

Monstrous Motherhood and Repetitive Trauma in *Lucy Rose's The Lamb*

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i4.2489>

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A B S T R A C T

Contemporary Female Gothic situates horror within the domestic sphere, often centering the maternal figure as a source of threat. This study examines monstrous motherhood and repetitive trauma in *The Lamb* by Lucy Rose, focusing on how the mother-child relationship normalizes and reproduces domestic violence. While previous studies have discussed monstrous motherhood and trauma in Gothic narratives, limited attention has been given to their interconnected role within everyday maternal relationships. Employing a qualitative interpretive approach, this study applies close reading and thematic coding to selected narrative passages. The analysis draws on Female Gothic criticism, Barbara Creed's concept of monstrous motherhood, and Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. The findings show that violence is normalized through domestic care and repeated across relationships, positioning trauma as a continuous relational structure rather than an individual experience.

Keywords: *Female Gothic, Monstrous Motherhood, Trauma, Domestic Violence, Lucy Rose, The Lamb*

Article History:

Received 01st May 2026

Accepted 18th June 2026

Published 02nd July 2026



INTRODUCTION

Domestic space in Gothic literature has never functioned merely as a setting. Following Gaston Bachelard in Bachelard (1994), the home can be understood as an affective space that preserves memory and reflects the inner life of its inhabitants. Beyond its architectural function, domestic space also operates as a social and ideological structure that shapes relations of power and belonging (Aureli & Giudici, 2016). In Gothic narratives, however, this function is transformed, as the home no longer offers protection but instead becomes a site where violence is embedded within everyday routines. As Botting (1996) explains, the Gothic operates through an aesthetics of transgression that destabilizes the boundary between the safe and the threatening. Within this dynamic, seemingly ordinary family structures become sites where horror emerges. This tendency is particularly evident in contemporary Gothic fiction, including Rose (2025), which portrays an isolated domestic space in which violence is not only present but normalized and continuously reproduced through the mother-child relationship. The shift from traditional Gothic settings such as castles toward more intimate domestic environments thus repositions the source of horror within interpersonal relations inside the household, rather than in external threats.

This shift creates the conditions for the emergence of the Female Gothic as a narrative tradition centered on women's experiences. Ellen Moers, in Moers (1976), argues that the Female Gothic no longer positions women as passive victims, but as subjects who experience, witness, and even produce horror, particularly in relation to the body, reproduction, and domestic life. Within this framework, the figure of the mother becomes especially significant, as contemporary literature increasingly situates motherhood at the intersection of trauma, loss, and social expectation (Lazzari & Ségeral, 2021). Creed (1993), in *The Monstrous-Feminine*,

further contends that monstrous motherhood is not simply a portrayal of a “bad” mother, but a construction shaped by cultural anxieties surrounding the female body and reproductive power. This construction takes different forms across cultural contexts; in Indonesian literary tradition, for instance, the monstrous maternal figure has been examined through the figure of the mother castrator, whose authority over the child's body operates as a mechanism of symbolic and physical control (Reggy Capital, 2023). This perspective resonates with Adrienne Rich (1995) argument in *Of Woman Born*, which distinguishes between motherhood as lived experience and motherhood as a social institution structured by patriarchal norms. From this perspective, the monstrous mother can be understood not as an individual deviation, but as a figure emerging from the tensions and contradictions embedded within the institution of motherhood itself.

In *The Lamb*, this dynamic is reflected in the character of Ruth, who exerts control over her child's body, choices, and everyday life while framing violence as a necessary condition of survival. This form of maternal authority not only produces domination but also normalizes violence within the intimacy of the mother-child bond. To further understand this dynamic, a trauma-based perspective is necessary. Caruth (1996), in *Unclaimed Experience*, conceptualizes trauma not as a stable or fully accessible memory, but as an experience that is not fully understood at the moment it occurs and that returns through repetition. Within intimate bonds, trauma often manifests through behaviors that appear ordinary but carry embedded violence, making harm difficult to recognize as such. This framework allows the maternal bond in the novel to be understood not only as a site of control, but also as a structure through which trauma is continuously reproduced.

