (…) She thumped Carrie with the side of her foot and Carrie screamed. *Get up, woman. Let's us get in and pray. Let's us pray to Jesus for our woman-weak, wicked, sinning souls*." (KING, 1974, p. 27). The strength of her words in catechizing her daughter, along with the strength of her blows to Carrie's body are likely to be interpreted as precisely the opposite of what she is preaching. It would not be a surprise if Carrie ended up catching the message in a wrong way. As Margaret insists on the idea that being a woman is a sin, she is opening space for her daughter to stand against the source of that view, that is, her mother.

The brutality of the scene goes on:

> "Momma —"
> The sobs were too strong to allow more. The latent hysterics had come out grinning and gibbering. She could not stand up. She could only crawl into the living room with her hair hanging in her face, braying huge, hoarse sobs. Every now and again Momma would swing her foot. So they progressed across the living room toward the place of the altar, which had once been a small bedroom.
> "And Eve was weak and —say it, woman. Say it!"
> "No, Momma, please help me —"
> The foot swung. Carrie screamed.
> "And Eve was weak and loosed the raven on the world," Momma continued, "and the raven was called Sin, and the first Sin was Intercourse. And the Lord visited Eve with a Curse, and the Curse was the Curse of Blood. And Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden and into the World and Eve found that her belly had grown big with child."

> The foot swung and connected with Carrie's rump. Her nose scraped the wood floor. (KING, 1974, p. 28).

These scenes of child abuse associated with religious faith cannot help but incite anger on the reader towards Margaret and everything she represents. A lot of the potential for violence Carrie seems to have within her might come not only from suffering physical torture at the hands of her mother, but also from her understanding of Margaret's teachings. In the following excerpt, it is possible to observe how, in Carrie's reasoning, she attributes some of the things she has learned from her mother to her own idea of redemption:

> And didn't Momma say there would be a Day of Judgment (the name of that star shall be wormwood and they shall be scourged with scorpions) and an angel with a sword? If only it would be today and Jesus coming not with a lamb and a shepherd's crook, but with a boulder in each hand to crush the laughers and the snickerers, to root out the evil and destroy it screaming — a terrible Jesus of blood and righteousness. And if only she could be His sword and His arm (KING, 1974, p. 15).

It is as though Carrie, by recalling her mother's words, was already looking forward to the day when she will get the chance to extrapolate her revenge. All the feelings she has been keeping inside, from the constant bullying, either at home or at school, all of them make sense in the words of the Bible. In her mind, Jesus represents her salvation in the form of ferocity and bloodthirstiness, because that is how she has learned. If Jesus represents love and kindness to anyone, that way is certainly not how Carrie perceives the son of God. Righteousness, in this context, is the synonym of setting people right, but not just any people, or all the people for that matter, but the same who make her life a living hell, and who she sees as a "carnival of laughers, joke-tellers, pointers, snickerers" (KING, 1974, p. 15).

3.2.3 The evil that [wo]men do lives on and on[41]

Margaret White never got over the fact that she became pregnant with Carrie, having always held intercourse as something wicked in her view. Because of that way of thinking, one of Margaret's accomplishments was managing to make Carrie herself think likewise, teaching her from an early age that the mere fact that Carrie existed was a mistake. Stella Horan, one of the Whites' neighbors, recalls once when she used to sunbathe in her backyard, and Carrie, who was about three years old, came to her with the curiosity common to any child, and asked Stella

---

[41] A play on the words of the song *The Evil That Men Do*, by the English heavy metal band, Iron Maiden. According to fans, the lyrics of this song are a reference to William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, which contains the lines, "The good that men do is often interred with their bones, but the evil that men do lives on". Available at <https://songmeanings.com/songs/view/16953/>. Access on: January 25th, 2022.

what *those* were, referring to her breasts:

> "I looked down and saw that my top had slipped while I was asleep. So I fixed it and said, 'Those are my breasts, Carrie.'
> "Then she said — very solemnly: 'I wish I had some.'
> "I said: 'You have to wait, Carrie. You won't start to get them for another . . . oh, eight or nine years.'
> "'No, I won't,' she said. 'Momma says good girls don't.' She looked strange for a little girl, half sad and half self-righteous.
> "I could hardly believe it, and the first thing that popped into my mind also popped right out my mouth.
> I said: 'Well, I'm a good girl. And doesn't your mother have breasts?'
> "She lowered her head and said something so softly I couldn't hear it. When I asked her to repeat it, she looked at me defiantly and said that her momma had been bad when she made her and that was why she had them. She called them dirtypillows, as if it was all one word. (…) (KING, 1974, pp. 18-19).

This passage recalls precisely one of the types of evil mentioned earlier, the evil that is passed down to children, and is assimilated with a certain ease, simply because children are equipped with an outstanding capacity for absorbing and replicating behavior and will take in mostly anything they are taught. A child can easily learn how to hate and inflict pain onto others, if their parents teach them so. In the same way, children can learn how to hate themselves, all their educators have to do is tell them in the right way, and it shall be done.

After saying that Carrie believed, already at the age of three, that she had been made because her mother, Margaret, *had been bad*, Horan goes on with her story, giving a complete account of what happened next. Carrie's mother had arrived and seen her daughter with the neighbor in a bikini, and she was outraged. The following passage describes Margaret's reaction and some of the physical characteristics attributed to her reinforce the idea that she resembles a monster:

> "For a minute she just goggled as if she couldn't believe it. Then she opened her mouth and whooped. That's the ugliest sound I've ever heard in my life. It was like the noise a bull alligator would make in a swamp. She just whooped. Rage. Complete, insane rage. Her face went just as red as the side of a fire truck and she curled her hands into fists and whooped at the sky. She was shaking all over. I thought she was having a stroke. Her face was all scrunched up, and it was a gargoyle's face.
> (…)
> oh, she was screaming things about sluts and strumpets and the sins of the fathers being visited even unto the seventh generation.
> (…)
> that woman *bayed* at the sky. And then she started to… to hurt herself, scourge herself. She was clawing at her neck and cheeks, making red marks and scratches. She tore her dress.
> (…)
> "Mrs. White kind of. . . squatted, like a frog, and her arms swooped wide open. I thought she was going to crush her and I screamed. The woman was grinning. Grinning and drooling right down her chin. Oh, I was sick. Jesus, I was so sick. (KING, 1974, p. 19).

The terror suffered by the three-year-old Carrie is great during these scenes of horror. Horan's account of the little girl's reaction seem to indicate that the trauma was so great that it might have damaged her not only emotionally and psychologically, but also physically in a permanent way. She says, "*I thought Carrie was going to faint—or die on the spot. She sucked in all her breath and that little face went a cottage-cheesy color.*" (KING, 1974, p. 19) This happened when Carrie saw her mother, the extreme fear taking shape and color to leave marks on the girl's body.

Horan adds, "*Carrie started to go back and then she stopped and then she started again, and just before she crossed over from our lawn to theirs she looked back at me and there was a look . . . oh, dreadful. I can't say it.*" (KING, 1974, p. 19) – it is almost possible to see the trauma forming. Horan concludes, "*Wanting and hating and fearing… and misery. As if life itself had fallen on her like stones, all at the age of three. (…) Oh, she was so pretty. You'd never know from those pictures*" (KING, 1974, p. 19). This account by Carrie's neighbor reinforces the theory that these events might have contributed to scar and cripple the girl permanently in every sense possible.

After that, Horan describes in detail the stone shower that fell mysteriously from the sky on the Whites' residence. What could be seen as a supernatural event, this shower seems to be what led Margaret to start becoming suspicious that her daughter was somehow behind the origin of said shower, and it was then that her plan to kill Carrie started to take a more solid shape.

3.2.4 Margaret gave and Margaret wants to take away[42]

One might look into Margaret's character and wonder where exactly the monstrosity in her lies. It might be in her proven lack of any friends to comfort her even when she is morning a loved one, or it might be in the way she treats her daughter, whom she slaps, kicks and locks up whenever she sees fit, or merely to prove a point. In addition, it might be accurate to say that what makes Margaret White a villain is the contradiction in her conduct as well as discourse, meaning that she speaks of the Lord as the supreme authority and, at times, she acts as though she were a god herself, by taking ownership of tasks that should purport only to Him. As was mentioned above, Margaret's villainess finds strong representation in the diabolic way in which she seems to imitate her god's actions.

---

[42] In reference to the biblical passage from the Book of Job, which says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord". Available at <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Job%201%3A21>. Access on: January 29th, 2022.

