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Casebook Research for *Carrie*

Stephen King's novel *Carrie* has been a staple in the genre of horror literature since its debut. Although the novel was received with great enthusiasm, it also came with some criticism. After all, he was a man writing about the high school experience mostly from that of the female perspective. Erica Dymond of Maryland University offers a critique in her article "An Examination of the Use of Gendered Language in Stephen King's *Carrie*."

First, Dymond begins by specifically acknowledging Stephen King's attempt to connect with all genders reading his novel. Even though King wanted to address many female issues, he also wanted to avoid stereotyping those experiences (Dymond, 94). This is why we often see King describe female events in a way that he hopes any reader will understand. Despite Dymond accepting King's effort, she writes how *Carrie* was a failure and should receive much criticism from any audience that reads it.

Next, Dymond goes on to write: "In *Carrie*, King strives to relate to women and portray them thoughtfully: however, the author frequently employs overtly masculine images in reference to his female subjects" (Dymond, 95). She points to a few similes and metaphors that King chooses to use in order to highlight what she is seeing. Specifically he writes: "calls and catcalls rebounded with all the snap and flicker of billiard balls after a hard break" (King, 4). As well as, "She and Carrie stared at each other down the short length of the front hall for a moment, like gunfighters before a shoot-out" (King 41). Dymond writes that while she can understand what King was trying to do, his work comes off as insensitive to the female experience. In her conclusion, Dymond criticizes King's incompetence as he portrays the female narrative as though it is extraterrestrial.

I related to Dymond's work because when I began reading the novel there was something off about it that I could not put my finger on. Then, as we began studying sources in lecture, I came across a fact that put it all together. Originally, his wife Tabitha King had found the novel in the trash where King respectfully thought it belonged (Dymond, 94). King's wife noted his frustration with relating to the female perspective and as a result she began to help him narrate the female experience. Even with the help of his wife, I think a critique of his work is necessary. It is quite clear that there is a connection loss between the narrator and the females in the novel. This is evident especially when King relates such strictly feminine experiences to weightlifting, a car with carburetor issues, and gunfights. An example of this that Dymond pulls attention to is when King writes: "Cramps came and went in great, gripping waves..." so far so good, right? But then he continues on, "making her slow down and speed up like a car with carburetor trouble" (King, 17). While Dymond acknowledges King's attempt to

relate a female experience to his audience of an opposite gender, it might be a stretch. Erica Dymond's work can contribute to fellow researchers' understanding of word choice in the novel in order to better understand *Carrie*.

Even though the novel is a historic piece of literature in the horror genre, it is criticized for King's interpretation of the female experience. In result, some scholars such as Dymond discredit the piece. Specifically, Dymond brings forward how he often compares his female narrative to a masculine thing. Erica Dymond's evaluation of the similes and metaphors in King's work sheds light on the gendered language in *Carrie* and is a great representation of the type of criticism the novel deserved.

Works Cited

King, Stephen. *Carrie*. Anchor Books, 1974.

Dymond E. "An Examination of the Use of Gendered Language in Stephen King's CARRIE."

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