Previous studies have examined monstrous motherhood and Female Gothic from various perspectives. In horror film, Julian (2026), Barokah et al. (2026), Biru (2024), Sobarudin (2021), and Dany et al. (2019) demonstrate how the maternal figure is constructed as a source of threat through the inversion of caregiving roles and the transformation of domestic space into a site of terror. In Gothic literature, Marpaung (2023) explores the reimaging of motherhood within Female Gothic conventions, while Dhini & Haryanti (2025) examine trauma through repetition and fragmented memory in Gothic narratives. McClelland (2024) further discusses intergenerational female trauma through grotesque aesthetics in Mexican Gothic. Beyond these studies, scholarship on monstrous femininity has examined how female figures embody cultural anxieties through abjection and transgression across different Gothic texts and cultural contexts (Azhari et al., 2021; Khairunnisa, 2023; Miller, 2022; Suhendi et al., 2017; Yasmin et al., 2025). Although these studies contribute important insights into maternal horror and Gothic representation, they primarily approach the monstrous mother as a representational figure and trauma as an individual psychological experience, leaving limited attention to how maternal violence becomes normalized through everyday domestic practices and transmitted relationally beyond the mother-child bond.

This limitation reveals a critical gap in existing scholarship. While monstrous motherhood and trauma have been widely discussed, prior studies have not examined them as interconnected relational processes within a single analytical framework. Existing work tends to treat the monstrous mother primarily as a symbolic or representational figure (Azhari et al., 2021; Creed, 1993; Julian, 2026; Marpaung, 2023; Suhendi et al., 2017), while examining trauma mainly through the child's individual psychological experience (Dhini & Haryanti, 2025; McClelland, 2024). As a result, the relational dynamics through which monstrous motherhood simultaneously produces, normalizes, and transmits trauma through everyday domestic practices remain insufficiently explored. Recent scholarship on maternal horror has increasingly emphasized the importance of relational and generational dimensions of this phenomenon (Lazzari & Ségeral, 2021), yet this perspective has not been systematically applied to contemporary Gothic fiction such as *The Lamb*. In many Gothic narratives, violence does not emerge as a singular event but recurs through ordinary interactions, requiring a framework attentive to repetition, transmission, and the lived texture of domestic relationships.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach to examine the representation of monstrous motherhood and trauma in Rose (2025). This approach is appropriate because the study focuses on meaning-making and narrative construction in literary texts rather than statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The object of the study is *The Lamb* as a contemporary Gothic novel that explores mother-child relationships and trauma within domestic space. The primary data source is the novel itself, while secondary sources, including theoretical works by Creed (1993), Caruth (1996), and Moers (1976), as well as previous scholarly studies, are used to contextualize and interpret the findings. The data consist of selected textual excerpts, including narrative descriptions, dialogue, and internal monologue related to motherhood, trauma, and domestic violence among female characters. The excerpts were selected based on two criteria: (1) their relevance to the research questions concerning monstrous motherhood, traumatic repetition, and the transmission of violence; and (2) their representativeness of recurring narrative patterns across the novel. From an initial pool of more than twenty passages, nine excerpts were selected through purposeful sampling because they provided the clearest illustrations of the study's analytical categories (Patton, 2014). The selection of these quotations is not intended to represent the entire content of the novel quantitatively, but rather to provide rich and relevant textual units for in-depth analysis. This approach aligns with Miles et al. (2019), who emphasize that in qualitative research, data quality and analytical depth are more important than data quantity.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis combined with close reading. Document analysis treats literary texts as cultural artifacts whose meanings can be examined in relation to their social and discursive contexts Bowen (2009), while close reading involves careful and repeated engagement with the text to identify narrative patterns such as diction, imagery, narrative voice, and repetition. The analysis was carried out interpretively through a combination of open coding and thematic coding (Miles et al., 2020). The analytical process consisted of four stages. First, the novel was read multiple times to establish familiarity with its narrative structure, character relations, and recurring motifs. Second, open coding was applied to identify initial indicators of trauma, domestic violence, maternal authority, and bodily control within the text. Third, thematic coding was used to organize these indicators into three broader analytical categories: monstrous motherhood, trauma as repetition, and the relational transmission of violence within the domestic and relational sphere of the narrative. Finally, the coded excerpts were interpreted using the theoretical frameworks of Creed's monstrous-feminine, Caruth's trauma theory, and Female Gothic criticism, with attention to how meaning is constructed through narrative form, domestic imagery, and interpersonal relationships.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on the representation of monstrous motherhood and the construction of trauma in Lucy Rose's *The Lamb*. The data consist of nine excerpts selected through purposeful sampling, including narrative descriptions, dialogue, and internal monologue that reflect the mother-child relationship, bodily control, domestic violence, and its extension into the child's interactions with other women.