In imitating one of her god's actions, specifically, by removing the life that she has given, Margaret struggles with the idea of killing her own daughter. In her distorted logic, committing filicide in this case would be the right thing to do, seeing as she believed that Carrie was possibly a creature of the underworld. Despite resisting the very idea created by her alone, she debates with herself and justifies to her own mind her need to terminate Carrie's life, as if she were correcting a huge mistake she had somehow made. That mistake, Margaret called a *sin*.

> The only way to kill sin, true black sin, was to drown it in the blood of (she must be sacrificed) a repentant heart. Surely God understood that, and had laid His finger upon her. Had not God Himself commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac up upon the mountain? (KING, 1974, p. 67).

She uses the Bible to guide her evil intentions and help them make sense, and with that Margaret becomes Carrie's central antagonist in the novel, the monster that the hero must face. To win the battle against this monster, most probably one of the worst types of monsters a person could probably have to face – one's own mother – in the case of Carrie, is going to demand from her that she turns into a monster as well, as the next section of this chapter will show. If the monster to be faced is one's own mother, it is safe to say that defeating that monster would be next to impossible without becoming a monster oneself.

Margaret wrestled with the idea of killing her own daughter for a long time. The first time, according to the novel's narrator, had been when Carrie was only a few months old, and had manifested for the first time her telekinetic powers, making a bottle levitate above her crib, a scene that her mother could witness, and therefore decided that something was wrong with Carrie. Margaret recalls that event and, in her mind, she makes a relation between her daughter and her own grandmother, who apparently had the same kind of powers.

> Margaret White walked slowly from her bedroom into the living room. First had come the flow of blood and the filthy fantasies the Devil sent with it. Then this hellish Power the Devil had given to her. It came at the time of the blood and the time of hair on the body, of course. Oh, she knew the Devil's Power. Her own grandmother had it. She had been able to light the fireplace without even stirring from her rocker by the window. It made her eyes glow with
> (thou shalt not suffer a witch to live)
> a kind of witch's light. And sometimes, at the supper table the sugar bowl would whirl madly like a dervish. Whenever it happened, Gram would cackle crazily and drool and make the sign of the Evil Eye all around her. (KING, 1974, p. 66).

Margaret reveals that she had already had some experience with telekinesis from another phase of her life, and she would not tolerate herself bringing a child with abilities that meant a connection with the Devil into the world. The biblical passage, *thou shalt not suffer a witch to*

live[43], appears in the paragraph as her thoughts in the form of reasoning for harming Carrie, because she started to demonstrate having said abilities. In the following excerpt, it is possible to see Margaret linking her grandmother to Carrie, and concluding that it was her job to terminate Carrie herself:

> Sometimes she panted like a dog on a hot day, and when she died of a heart attack at sixty-six, senile to the point of idiocy even at that early age, Carrie had not even been a year old. Margaret had gone into her bedroom not four weeks after Gram's funeral and there her girl-child had lain in her crib, laughing and gurgling, watching a bottle that was dangling in thin air over her head.
> Margaret had almost killed her then. Ralph had stopped her.
> She should not have let him stop her. (KING, 1974, p. 66.).

The second time that Margaret seems intent on killing Carrie is when she catches her daughter, now a three-year-old, talking to their neighbor, Stella Horan. Because she found it indecent for Carrie to be in the presence of an adult girl wearing a bikini, and being able to see her body, Margaret picks her daughter up and brings her into the house in a furious fit. According to Horan's account, there was a lot of noise from Margaret's screaming and going crazy inside the house, and then the stones fell on the bungalow, but later Carrie's mother reveals that what probably caused the stone rain was the fact that Margaret threatened her with a knife.

> (…) The Lord works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. I see that now. When the pains began I went and got a knife – this knife –" she held it up "– and waited for you to come so I could make my sacrifice. But I was weak and backsliding. I took this knife in hand again when you were three, and I backslid again. So now the devil has come home (KING, 1974, p. 92).

Convinced that Carrie must have been related to the Devil, Margaret took it upon herself to be the one to end her own daughter's life, thus doing God's work. In an innuendo of paranoia, Margaret's thoughts only seem to convince her of the evil represented by Carrie, as it is possible to see in the following passage, "little slut o I know how it is with you I see what has to be done" (KING, 1974, p. 43). Holding a knife in one hand and a bible in another, she thinks, "cut it out I have to cut out the evil the nastiness sins of the flesh o I know about that the eyes cut out your eyes" (KING, 1974, p. 44). Finally, when the stones started to fall, Margaret concludes, "it's you it's you devilspawn witch imp of the devil it's you doing it" (KING, 1974, p. 44).

---

[43] This line is found in the Book of Exodus, chapter 22, verse 18, and is generally interpreted as a direct order for what to do with someone who might behave out of line, seeing as it is followed by the lines, *Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death*. Available at <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+22&version=KJV>. Access on: January 29th, 2022.

Like Medea, Margaret thinks that the solution for all the problems that came with the birth of her daughter, or perhaps from even before Carrie's birth, is precisely the end of her daughter's life. Only in her case, she is not doing that out of revenge against an unfaithful husband, but out of self-righteousness, that is, because of a religion-oriented belief that she must carry out the work of God and destroy the devil's work.

3.3 The *tragic* relief

After seeing how Carrie receives evil primarily from her mother, ruining her chances of functioning healthily in society, and then seeing how that society gives her more of that evil, the third and final part of the analysis will focus on how Carrie comes to suffer such an extreme transformation of character that results in her giving all that evil back to the world. Once more, the purpose of this study is by no means to defend evildoers or to justify their actions, but to understand how the evil received by someone can make this person pass it on to other people through more evil actions.

Thus, the hypothesis of traumatic evil raised in chapter 2 will be considered the main factor to cause Carrie's through transformation into an evildoer, although it may be argued that the other two hypotheses contributed to a smaller scale. In that line of thought, this analysis contends Carrie is essentially a good person and that her goodness prevails even with all odds against her. That is, Carrie manages to keep being good even as the people around her seem deliberate at failing to recognize her goodness by punishing her for being different, which does not justify the harm they inflict upon her. She goes through a series of "serious, excessive, malevolent and inexcusable" (KEKES, 2005, p. 118) abuses for the simple fact that she is perceived as the *other*, and due to her lack of crimes, the present analysis contends that she is innocent, therefore undeserving of such oppression. She suffers until she cannot take it anymore, and ends up committing her portion of evil herself, for which she is undoubtedly to blame, but which would not have come about if it were not for the exaggerated incentive received throughout her life.

In exploring the possibility of even the remotest traces of congenital evil in Carrie, the novel's narrator offers an intriguing account of how the girl came to have telekinetic powers:

> It is now generally agreed that the TK phenomenon is a genetic-recessive occurrence – but the opposite of a disease like hemophilia, which becomes overt only in males. In that disease, once called "King's Evil," the gene is recessive in the female and is carried harmlessly. Male offspring, however, are "bleeders." (…) With the TK phenomenon, the male appears to be the carrier; the TK gene may be recessive in the female, but dominates only in the female. It appears that Ralph White carried the gene. Margaret Brigham, by purest chance, also carried the outlaw gene sign, but we may

be fairly confident that it was recessive, as no information has ever been found to indicate that she had telekinetic powers resembling her daughter's. Investigations are now being conducted into the life of Margaret Brigham's grandmother, Sadie Cochran – for, if the dominant/recessive pattern obtains with TK as it does with hemophilia, Mrs. Cochran may have been TK dominant (KING, 1974, pp. 47-48).

As seen in chapter 2, telekinesis might be interpreted as a metaphor for Carrie's development of a disease caused by childhood traumatic stress. In the novel's excerpt shown above, though, the idea purported is that the girl's telekinetic powers represent a genetic predisposition for evil, like her own mother believed it to be. Margaret thought of Carrie's ability as a "hellish Power the Devil had given to her", and she knew it had been transmitted genetically, because "she knew the Devil's Power. Her own grandmother had it" (KING, 1974, p. 66). Nevertheless, the novel holds no account of Carrie using those powers for evil out of her own volition, like a psychopath would. Instead, she uses it to get vengeance from those who had so repeatedly been evil to her.