The excerpts are analytically grouped into three categories aligned with the research questions. The first category focuses on the representation of monstrous motherhood, highlighting how violence is normalized through domestic language and everyday practices. The second category addresses the narrative construction of trauma, showing how trauma operates through repetition, failed identification, and the recoding of violence as care. The third category examines the reproduction of violence across relationships, demonstrating how internalized maternal patterns extend beyond the mother-child dyad. Together, these findings indicate that monstrous motherhood functions as a relational structure through which violence and trauma are continuously produced and transmitted.

Table 1. Analytical Classification of Data Excerpts

No	Data Excerpt	Source	Category	Analytical Focus
01	"The nervous boy was the best I'd ever eaten, the best birthday present I'd ever been gifted..."	Ch. 2	Monstrous Motherhood	Violence normalized through domestic celebration
02	"I pretended to be a well-slept ammonite fossil just like Mama wanted."	Ch. 5	Monstrous Motherhood	Bodily control internalized as intimacy
03	"When they saw our modest pebble-dashed homestead, they saw sanctuary."	Ch. 3	Monstrous Motherhood	Domestic space as deceptive enclosure
04	"On my fourth birthday, I plucked six severed fingers from the shower drain." / "In the dream, I saw the severed fingers trail across the floor."	Ch. 1 and Ch. 49	Narrative of Trauma	Construction of Trauma structured through narrative repetition
05	"I'd wanted to look exactly like Mama and now I did, but all I saw was ugliness."	Ch. 25	Narrative of Trauma	Failed identification produces self-alienation
06	"Mama left a clean slap across my cheek... One of Mama's special kisses."	Ch. 44	Narrative of Trauma	Violence recoded as maternal affection
07	"That's what Mama would do... I gave her hope, thinking about what hope would taste like seared into her muscles and fat."	Ch. 36	Reproduction of Violence	Care replicated as predatory behavior
08	"I wanted to feel what you felt... I felt like everything had been scraped out from inside of me."	Ch. 55	Reproduction of Violence	Violence enacted as failed maternal identification
09	"Mama knew the difference better than anyone, but I was still learning."	Ch. 15	Reproduction of Violence	Maternal gaze transmitted as perceptual framework

Discussion

Monstrous Motherhood as Domestic Normalization

This section examines how monstrous motherhood is constructed in the mother-child relationship as a form of domestic normalization. Analysis of the following three excerpts demonstrates that maternal monstrosity in *The Lamb* does not appear as explicit or acknowledged violence, but rather as a representational structure that disguises violence beneath the language of domesticity, care, and intimacy.

Data 01

There were still bits of the nervous boy left at the edge of my plate. Cabbage and carrots nestled by the stray, keeping him warm. Mama had even roasted potatoes and made Yorkshire puddings to soak up the gravy. The nervous boy was the best I'd ever eaten, the best birthday presents I'd ever been gifted, but he didn't taste nervous at all (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt constructs cannibalism, one of the most extreme forms of violence in the narrative, as part of an ordinary domestic scene. The human victim is described alongside "cabbage and carrots," placing it within the familiar context of a meal. This combination is not merely descriptive, but works as a narrative strategy that normalizes violence by embedding it within the routines and language of domestic care.