It Is as though Margaret White, for believing that sexual intercourse is a sin, manages to infect Carrie with the destructive idea that coming into the world is a sin too, that is, human beings should not be born, so wrong that they are, as Carrie's aforementioned exchange with neighbor Stella Horan proves. In her turn, Carrie seems to have learned that lesson well from her mother through ceaseless domestic abuse, and the girl's own life experience leaves her with no reason to believe the contrary, which ultimately leads her to act upon destroying everything and everyone that she knows, as completely as possible. Eagleton seems to be addressing that subject when he says:

Original sin (…) is not about being born either saintly or wicked. It is about the fact of being born in the first place. Birth is the moment when, without anyone having had the decency to consult us on the matter, we enter into a preexistent web of needs, interests, and desires – an inextricable tangle to which the mere brute fact of our existence will contribute, and which will shape our identity to the core. (…) Original sin is not the legacy of our first parents but of our parents, who in turn inherited it from their own. The past is what we are made of. Throngs of ghostly ancestors lurk within our most casual gestures, preprogramming our desires and flicking our actions mischievously awry. Because our earliest, most passionate love affair takes place when we are helpless infants, it is caught up with frustration and voracious need. And this means that our loving will always be defective. As with the doctrine of original sin, this condition lies at the core of the self, yet is nobody's responsibility. Love is both what we need in order to flourish and what we are born to fail at. Our only hope is learning to fail better. Which may, of course, prove not to be good enough. (EAGLETON, 2010, pp. 35-36).

Thus, Margaret White personifies Original Sin, and the fruit of her sin is Carrie, whose own name suggests that she would be only a *carrier* if the disease was hemophilia, but as it is telekinesis, she *carries out* the job of perpetrating evil. Or it could be that she *carries on* doing

evil as she is meant to do due to a defect that her mother believes their family have in their genes. It is also worth noticing that, in terms of suggestive names in the novel, Chris – Carrie's antagonist – is one letter away from being *Christ*, though she functions as the anti-Christ. Thus, as much Carrie is not only the *carrier* of the telekinetic gene, but an active user of such ability, so is Chris the opposite of what her name suggests. That is, Chris Hargensen is the real Devil in the story, despite what Margaret White seems to think.

Carrie only ever starts using her powers for evil after years of mistreatment. As the novel's narrator explains, during the shower room episode, when the girls are throwing tampons at Carrie and chanting "plug it *up*" repeatedly, and "Carrie suddenly began to howl and back away, flailing her arms and grunting and gobbling", which made them stop and realize that

> (…) fission and explosion had finally been reached. It was at this point, when looking back, that some of them would claim surprise. Yet there had been all these years, all these years of let's short-sheet Carrie's bed at Christian Youth Camp and I found this love letter from Carrie to Flash Bobby Pickett let's copy it and pass it around and hide her underpants somewhere and put this snake in her shoe and duck her again, duck her again; Carrie tagging along stubbornly on biking trips, known one year as pudd'n and the next year as truck-face, always smelling sweaty, not able to catch up; catching poison ivy from urinating in the bushes and everyone finding out (hey, scratch-ass, your bum itch?); Billy Preston putting peanut butter in her hair that time she fell asleep in study hall; the pinches, the legs outstretched in school aisles to trip her up, the books knocked from her desk, the obscene postcard tucked into her purse; Carrie on the church picnic and kneeling down clumsily to pray and the seam of her old madras skirt splitting along the zipper like the sound of a huge wind-breakage; Carrie always missing the ball, even in kickball, falling on her face in Modern Dance during their sophomore year and chipping a tooth, running into the net during volley-ball; wearing stockings that were always run, running, or about to run, always showing sweat stains under the arms of her blouses; even the time Chris Hargensen called up after school from the Kelly Fruit Company downtown and asked her if she knew that pig poop was spelled C-A-R-R-I-E: Suddenly all this and the critical mass was reached. The ultimate shit-on, grossout, put-down, long searched for, was found. Fission." (KING, 1974, p. 10).

The passage above is crucial to understand how the bullying Carrie suffers at school can be defined as evil after all the theory displayed thus far in this thesis. As Kekes states in *The Human Condition*, "life should not be like that. Good people deserve good things, bad people bad things, but contingencies prevented this from happening" (2010, p. 14), and that is precisely the case of Carrie at school. Her colleagues make her life a living hell, and it is really a no brainer when she finally pays them back. About the otherization of individuals in a determined society, Kekes explains:

> A society's system of values (…) may be mistaken even if it is free of the defects I have so far noted and even if there is nothing intrinsically wrong with its human or cultural values. Its mistake may be that the values are available only for a minority selected, for example, on the basis of religion, ethnicity, or wealth. For others, then, the values they need to realize for their well-being are unavailable, even though they

> have the required capacity and have not disqualified themselves by their conduct from the unobstructed pursuit of well-being, if only they would have the opportunity to do so. A society's system of values is mistaken if it undeservedly deprives some of its members of this opportunity (KEKES, 2010, p. 49).

Carrie could not be part of her society's minority selected because "she was a chunky girl with pimples on her neck and back and buttocks, her wet hair completely without color" (KING, 1974, p. 8), among many other reasons, including because "she looked the part of the sacrificial goat, the constant butt, believer in left-handed monkey wrenches, perpetual foul-up, and she was" (KING, 1974, p. 8). Her constant torturing made her "aware that the joke was on her (as always)" (KING, 1974, p. 9), and her tortures made sure everyone knew about it by registering with "graffiti scratched on a desk in Chamberlain Junior High School: Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet, but Carrie White eats shit" (KING, 1974, p. 15).

So much hatred for Carrie would lead one to believe that Carrie was this tremendously evil person, because it seems only logical that human beings should reserve the treatment Carrie's schoolmates give her for such a vicious creature. Instead, they spend their precious energy on directing all their hatred towards a harmless, defenseless person such as the school's weirdo because her physical appearance or introverted behavior fails to please them – that is, until she decides she is not harmless nor defenseless anymore. As Sue Snell writes in her book, as if looking back in retrospect, "This is the girl they keep calling a monster. I want you to keep that firmly in mind. The girl who could be satisfied with a hamburger and a dime root beer after her only school dance so her momma wouldn't be worried" (KING, 1974, p. 65).

With movements described as "bovinely", Carrie has "her hair stuck to her cheeks in a curving helmet shape" and "a cluster of acne on one shoulder" (KING, 1974, p. 9), which contribute to her being characterized as a monster on the outside. Prove that on the inside she is the opposite of a monster is the simple fact that her telekinetic powers are there from birth, but she does not use them until the amount of torture she suffers is too much to bear. At the same time as she is described like a monster, the novel also reveals how much of a victim Carrie is by saying that "at sixteen, the elusive stamp of hurt was already marked clearly in her eyes" (KING, 1974, p. 9). And she was only a normal girl, who wanted to be beautiful like any other, which becomes obvious in face of the fact that many of the physical and visual elements used to reinforce Carrie's otherness or monstrosity are, in fact, common marks of awkwardness and body development during teen years. Despite all the horror that her society made so much effort to input into her mind, she struggled to remain positive towards herself:

> And she thought her legs were actually pretty, almost as pretty as Sue Snell's or Vicky

Hanscom's. She could be
(what o what o what)
could stop the chocolates and her pimples would go down. They always did. She could fix her hair. Buy pantyhose and blue and green tights. Make little skirts and dresses from Butterick and Simplicity patterns. The price of a bus ticket, a train ticket. She could be, could be, could *be* –
Alive (KING, 1974, p. 23).

Still, Carrie's school peers would not let her feel alive, let alone beautiful. The system into which she is inserted is hopelessly lost to evil, so much that mistreating her is rule of thumb to those people. They cannot see what they do as evil because mistreating Carrie has already become the status quo. Although, as Kekes puts it, "the idea (…) that reforming society will reform the people who live in it is as much a dream as human perfectibility" (2005, p. 81), it is undeniable that Zimbardo makes a strong point, as chapter 2 has demonstrated, in saying that an evil society can make evil social beings. And that is precisely what happens to Carrie, whose slow transformation starts with Tommy Erbter falling off his bike (KING, 1974, p. 16).

In the novel's very first account of Carrie starting to use her powers to get back at the world for being so mean to her, the five-year-old boy shouts at her from his bicycle, "Hey, ol' fart-face! Of prayin' Carrie!" and Carrie "glared at him with sudden smoking rage", which makes "the bike [wobble] on its training wheels and suddenly [fall] over. Tommy screamed." (KING, 1974, p. 16). She had been walking home from school after the shower room episode, and as if getting a minute of rest was asking too much, a boy, who is not even her classmate, must come to bother her gratuitously as well, which proves that Carrie was not only a victim of bullying to her classmates, but other people in general. When Tommy Erbter gets what he deserves, the narrator says that "Carrie smiled and walked on. The sound of Tommy's wails was sweet, jangling music in her ears" (KING, 1974, p. 16).