Within the Female Gothic framework, this reflects what Botting (1996) calls an aesthetics of transgression, where the boundary between safety and horror becomes unclear. The home is no longer a safe place, but a space where violence is carried out and presented as something caring. In this context, maternal monstrosity does not appear through obvious cruelty, but through the way violence is framed as affection. As Creed (1993) explains, monstrous motherhood lies in the tension between the power to nurture and the ability to harm, and this tension is clearly visible in this scene.

More importantly, the narrative does not guide the reader to judge the act as wrong. Because the story is told from the child's perspective, the reader is drawn into the same way of thinking, where violence feels normal. This is what makes the maternal figure in the novel disturbing, not because the violence is extreme, but because it is accepted as part of everyday life.

Data 02

Just like Mama, I buried myself. My spine curved and my knees met my chin. She once told me I was her sweet ammonite fossil and I was only hers to unearth. Since then, I'd grown fond of the idea of becoming lost under layers of muck and rock and sand. I coiled up in my blanket, squeezing my eyes shut. I pretended to be a well-slept ammonite fossil just like Mama wanted (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt constructs the mother-child relationship through bodily submission, where the child's body is shaped and controlled according to the mother's will. The phrase "just like Mama wanted" shows that this posture is not a personal choice, but a response to maternal authority that no longer needs to be spoken. The image of the "ammonite fossil," something hardened and motionless, reflects a condition in which the child's existence is restricted and fixed within the domestic system controlled by the mother. This suggests that control operates not through force, but through the regulation of the child's body and behavior in everyday life.

Within the Female Gothic framework, this passage illustrates how maternal care becomes a mechanism of control. As Creed (1993) suggests, maternal power can blur the line between nurturing and domination, while Moers (1976) shows that domestic space often functions as a site of hidden control. In this case, control is so deeply internalized that it is experienced not as coercion but as intimacy. As a result, the child does not experience this condition as oppression, but as closeness to the mother. This dynamic reflects Caruth (1996) notion of trauma as a structure that resists recognition: because violence is embedded in everyday relational practices rather than encountered as a discrete event, it is normalized and accepted rather than resisted.

Data 03

Some of the strays were lost, trying to hike across the fells without knowing that this gloom was where they'd spend the rest of their short lives. Mama could tell a stray just by looking at them, it was something in their soul. The thing that bound them together was the flood of relief they felt when they found our little house tucked away between the trees. When they saw our modest pebble-dashed homestead, they saw sanctuary. They felt lost, and that is what beckoned them to us (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt constructs maternal authority through an epistemic power that enables the mother to identify vulnerability and define how others are perceived and treated. Her ability to recognize "strays" is not simply observational, but functions as a mechanism of control that determines who can be incorporated into the domestic space. The house, perceived by outsiders as a sanctuary, in fact operates as a trap, revealing a key Gothic inversion in which safety and danger become indistinguishable. Within the Female Gothic framework, these dynamic positions the domestic space as an enclosed system governed by maternal authority, where care and predation coexist within the same structure. As Creed (1993) suggests, maternal power often operates through this ambivalence, allowing nurturing roles to mask forms of domination.

The narrative perspective reinforces this structure by presenting it through the child's normalized perception. The events are recounted in a flat, matter-of-fact tone, without moral distance, indicating that predatory practices have been fully internalized as ordinary behavior. As a result, the reader is drawn into the same perceptual framework, where violence is not recognized as such. This narrative positioning demonstrates that the normalization of violence

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in the novel is not only thematic but also formally constructed, as the text itself reproduces the distorted logic through which maternal authority reshapes perception. What makes this particularly significant within the Female Gothic framework is that the child's flat, unreflective narration is not a failure of understanding but a product of it, maternal authority has so thoroughly shaped how the domestic space is perceived that violence requires no concealment. It has simply ceased to be visible as violence at all, which is precisely what Creed (1993) identifies as the most insidious form of monstrous maternal power.