As Carrie is trying something new, she thinks about how great it would be if "she could make something like that happen whenever she liked", then she tries it someplace else: "She suddenly stared fiercely at Mrs. Yorraty's big picture window. She thought stupid frumpy old bitch break that window" (KING, 1974, p. 16), but nothing happens, which reinforces the argument that Carrie is incapable of using her powers just to obtain pleasure for practicing evil actions. She needs a strong motivation, and she gets that when people provoke her innermost defense instincts. As mentioned in section 3.2, three-year-old Carrie uses her powers to make stones fall from the sky over her own house, but only as a response to the extreme stress her mother causes her to have, which reinforces the hypotheses of traumatic evil.

In relation to the negative mother-complex in the daughter, Jung sustains the notion that "when she fights against the mother she may, at the risk of injury to her instincts, attain to

greater consciousness, because in repudiating the mother she repudiates all that is obscure, instinctive, ambiguous, and unconscious in her own nature" (JUNG, 1953, p. 37). Carrie does try with all her might to live her own life and be the owner of her own fate, but her mother's grip on her is too strong, as the woman harasses the girl with extreme violence at the same time as she tries to indoctrinate her into hating the world. It is as though Margaret, as she tries to teach Carrie correctness, is simultaneously preparing her to be evil. In the following passage, it is possible to feel how the woman manages to scare her daughter into hating even herself:

> She unsnapped her heavy cotton bra and let it fall. Her breasts were milk-white, upright and smooth. The nipples were a light coffee color. She ran her hands over them and a little shiver went through her. Evil, bad, oh it was. Momma had told her there was Something. The Something was dangerous, ancient, unutterably evil. It could make you Feeble. *Watch*, Momma said. *It comes at night. It will make you think of the evil that goes on in parking lots and roadhouses.* (KING, 1974, p. 23).

Margaret shapes Carrie's evil tendencies not only through traumatic experiences, but also through a chain of hateful indoctrination. Going home full after the shower room scene, moments before Tommy Erbter comes to bother her, Carrie fuels her own hatred, thinking about her mother's words in relation to the Day of Judgment, focused on its most violent aspects (KING, 1974, p. 15). As traumatic as the stress she has suffered after years of domestic violence, Carrie turns to that violence for comfort in wishing punishment upon "the laughers and the snickerers" by a "terrible Jesus of blood and righteousness" who would "root out the evil and destroy it screaming" (KING, 1974, p. 15), as mentioned in Section 3.2. Carrie's hateful thoughts build up as she thinks of how much she is hated:

> They all hate and they never stop. They never get tired of it. (…) Imagine Chris Hargensen all bloody and screaming for mercy. With rats crawling all over her face. Good. Good. That would be good. (...) Crash in her head with a rock, with a boulder. Crash in all their heads. Good. Good.
> (savior jesus meek and mild)
> (KING, 1974, p. 15).

Moments after she leaves Tommy Erbter behind, and after failing to break Mrs. Yorraty's picture window with her mind, she tries again, this time using her hate, thinking, "old bitch hates my momma", and "it seemed that something flexed… but very weakly (…) The picture window seemed to ripple. Nothing more" (KING, 1974, pp. 16-17), indicating that she needs a greater amount of hate to be able to use her powers. Feeling "tired and fuzzy", with her eyes "hot, as if she had just sat down and read the Book of Revelations straight through", she approaches her house, with "The familiar hate-love-dread feeling was churning inside her" (KING, 1974, p. 17), because she knows what to expect from her mother as soon as she tells

the woman what had happened at school.

Carrie's conflict with her mother is at the center of the girl's evil transformation, in the sense that while Margaret raises her daughter based on trauma, Carrie starts to question her mother's ways the more she approaches womanhood. At home, Carrie must put up with Margaret's world view and lifestyle, which the girl slowly starts to realize are not a match for what she believes. About her workplace, Margaret says that "The laundry was Godless. Momma had told her so many times. The foreman, Mr. Elton Mott, was especially Godless. Momma said that Satan had reserved a special blue corner of Hell for [him]" (KING, 1974, p. 21). The novel offers no account of the character Elton Mott so that his morals could be analyzed, still, the fact that Margaret keeps telling Carrie about how the man belongs in hell is highly influential on the girl.

Some of the religious imagery worshiped by Margaret is nothing but monstrous to Carrie at times. In the closet where her mother often locks her up and forces her to pray, there is "a luminous picture above the coathooks" with a "ghostly Jesus hovering grimly over a family seated at the kitchen table" (KING, 1974, p. 21). The living room has "many religious pictures", including one of "Thomas the doubter putting his hand in Christ's wounded side (oh, the horrified fascination of that one and the nightmares it had given her as a girl!)" (KING, 1974, p. 22). She begins, little by little, to grow tired of the fear caused by those "black horrid figures [which] struggled through the flames of perdition" with "the Black Man (…) on a huge flame-colored throne with a trident in one hand", whose "body was that of a man, but" with "a spiked tail and the head of a jackal" (KING, 1974, p. 28). Not only inside, but on the outside the house also looks monstrous: "the ivy was picturesque, she *knew* it was, but sometimes she hated it" (KING, 1974, p. 17). Going home to a monstrous mother in a monstrous house, she thought that "sometimes, like now, the ivy looked like a grotesque giant hand ridged with great veins (…) sprung up out of the ground to grip the building. She approached it with dragging feet" (KING, 1974, p. 17). The following excerpt describes Jesus in Carrie's nightmares as if the description was talking about Freddy Krueger:

> The Jesus Impaled upon It was froz"n in'a grotesque, muscle-straining rictus of pain, mouth drawn down in a groaning curve. His crown of thorns bled scarlet streams down temples and forehead. The eyes were turned up in a medieval expression of slanted agony. Both hands were also drenched with blood and the feet were nailed to a small plaster platform. This corpus had also given Carrie endless nightmares in which the mutilated Christ chased her through dream corridors, holding a mallet and nails, begging her to take up her cross and follow Him. Just lately these dreams had evolved into something less understandable but more sinister. The object did not seem to be murder but something even more awful. (KING, 1974, p. 22).

All of this terrorizes Carrie at a deeper level, and she uses this learning to boost her hatred when she finally, at the age of seventeen, finds out she can take revenge on those who harass her. At the same time as she only wants to be a normal girl, as she writes on a notebook some words from a Bob Dylan's song, "Everybody's guessed/that baby can't be blessed/'til she finally sees that she's like all the rest" (KING, 1974, p, 21), Carrie knows somehow that people shall not allow her any redemption, not even her mother. Living in a house with a bathroom that "had a wooden floor that had been scrubbed nearly white (Cleanliness is next to Godliness)" with "no shower attachment" because "Momma said showers were sinful" (KING, 1974, p. 22), her notions of good and evil, right and wrong cannot help but be all mixed up.

Forced to wear "her hateful knee-length skirt", Carrie "looked at the pile of heavy clothes, their buttons and rubber, with an expression of fierce wretchedness", while the girls on *Seventeen* looked "so easy and smooth in their short, kicky skirts, pantyhose, and frilly underwear with patterns on them" (KING, 1974, p. 22). Margaret's verbal, as much as her physical abuse, cannot seem to give Carrie a moment's truce:

> Of course *easy* was one of Momma's pet words (she knew what Momma would say o no question) to describe them. And it would make her dreadfully self-conscious, she knew that. Naked, evil, blackened with the sin of exhibitionism, the breeze blowing lewdly up the backs of her legs, inciting lust. And she knew that *they* would know how she felt. They always did. They would embarrass her somehow, push her savagely back down into clowndom. It was their way.
> She could, she knew she could be
> (what)
> in another place.
> (KING, 1974, pp. 22-23).

By *they* Carrie means the boys and girls at school, mainly the popular ones, who have it *easy*, while Carrie "was thick through the waist", though she tells herself that is "only because sometimes she felt so miserable, empty, bored, that the only way to fill that gaping, whistling hole was to eat and eat and eat" (KING, 1974, p. 23). Seeking to convince herself that she has a chance at being normal, she looks at herself in the mirror and thinks that "she was not that thick through the middle" (KING, 1974, p. 23), but she knows that her mother would go berserk if she knew that Carrie thinks about these things. So much so that the moment Margaret finds out about Carrie's first period, she becomes virtually crazy with anger, for in her conception what Carrie had done – that is, to menstruate – is wrong:

> "O Lord," Momma declaimed hugely, her head thrown back, "help this sinning woman beside me here see the sin of her days and ways. Show her that if she had remained sinless the Curse of Blood never would have come on her. She may have committed the Sin of Lustful Thoughts. She may have been listening to rock 'n roll music on the radio. She may have been tempted by the Antichrist. Show her that this

is Your kind, vengeful hand at work and —"
"No! Let me go!"
(KING, 1974, p. 28).

From this point on, there seems to be a significant change in Carrie's attitude towards Margaret, as she starts to resist her mother's grip. When Margaret tells her that she is not going to the Prom, Carrie contradicts her, and her mother accuses her of being the "Devil's child, Satan spawn" (KING, 1974, p. 46). Carrie then tells her, "I don't want to fight with you, Momma, (…) I only want to be let to live my own life. I... I don't like yours", finally deciding to be independent, and then she adds, "I just want you to understand that things are going to change around here, Momma" (KING, 1974, p. 46). Once and for all, Carrie makes up her mind and certifies herself that "anything was better than the closet with its blue light and the overpowering stench of sweat and her own sin. Anything. Everything", and that decision fills her "with an almost indescribable relief, as if a huge weight, long carried, had slipped from her shoulders" (KING, 1974, p. 46). Margaret ends up going to her room, and the woman "continued to whisper. It was not the Lord's Prayer. It was the Prayer of Exorcism from Deuteronomy" (KING, 1974, p. 46), convinced that her daughter is pure evil.

In her conflicted heart, while waiting for Tommy to come to her house and pick her up so that they can go to the prom together, Carrie still tries to see the positive side of living with her mother. She starts to suspect Tommy might stand her up, thinking that "maybe it was all just an elaborate joke, the final crusher, the ultimate punch line" (KING, 1974, p. 56), as if she cannot wrap her mind around the fact that she might have fun and be normal for one single night at least. In a way, she wishes that Tommy does not come, because "it would be easier to stay here with Momma. Safer." (KING, 1974, p. 57), and that makes her compare her tortures at school to her mother, trying to make herself believe that Margaret is the lesser of two evils. While "she knew what They thought of Momma", she reconciles to the fact that, "maybe Momma was a fanatic, a freak, but at least she was predictable", that "the house was predictable", and that "she never came home to laughing, shrieking girls who threw things" (KING, 1974, p. 57), ignoring that many times she comes home to much worse than that.

While waiting for Tommy, Carrie grows more sure that he is not coming, which means that her ticket to freedom is not going to be given to her, and while she pleads, "No. Oh dear God, please no. (please let it be a happy ending)" (KING, 1974, p. 57), she is forced to consider that her mother might be her only friend. It is in moments like this that Margaret's teachings, such as "Boys. Yes, boys come next. After the blood the boys come. Like sniffing dogs, grinning and slobbering, trying to find out where that smell is. That ... smell!" (KING, 1974, p.

45), seem most appealing to Carrie. The minutes drag along, and Margaret's words grow on the girl, with "…in hallowed earth! We know thou bring'st the Eye That Watcheth, the hideous three-lobed Eye, and the sound of black trumpets. We most heartily repent—", and "protect us from he with the split foot who waits in the alleys and in the parking lots of roadhouses, O Saviour" (KING, 1974, pp. 56-57). Carrie cannot escape that influence, and for a moment she is sure that Tommy has betrayed her trust:

> (he's not coming)
> (don't think about it a watched pot doesn't boil he'll come)
> (no he won't he's out laughing at you with his friends and after a little bit they'll drive by in one of their fast noisy cars laughing and hooting and yelling)
> Miserably, she began lifting the sewing machine up and down, swinging it in widening arcs through the air.
> "—and protect us also from rebellious daughters imbued with the willfulness of the Wicked One—"
> "*Shut up*!" Carrie screamed suddenly.
> There was startled silence for a moment, and then the babbling chant began again.
> Seven thirty-three.
> *Not coming.*
> (then I'll wreck the house)
> The thought came to her naturally and cleanly. First the sewing machine, driven through the living-room wall. The couch through a window. Tables, chairs, books and tracts all flying. The plumbing ripped loose and still spurting, like arteries ripped free of flesh. The roof itself, if that were within her power, shingles exploding upward into the night like startled pigeons—
> (KING, 1974, pp. 57-58).

Again, it is possible to see that the source of Carrie's powers is in fact a vast range of repressed feelings of hate and anger from being humiliated through and through. All the evil people around have planted deep inside there is about to come out, just waiting for the right reason to explode. One might argue that she is only feeling like that because of Tommy, but that would be a remarkable mistake, because Carrie is in fact tied to what Tommy represents instead, and at the night of the prom, now that she is seventeen and her body has fully developed into a woman's, what he represents is her possibility of redemption.

In the passage above it is also possible to see Carrie finally losing her control towards the feeling of a growing impatience with Margaret. The act of screaming at her mother, ordering the woman to shut up, symbolizes the apex of a confrontational posture she had not assumed up to this point in the novel. If on the one hand Carrie tries to save Margaret from drowning in the river of hatred growing inside her own heart, by seeing that the people at school are the bigger evil, now she seems intent on breaking up with her mother. The symbology of such a rupture is strong, and according to Jung, "it by no means follows that the complex induced in a daughter by such a mother must necessarily result in hypertrophy of the maternal instinct. Quite

the contrary, this instinct may be wiped out altogether" (JUNG, 1953, p. 23). That is, by symbolically killing the mother that bore her, Carrie is also killing the mother she could someday be. Jung explains:

> If a mother-complex in a woman does not produce an overdeveloped Eros, it leads to identification with the mother and to paralysis of the daughter's feminine initiative. A complete projection of her personality on to the mother then takes place, owing to the fact that she is unconscious both of her maternal instinct and of her Eros. Everything which reminds her of motherhood, responsibility, personal relationships, and erotic demands arouses feelings of inferiority and compels her to run away—to her mother, naturally, who lives to perfection everything that seems unattainable to her daughter (JUNG, 1953, p. 24).

In that line of thought, *running away to her mother* is exactly what Carrie does after the catastrophic episode at the prom. In fact, as soon as the bucket of pig blood is spilled over Carrie's head, she begins her revenge act by concentrating all her power on the deepest feelings of hate she has been taught so well throughout her life, and as it could not be any different, the thing that most facilitates the release of her telekinetic power is to evoke her mother's words and actions. The following passage demonstrates that: "It was time to teach them a lesson. Time to show them a thing or two. She giggled hysterically. It was one of Momma's pet phrases" (KING, 1974, p. 82). Following that thought, Carrie remembers "momma coming home putting her purse down eyeglasses flashing well I guess I showed that 116et a thing or two at the shop today" (KING, 1974, p. 82).

For Carrie, *they* no longer means exclusively the people at school, but *all* of the people that she knows and that have never been on her side, including her mother:

> They had beaten her, bested her, once and for all time. It was over.
> She would pick herself up very soon now, and sneak home by the back streets, keeping to the shadows in case someone came looking for her, find Momma, admit she had been wrong—
> <div align="center">

(!! NO !!)
</div>
> The steel in her—and there was a great deal of it—suddenly rose up and cried the word out strongly. The closet? The endless, wandering prayers? The tracts and the cross and only the mechanical bird in the Black Forest cuckoo clock to mark off the rest of the hours and days and years and decades of her life? (KING, 1974, p. 82).

Carrie's good side still tries to speak up, but that big *no* demonstrates how stronger her evil side is now. The minute she thinks of running back to her mother, she remembers that there is nothing for her but slow death in her house. Interestingly, there is one more passage by Jung in *Four Archetypes* that seems to address Carrie's divided feelings towards Margaret, in the sense that Carrie's natural inclination to heed Margaret's every wish parallels her desire to be free from her mother once and for all:

As a sort of superwoman (admired involuntarily by the daughter), the mother lives out for her beforehand all that the girl might have lived for herself. She is content to cling to her mother in selfless devotion, while at the same time unconsciously striving, almost against her will, to tyrannize over her, naturally under the mask of complete loyalty and devotion. The daughter leads a shadow-existence, often visibly sucked dry by her mother, and she prolongs her mother's life by a sort of continuous blood transfusion. (JUNG, 1953, pp. 24-25).