Trauma as Repetition: The Narrative Construction of Traumatic Experience

This section examines how trauma is structured as repetition in the narrative of *The Lamb*. The following analysis shows that trauma in the novel does not appear as a single acknowledged event but as a structure that recurs, embedded in the body, in language, and in everyday relationships.

Data 04

On my fourth birthday, I plucked six severed fingers from the shower drain (Rose, 2025)

In the dream, I saw the severed fingers trail across the floor. The very first severed fingers I could remember from my memories (Rose, 2025).

These two fragments, separated by nearly fifty chapters, construct a narrative pattern that reflects trauma as theorized by Caruth (1996): an experience that is not fully understood at the moment it occurs and returns belatedly in another form. The image of the "severed fingers," first presented as an ordinary childhood memory rather than a moment of fear, reappears in a dream sequence. In Gothic convention, the dream functions as a space where unassimilated experience emerges beyond the subject's control. This shift from everyday narration to dream highlights the indirect and delayed nature of traumatic experience, where what was not recognized initially returns in a more unsettling form.

The repetition of this image is therefore not merely thematic but structural. Because the initial encounter with violence lacks comprehension, it persists and disrupts the present when it re-emerges. Rather than remaining in the past, the event intrudes upon later moments, reflecting the temporal dislocation central to trauma. This logic is reinforced by the novel's structure, which places the two fragments at distant points yet links them through recurrence. As a result, the narrative does not simply represent trauma but formally enacts its repetitive and unresolved nature, making the reader experience its circular and disruptive movement.

Data 05

I funnelled the lipstick and daubed my finger on the end. The colour was a stroke of plum on my fingertip. Pressing the lipstick over the curve of my bottom lip, I slid it over my mouth. I couldn't keep the colour inside the lines. Deep plum brushed my chin.

When I was done, I forced a smile. Looking at my reflection in the mirror, it looked as if two fish hooks had caught either side of my mouth and pulled wide. Wider. I'd wanted to look exactly like Mama and now I did, but all I saw was ugliness (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt presents the child's attempt to identify with the maternal figure through a bodily practice, namely the use of makeup as a form of imitation. The desire to "look exactly like Mama" reflects the child's strong attachment to the mother as an ideal model of identity. However, this attempt does not produce a sense of closeness or recognition. Instead, the child perceives "ugliness," indicating a moment of self-alienation in which the expected resemblance fails. The mirror does not return the mother's image, but a distorted sense of self, suggesting a gap between the identity the child desires and the one she is able to recognize.

Within the Female Gothic framework, this failed identification shows how maternal influence destabilizes rather than secures the child's sense of self. As Creed (1993) suggests,

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the maternal figure can disrupt boundaries between self and other, but in this case the disruption results not in fusion but in disorientation. The child's identity is shaped so strongly by the mother that it cannot be independently formed, yet it also cannot fully replicate the maternal figure. The child's failed identification with the mother is not simply a developmental rupture but itself a traumatic return, a moment in which the child encounters, without fully comprehending, the instability that the maternal relationship has produced in her sense of self. In Cathy Caruth's terms, this surfaces not as conscious memory but as an intrusive and unassimilated experience: the mirror does not reflect the mother but the accumulated residue of what that relationship has done to the child's perception of her own body.

Data 06

'Look at me,' Mama said, pulling my chin up and holding it tight between her fingers. Then my cheek stung. It was hot and crackling. Mama left a clean slap across my cheek. The sort of slap that shocks you into quiet. My ears rang and around me the world blurred as I pressed my hand over the mark she'd left behind, blushing and red. It felt like a thousand tiny bee stings. One of Mama's special kisses (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt provides one of the clearest examples of how *The Lamb* normalizes violence through the language of affection. A forceful slap that causes visible pain is described by the narrator as "one of Mama's special kisses." This is not presented as irony, but as the child's genuine interpretation of the act. Violence is not erased, but redefined through language, so that harm is experienced as care. This act of renaming functions as a key mechanism of normalization, allowing physical violence to be absorbed into everyday emotional experience without being recognized as something harmful.

From a trauma perspective, this reflects what Caruth (1996) identifies as the structural difficulty of recognizing trauma at the moment it occurs. The child does not interpret the slap as violence because her understanding of affection is entirely shaped by the maternal relationship. As a result, she lacks the conceptual framework needed to identify harm as harm, allowing violence to persist without resistance. At the same time, the moment also reflects what Creed (1993) describes as the authority of the monstrous mother. The command "Look at me" emphasizes that the act is deliberate and controlled, not accidental. Violence is thus presented as an extension of maternal authority, framed as care. This dynamic illustrates how, within the domestic space, the most familiar gestures of intimacy become the very means through which violence is enacted and sustained.

Intergenerational Transmission of Violence Across Female Relationships

This section examines how internalized maternal violence is transmitted intergenerationally through the child's relationships with other female characters. The following analysis shows that the trauma experienced and internalized by the child in her relationship with her mother does not remain confined to that relationship but extends outward to shape how the child relates to other women, making the maternal pattern of violence a transmissible relational template.

Data 07

'I can help you. I live close by. I can take you back to the house and get you help. Shelter. Food.' Mama and Eden would love me if I brought this stray to our homestead alive.
But the stray was fading. Her head was tipping back against the bark of the tree trunk. 'I fell onto a branch and I pulled it out. I've lost a lot of blood,' said the stray, voice faltering into a quiet whisper. She shouldn't have pulled the branch out. She should have left it lodged inside to keep the blood in her veins.
'It's okay. You're going to be fine,' I said, brushing her hair back behind her ears and wiping the gleam of sweat from her forehead. That's what Mama would do. I moved closer, sliding my hand beneath her arm and helping her to her feet. She yowled as I pulled her up. 'We have a phone. We can call for help.' I gave her hope,

thinking about what hope would taste like seared into her muscles and fat (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt marks the moment when the child reproduces maternal behavior in her interaction with another woman. The phrase “That’s what Mama would do” signals that the child draws directly on the mother as a model, using gestures of care such as offering help, physical support, and reassurance. However, these gestures are inseparable from her simultaneous perception of the victim as food. Care and predation operate together within a single act, reflecting the same ambivalence that defines the maternal relationship. What appears as compassion is structurally aligned with violence, indicating that the child has internalized not only her mother’s actions but also the logic that underlies them.

From a trauma perspective, this behavior illustrates what Caruth (1996) describes as compulsive repetition. The child’s actions are not simply conscious imitation, but the repetition of an internalized relational pattern that has never been resolved. Violence is no longer only experienced but enacted, as the child attempts to reproduce the conditions of maternal connection through the only model available to her. Within the Female Gothic framework, this moment shows that domestic violence is not confined to the home but extends through the subject shaped by it. The Gothic space thus becomes relational rather than purely spatial, as the logic of the domestic sphere is carried outward and reproduced in new interactions. This demonstrates that trauma in the novel functions as a transmissible structure, embedded in patterns of relating rather than in isolated events.

Data 08

'The baby kits that they found on the coat hooks at school. They blamed Marcus for it, but it was me. I went to the woods and caught them. I wandered close to the almond stone and once I found the road I followed it to the school. I was in and out. Home by sun-up.' I wanted to be punished, but Mama looked at me with wonder for a moment. 'I wanted to feel what you felt when you dipped your fingers into the skull of your first stray, Mama. I wanted to feel full. But I didn't feel anything like that. I felt like everything had been scraped out from inside of me (Rose, 2025).'

This excerpt presents violence as an attempt to recreate the mother’s affective experience. The child’s action is not driven by an autonomous desire for violence, but by the need to “feel what you felt,” indicating that violence has become the primary medium through which intimacy is imagined and pursued. Within this relational structure, closeness to the mother can only be achieved by repeating her actions. However, the attempt fails. Instead of feeling “full,” the child experiences a sense of emptiness, as if “everything had been scraped out” from within her. This gap between expectation and outcome shows that the maternal experience cannot be reproduced through imitation, even when the act itself is successfully repeated.