The way Carrie knows to prolong her mother's life is the way the woman has taught her, along with the people from her school, and that way is through evil. At the prom, minutes before the pig blood bucket incident, Miss Desjardin tells Carrie, "*You are beautiful*, (…) and each word carried a peculiar emphasis", and "Carrie felt herself blushing again and dropped her eyes to the table. *It's awfully nice of you to say so. I know I'm not . . . not really. . . but thank you anyway*." (KING, 1974, p. 68). Carrie does not allow herself to really feel beautiful, because she had been taught that she is ugly, and that is what she knows, no matter how much she struggles to believe the opposite. Then, the gym teacher replies, "It's true" and adds, "Carrie, anything that happened before . . . well, it's all forgotten. I wanted you to know that" (KING, 1974, p. 68). That is when the reader is allowed into some of Carrie's darkest and deepest secret feelings, as the girl retorts, "I can't forget it", and the narrator adds, "She looked up. The words that rose to her lips were: *I don't blame anyone any more*. She bit them off. It was a lie. She blamed them all and always would, and she wanted more than anything else to be honest" (KING, 1974, pp. 68-69).

The same way in which Tommy Ross represents Carrie's chance at a normal life, Miss Desjardin represents protection, and the woman's failure at that teaches Carrie a lesson in loneliness, which fuels the fire that the girl has already learned in evil. Thus, the moment the pig blood covers Carrie, she understands it is the last straw, and she begins the destruction of everything she can, and the tragedy comes to the reader as nothing but a relief. In the passage that says that "Miss Desjardin was running toward her", with her "face (…) filled with lying compassion", the narrator says that "Carrie could see beneath the surface to where the real Miss Desjardin (…) giggling and chuckling with rancid old-maid ribaldry", so Carrie uses all her "hate for Miss Desjardin, hate for herself" (KING, 1974, p. 101) to boost the power that will bring about her horrible revenge. Now there is no coming back, Carrie is fully transformed into evil incarnate, as her mom had always believed she was, even during the times when Carrie was nothing but innocent.

They are now locked in the building, and Carrie "heard some of them scream and it was music, sweet soul music", because "they were trapped (*trapped*) and the word echoed

intoxicatingly in her mind. They were under her thumb, in her power. Power! What a word that was!" (KING, 1974, p. 82). Her power is limitless now, as it is possible to infer from the following excerpt: "Suddenly, as if a videotape machine had been turned on in her mind, she saw Miss Desjardin running toward her, and saw her thrown out of her way like a rag doll as she used her mind on her, without even consciously thinking of it" (KING, 1974, p. 82). While "they all looked like fish in an aquarium", Carrie "walked to the small oblong of glass in the middle door and looked inside", and "began to smile" (KING, 1974, pp. 82-83) at seeing how frightened they all were. Their pain is her pleasure now, "Yet it wasn't enough. They weren't crying yet, so it wasn't enough. (hurt them then hurt them)" (KING, 1974, p. 83).

The evil that Carrie perpetrates at this point recalls Leibniz's idea of the necessity of evil which, as mentioned in chapter 2, contends that "harmony is (…) a fundamental ontological law of reality" (ECHAVARRÍA, 2019, p. 84), and that, once evil is a part of this world, then it is only logical that it contributes to the equilibrium of all there is. In Carrie's universe, after suffering in the hands of so much evil, she restores the harmony by causing evil in her turn. Some may argue that the evil that she perpetrates is far greater than the one she receives, because of the capacity that physical harm has of being much more salient than psychological harm. Also, it is important to remember that people capable of treating Carrie as badly as they do cannot hope to get away with it for too long, even if they believe that humiliating Carrie for years is the right thing to do. As Kekes points out, "excusing evildoers from responsibility because their false beliefs made their evil actions unintentional would be a mistake", because "evildoers would be responsible even if their false beliefs were true: their supposed moral justifications do not account for their excesses and malevolence" (KEKES, 2005, p. 123).

The logic of moral responsibility works for Carrie in the same way, although the evil she does is an expected response from the point of view of the reader's cathartic experience, which means that her moral responsibility is counterbalanced by her contribution to restoring harmony. The fact that people laugh when they see Carrie covered in blood cannot be seen as anything but excessive malevolence. After years of bullying her, such exaggerated humiliation should have incited even the smallest bit of pity in those people's hearts, still, it gives them sick pleasure, as Norma Watson testifies:

> That was what made people laugh. We couldn't help it. It was one of those things where you laugh or go crazy. Carrie had been the butt of every joke for so long, and we all felt that we were part of something special that night. It was as if we were watching a person rejoin the human race, and I for one thanked the Lord for it. And *that* happened. That horror.
> And so there was nothing else to do. It was either laugh or cry, and who could bring himself to cry over Carrie after all those years?

> She just sat there, staring out at them, and the laughter kept swelling, getting louder and louder. People were holding their bellies and doubling up and pointing at her.
> (…)
> And then her face… broke. I don't know how else to describe it. She put her hands up to her face and half-staggered to her feet. She almost got tangled in her own feet and fell over, and that made people laugh even more
> (KING, 1974, p. 75).

When Carrie starts to move, heading outside, "They stepped back from her as if she was plague, but they kept laughing" (KING, 1974, p. 81), so she becomes *the plague*. She leaves the gym building, locks everyone in, and while "some obscure sense told her that a few were getting out the fire doors", she thinks, "let them", because she knew that "she would get them later. She would get all of them. Every last one." (KING, 1974, p. 83). After setting the building on fire with everyone inside, Carrie goes to the church, where "She prayed and there was no answer. No one was there—or if there was, He/It was cowering from her. God had turned His face away, and why not? This horror was as much His doing as hers" (KING, 1974, p. 88). In this scene, Carrie resembles Eichmann in the sense that she prays, but the only one who seems to answer her is the Devil, as mentioned in chapter 2. She leaves the church as if in a definite break-up act with God, executes a bunch of people on her way home, where she goes to symbolically kill Him by killing her mother.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this thesis, evil was presented in a variety of ways, from the point of view of both religious and secular philosophers, as well as with the help of psychoanalysis. The word *evil* itself evokes various interpretations, but the most fitting definition of it, for the purposes of the analysis of *Carrie* (1974), is an extreme, malevolent action, or series of actions, perpetrated by one person against another. Carrie White was the target of a series of these actions, and she was transformed by it, even though she was a good person in principle. That is, she could have been a hero, but evil forbade her from it, making her a villain.

Thus, the analysis showed that Carrie received so much evil that she went from its target to a perpetrator of it, as if she had received evil treatment in the same one might contract a virus, a comparison that was made in the introduction chapter of this thesis. That comparison makes sense because of its metaphorical aspect. Another metaphor used in this thesis was the allusion to the Devil, a word included in the title, in the hopes that it should be understood as a symbol of inhumanity, of all that is dark and malevolent in people's hearts. This malefic darkness, called *evil* throughout this work, seems to inhabit inside each one of us, like a carcinogenic cell, and here is another metaphor to represent the fact that evil might never manifest, unless it has a reason for doing so.

Following the line of thought that evil can be passed on from person to person in a similar way that a virus can spread, this thesis has brought forward the assumption that there are three basic ways in which that can happen. They were named a) *indoctrinated evil*, b) *congenital evil*, and c) *traumatic evil*. However, it is a fact that the present research is far from being considered concluded, for there is much more left to be said about evil, alas, as has been the case since forever and will always be. This thesis has relied merely on a small selection of theories based on which Carrie White's transformation into an evildoer could be analyzed.

What type of mother would Carrie have been? No one shall ever know. Still, the question lingers. What is known is that she unleashed an extreme type of evil onto the world, one so strong that ended up killing not only her adversaries, but herself in the process. Had she just gone home at the night of the prom, taken a shower, and decided to continue dealing with evil as she had always before, by simply sleeping on it and waiting it out, she might have reached full adulthood, and perhaps even having a daughter of her own someday. Still, she would have to vent it out eventually, and one wonders in what creative ways she could come to react to all the evil she had received. Would she be exaggeratedly harsh on her daughter, thus continuing to pass evil on, in this case, by means of a *traumatic evil*, such as the one that got to

her the most?

One may argue that Carrie was also the victim of *indoctrinated evil*, seen as her mother forced upon her the religious fundamentalism that she, Margaret, had brought into her own life as a replacement for her own mother, who in a way partnered up with Margaret's stepfather to kick her out of the house. Moreover, it may be argued that Carrie was a product of *congenital evil*, as inferred earlier in this dissertation, since the novel offers evidence that Margaret's grandmother, Sadie Cochran, might have had telekinetic powers (KING, 1974, p, 48), therefore passing the genes on down to Carrie White. In this perspective, the telekinetic gene in the novel would be a symbol of genetic predisposition towards being evil.

Carrie is a daughter of evil. Seeing that she will never be a mother, she shall be remembered as a daughter, one raised by deliberate cruelty. As an evildoer, Carrie is born in blood, as red as the one that runs down her legs in the shower room scene, at the beginning of the novel, as scarlet as the one that pours down on her head at the night of the prom, so unlike the *white* that her name suggests. No matter how much Carrie was sure that evil does not make sense, by her many encounters with it throughout her life, at the moment that the bucket of pig blood rains down on her, only malevolence and inhumanity are left, and the purity implied in her name give room to all the capacity one could ever have for perpetrating evil. Exit caring, enter recklessness.

But what does it mean to state that *evil does not make sense*? It is always reckoned with, no exception. Or did Hitler think he would go on indefinitely invading countries and conquering nations? Besides, after he started that dreadful war, did he for a moment believe he would have another full night of sound sleep, knowing they were, or would come for him eventually? So, what does evil really seek, as it moves forward on its destructive path? It probably does not know what it wants, out of pure ignorance, or pure recklessness. In that perspective, is it possible that the origin of evil would be recklessness? Perhaps, of some types of evil. Still, the objective of this thesis is not to find the origin of all evil, or of any type of evil for that matter, but to evidence that it can be passed on by looking at literature to support the hypothesis. Without a doubt, *Carrie* (1974) is a fairly coherent choice for that much.

Still on the topic of evil's lack of sense, to make that point clearer, one might evoke Edmund Burke's words, which state that "we are rational creatures, and in all our works we ought to regard their end and purpose" (BURKE, 1998, p. 98). Add to that the axiom that evil actions incontrovertibly end up bringing nothing good to anyone, especially the author of those actions, and the result will be a simple logic. That is, if the evildoer's sole purpose is destruction, if all they really seek is evil as an end in itself, one might conclude that evildoers seek their own

termination, which they are certainly entitled to, hence the conclusion that merely destruction for destruction's sake simply makes no sense. As long as humanity keeps perpetuating evil, that is, passing it on to others, it is also only logical to infer that to overcome evil all it takes is deciding to do otherwise. As mentioned earlier in the present work, this thesis in no way has the pretense to come up with a solution for the problem of evil. Still, Carrie's story offers a fine example of how catastrophic the perpetuation of evil can be if the potential hero is not strong enough to keep fighting evil and instead decides to use their strength to cause more of it.

Literature provides an insurmountable range of narratives in which it is possible to observe that the only difference between the hero and the villain is what they decide to do with their strength. Take Harry Potter and Voldemort, for instance, analyze both characters to their most basic features, and the result will be that they are virtually the same person, both have the same powers and similar backgrounds. What makes Harry Potter a hero is what he decides to do with his power, and the same can be said of other well-known characters, such as Peter Parker and Luke Skywalker, for instance. From this standpoint, Carrie would be the metaphorical embodiment of both the Jedi and the Sith, and when she snaps, she goes straight to the dark side. She could be compared to Anakin Skywalker in that sense, except that the latter does not experience half the suffering and loneliness that Carrie undergoes.

This thesis is not a comparative work, and the reason characters from various other fictional universes are being cited alongside Carrie White here is solely to support the analysis in chapter 3 with more consistency by illustrating just how unique Stephen King's début protagonist is in terms of transformation, according to the theories presented in chapter 2. And, because points are often better made through examples, another one that comes to mind is what happens to Sméagol in *The Lord of the Rings* down his path towards the horrific Gollum metamorphosis. In juxtaposition, Carrie stands out once again, for Tolkien's character shows signs of meanness even before the seduction invested by Sauron through the One Ring, which in its turn nothing but intensifies Sméagol's already rotten spirit. Frodo Baggins is transformed by the same ring, though not to the point of becoming a zombie-like creature such as Gollum, for Frodo's nature is a purer one. In the case of Carrie White, she was not exactly seduced by the forces of evil, as much as she was tortured by them until she decided to fight back. As it turns out, Carrie's evil was bigger and meaner.

Now that the reader has been taken down heroes' memory lane, instead of announcing that it is enough, there is only one more fictional character that could be brought into the present discussion, but this time not for means of comparison to Carrietta White. The proposition here is to invite to one last exercise (at least for the time being) on critical thinking on evil. In one

of the final scenes of Lionel Shriver's thriller novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, Eva (Kevin's mother) asks Kevin why he had killed those people at his school two years before, and he answers, "I used to think I knew. Now I'm not so sure" (SHRIVER, 2003, p. 464). What would Carrie's answer to that question be two years after the prom night massacre?

In recapitulating what this thesis has sought to do since a discussion was initiated about how evil is passed on, it shall be recalled that, at the epicenter of chapter 1 was Jason Colavito's theories about the relation between the advancements in modern society and horror in the arts. Once it was verified that horror's "overarching concern [is] the role of knowledge, often manifested as *science*, *technology*, or *wisdom*", (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 3), a parallel was traced between the fears and anxieties commonly associated with humanity's difficult to deal with these and the rising relevance of storytellers, such as Stephen King, especially from the 1970s on. Stephen King's stories, including his debut novel *Carrie* (1974), reflect what Colavito defends in the following passage:

> It is my contention that horror records humanity's uneasy relationship with its own ability to reason, to understand, and to know; and that horror stories are a way of understanding and ultimately transcending the limits of mind, knowledge, and science through fear. Horror stories may deal directly with knowledge within their plots, through characters engaged in science, the occult, or skepticism, or indirectly by reflecting external, real-life developments in the scientific understanding of the human body, the human mind, or the cosmos at large (COLAVITO, 2008, p. 3).

Among various other subjects of extreme relevance to today's society, *Carrie* (1974) deals with the challenges faced by young women who are leaving adolescence to cross into the unknown and terrifying world of puberty. While in the novel Carrie White's first menstrual period symbolizes the end of purity, or even a *sin*, according to her own mother, in the non-fictional world it means the start of adult life for girls in a universe where information goes through a new revolution every day, and it is hard to fathom whether anyone's capacity to absorb all these changes can keep up the pace. In that context, parents have the possibility to offer guidance and support, though in many cases that is not what happens, a theme horror explores well through various elements, especially the allegory of monstrosity.

Following from the notion of monstrosity, chapter 2 focused on a brief study of philosophical and psychological theories to shed light on how that monstrosity manifests in the relationship among human beings to configure manifestation of evil. Authors with a religiously centered view of evil, such as Plato, Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, were selected due to the pioneering aspect of their ideas about such a complex and deep subject. Other philosophers, tending more to secularism, were also added to the small selection in order to

enrich the discussion with their insights pertaining to the human nature. They are, in chronological order, Nicolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, the Marquis de Sade, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Apart from these, the contribution of thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus were considered key additions to the work, especially due to their knowledge of the Great Wars, which the previous philosophers were not alive to witness. Finally, it is important to remark that this dissertation relied on the help of a wide selection of academics that contributed with insights about the thoughts of the philosophers mentioned above.

The second section of chapter 2 focused on psychology and its approach to various phenomena of the psyche that might be connected to evil, or to a distorted perception of it, so to speak, starting with Freud, and then investigating some of Jung's thoughts about the mother figure, specifically. That was especially relevant to the research inasmuch as it would help expound most of the arguments used to analyze the character Margaret White further on in the thesis. Apart from that, Zimbardo's theories were examined, assuming a central position in the present work due to their emphasis on the situational forces of evil, which became paramount to understanding the malevolent atmosphere surrounding Carrie. Apart from stating that evil situations may cause people to do evil, Zimbardo also hints at the perpetuation of it:

> The idea that an unbridgeable chasm separates good people from bad people is a source of comfort for at least two reasons. First, it creates a binary logic, in which Evil is *essentialized*. Most of us perceive Evil as an entity, a quality that is inherent in some people and not in others. Bad seeds ultimately produce bad fruits as their destinies unfold. (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 6).

Likewise, the third and final section of chapter 2 revolved around Kekes' definition of evil, along with the distinctive theories propounded by Eagleton, Calder and Susan Wolf, leading to the delineation of the aforementioned three basic ways in which evil is passed on. To recall Kekes' definition of evil and why it is so important to the present work, nothing better than his very words:

> Evil has an ominous connotation that goes beyond badness. It is perhaps the most severe succinct condemnation our moral vocabulary affords, so it should not be used casually, and the conditions of its justified ascription should be made clear. Evil involves serious harm that causes fatal or lasting physical injury, as do, for instance, murder, torture, and mutilation. Serious harm need not be physical. (…) Serious harm may be caused by natural disasters, animals, or viruses; and human beings may cause serious harm to the fauna or the flora. Nevertheless, evil has primarily to do with serious harm caused by human beings to other human beings (KEKES, 2005, p. 1).

Following that, chapter 3 brought the reader to a close reading of some of the key

characters in *Carrie* (1974), starting with four people at Carrie White's high school – Sue Snell, Chris Hargensen, Rita Desjardin, and Tommy Ross – and then an analysis of her mother, Margaret White. The theory of the three types of passed on evil established in section 2.3 is applied to the reading of all these characters, with special regards to Margaret White, whose influence on Carrie's tragic destiny is crucial from the perspective of evil transformation. If it is true that "we can learn to become good or evil regardless of our genetic inheritance, personality, or family legacy" (ZIMBARDO, 2007, p. 7), Margaret is the one who, above all others, manages to contribute the most to making a monster out of her daughter. On that note, it may be stated that the best thing Carrie White could have done, at the end of the novel, was to die. Could it be that both her sex and death drive converged? Perhaps, if this was a Freudian study. As this is more of a Kekesian kind of work, it can be simply stated that Carrie suffered excessive harm at the mercy of others, until she could not help but retribute that suffering.

Could Carrie's story be considered a case of demonic possession? Absolutely. In the present work, though, it shall be said that hers is a case of *human* possession. Carrie's transformation is far from metaphysical. If anything, what drove her to take revenge on everyone that used to harm her was her own spirit, filled with the harsh words, slaps and kicks accumulated throughout years of bullying and mistreatment by a society that was supposed to love her. A society which failed to see that she never did anything to them that could be considered even slightly evil, and that could explain why everyone seemed so intent on punishing her. A society, her mother included, which failed to realize that evil is a bad seed that can bear fruit and, sooner or later, such fruit might eventually come to force itself into the mouths of those who planted it in the first place.

Evil gets passed on and when you do evil you stop being a person. How incredibly frightening is that thought? Actions have consequences, as the old popular saying goes. That is, if somebody pushes the buttons of a person who can push the button of a bomb, it seems only logical to say that both pushed the bomb's button together. So, the next time you see a Carrie-type of person, looking all weird, sitting by themselves, and you start inflating yourself with all those feelings of hate for that person, regardless of how harmless they look, think about how deciding not to hurt them might just be too great an opportunity for you to simply pass up. Bottom line, you had better just let them be.

REFERENCES

APELDOORN, Laurens van. *Hobbes on evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 70-82.

ARENDT, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of Evil*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1992 [1963].

ARENDT, Hannah. *Essays in Understanding*. Edited by Jerome Kohn, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

ARENDT, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1951.

ASMA, Stephen T. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

AQUINAS, Thomas. *On Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

BIRMINGHAM, Peg. *Hannah Arendt's double account of evil: Political superfluousness and moral thoughtlessness*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil.* London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 148-162.

BLACK SABBATH. *Official website.* In: <www.blacksabbath.com/discography.html>.

BURKE, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

CALDER, Todd. *The Concept of Evil*. In: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concept-evil/>.

CAMUS, Albert. *Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism*. Translated by. R. Srigley. Columbia, MO, and London: University of Missouri Press, 2007.

CAMUS, Albert. *The Fall*. Translated by J. O'Brien. New York: Vintage, 1956.

CAMUS, Albert. *The Plague*. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin, 1971.

CARROLL, Noël. *The philosophy of horror or Paradoxes of the heart*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1990.

CARY, Phillip. *Augustine on evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 30-41.

CLOVER, Carol J. *Men, Women and Chainsaws – Gender in the modern horror film.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992.

COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome (Ed.). *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. London & Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

COLAVITO, Jason. *Knowing Fear: Science, Knowledge and the Development of the Horror Genre*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008.

EAGLETON, Terry. *On Evil*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010.

ECHAVARRÍA, Agustín. *Leibniz on evil: God's justice in the best of all possible worlds*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 83-96.

FREUD, Sigmund. *A case of paranoia running counter to the psycho-analytic theory of the disease (1915)*. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works – vol. XIV (1914-1916)*. Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1968.

FREUD, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1960.

FREUD, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

FREUD, Sigmund. *Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses (1898)*. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works – vol. III (1893-1899)*. Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1962.

FREUD, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)*. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works – vol. VII (1901-1905)*. Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1964.

FREUD, Sigmund. *Studies on Hysteria*. Collaboration with Josef Breuer. UK: Hachette, 2009 [1896].

FRIEDAN, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1974 [1963].

GENIUS. *Song lyrics website*. In: <https://genius.com>.

GILBERT, Sandra M.; GUBAR, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984 [1979], 2nd Ed.

GIORGINI, Giovanni. *Machiavelli: The drama of politics and its inherent evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 55-69.

GRANT, W. Matthews. *Aquinas on evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 42-54.

HARRISON, Victoria S. *The History of Evil in the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1950 C.E.) – Volume 5*. London & New York: Routledge, 2018.

HIPPO, Augustine of. *City of God*. Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2015.

HOBBES, Thomas. *The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance (1656)*. In: *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

JUNG, Carl Gustav. *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*. London: Bollingen Foundation, 1953.

JUNG, Carl G. *Psychological Types*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976.

JUNG, Carl Gustav. *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*. New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1915.

KANT, Immanuel. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

KEKES, John. *The Human Condition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

KEKES, John. *The Roots of Evil*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2005.

KING, Stephen. *Carrie*. New York: Doubleday, 1974.

KING, Stephen. *Cujo*. New York: Signet, 1981b.

KING, Stephen. *Danse Macabre*. Pickering: Beaverbooks, 1981a.

KING, Stephen. *Firestarter*. New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, New Delhi: Scribner, 1980.

KING, Stephen. *Rage*. New York: Signet, 1977b.

KING, Stephen. *The Shining*. New York: Doubleday, 1977a.

LEEZENBERG, Michiel. *Evil: A comparative overview*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 360-380.

LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Confessio Philosophi: Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil, (1671–1678)*. Edited and translated by R. C. Sleigh. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005.

LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Die Philosophischen Schriften*. Edited by C. J. Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–1890; reprinted by Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965.

LOVECRAFT, H. P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Ed. E. F. Bleiler. New York, NY: Dover, 1973, 11–106. In: <https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/ shil.aspx>.

MACHIAVELLI, Nicolo. *The Prince*. London: Microsoft Press, 2010.

MAGISTRALE, Tony. *Stephen King: America's Storyteller.* Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010.

METALLICA. *Official Website.* In: <https://www.metallica.com>.

NEIDLEMAN, Jason. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the origin and nature of evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 97-108.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by R. Hollingdale. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *Nachgelassene Fragmente. Kritische Studienausgabe. Vol. 7–13*. Munich and Berlin: dtv/de Gruyter, 1980.

NYS, Thomas. *Sade: mushroom clouds and silver linings*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 122-134.

NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.

PROPHET, Elizabeth C. *Fallen Angels and the Origins of Evil*. Gardiner, Montana: Summit University Press, 2000.

RANK, Otto. *The Double – A Psychoanalytic Study*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1971.

RANKE-HEINEMANN, Uta. *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality, and the Catholic Church*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991 [1988].

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990.

SADE, The Marquis de. *Justine*. Translated by Richard Seaver & Austryn Wainhouse. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965 [1791].

SADE, The Marquis de. *Juliette*. Translated by Richard Seaver & Austryn Wainhouse. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968 [1797].

SCHOLTEN, Matthé. *Kant: the evil in all of us*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 109-121.

SCUDIERI, Alina. *Plato on evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 15-29.

SHARPE, Matthew. *After the fall: Camus on evil*. In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil*. London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 163-174.

SHRIVER, Lionel. *We need to talk about Kevin*. New York: Counterpoint Press, 2003.

SINGER, Marcus G. *The Concept of Evil*. In: <http://wikidshakespeare.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/64757828/The%20Concept%20of%20Evil.pdf>.

THE BOOK OF ENOCH. Translated by R. H. Charles. London: SPCK Classics, 2013.

THE HOLY BIBLE. In: <http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/BIBLES/DRV/Download.pdf>.

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion, The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings.* In: <https://pt.br1lib.org/book/290895/126314>.

TONGEREN, Paul van. *Nietzsche's critique of morality and his effort to create an evaluation "beyond good and evil".* In: NYS, Thomas; DE WIJZE, Stephen (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil.* London and New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 135-147.

WOLF, Susan. *Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility*. In: SCHOEMAN, F. D. (Ed.). *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 46-62.

ZIMBARDO, Philip. *The Lucifer Effect – Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House, 2007.