From the perspective of trauma theory, this failure reflects what Caruth (1996) describes as the paradox of traumatic repetition. Trauma, as an experience that was never fully understood at the moment it occurred, cannot be accessed or resolved through deliberate reenactment. The child repeats the act in an attempt to recover an affective experience that remains fundamentally unavailable, and the result is not fulfilment but further disconnection. At the same time, the mother’s response, marked by “wonder” rather than punishment, reinforces the relational logic of the domestic space, where violence becomes a recognized and valued form of connection. As a result, the cycle of trauma is not interrupted but sustained, as the child learns that violence is the means through which recognition and closeness are obtained, even when it fails to produce the desired effect.

Data 09

'She's different from the others,' Mama said, mouth falling back into a straight line. 'She's not untethered. Or lost.'

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Mama knew the difference better than anyone, but I was still learning. I thought of the lonely woman on the street corner with the ladders in her tights. At a glance, she'd probably been no different. Not really. She'd just been a mind woven in skin. Our tendons all tore the same way (Rose, 2025).

This excerpt highlights a crucial dimension of trauma transmission: the child is not only learning what the mother does, but how the mother sees. The statement "Mama knew the difference better than anyone" positions the mother as an unquestioned authority, while "I was still learning" shows the child actively in the process of adopting that perceptual framework. Crucially, the child's reflection on the woman on the street corner reveals how far this process has already progressed. Rather than perceiving the woman as a person, the child reduces her to biological material, "a mind woven in skin" whose "tendons all tore the same way," indicating that the maternal logic of identifying others by their vulnerability has been absorbed not only as behavior but as a fundamental way of seeing. What is transmitted here is therefore not simply a set of actions, but an entire perceptual structure in which other women are assessed and categorized before any interaction takes place.

From the perspective of trauma as a relational structure, this indicates that transmission operates through the formation of how the child understands the world. Other women are no longer perceived as subjects, but as figures to be assessed within a learned system of meaning shaped by the mother. Within the Female Gothic framework, this also shows that the domestic space functions as a site of formation, where patterns of seeing and relating are internalized over time. As a result, maternal influence extends beyond the home, because the child carries this perceptual structure into future interactions. Trauma is therefore not only repeated through action, but sustained at the level of perception, making it more difficult to recognize and interrupt.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that in *The Lamb*, monstrous motherhood is constructed not as overt or exceptional violence, but as a form of distorted domesticity in which harm is normalized through affection, bodily control, and maternal authority. Violence is embedded within everyday practices, making it appear natural rather than transgressive. Trauma, in this context, does not emerge as a singular event, but as a repetitive structure that recurs through images, actions, and narrative form. The analysis also demonstrates that the mother-child relationship functions as a site of transmission, where internalized maternal patterns extend into the child's interactions with other women, reproducing violence beyond the domestic sphere. Theoretically, this study argues that monstrous motherhood operates as a relational mechanism through which trauma is produced, normalized, and transmitted. This reframing changes how Female Gothic is read: rather than treating the monstrous mother as a static symbolic figure that embodies cultural anxiety, this study shows that maternal monstrosity is a dynamic process that actively shapes how violence is perceived, absorbed, and reproduced by those within the domestic sphere. The novel therefore demands to be read not only as a representation of horror, but as a formal enactment of trauma's relational logic, in which narrative structure, voice, and repetition all participate in reproducing the conditions of domestic violence. This extends Female Gothic criticism by shifting the focus from symbolic representation toward the processes through which domestic violence is sustained in everyday relational practices. Although this study is limited to a single text, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The analysis relies on purposeful sampling of nine excerpts, which, while theoretically grounded, may not capture the full range of narrative strategies employed in the novel. Additionally, the theoretical framework privileges Western Gothic and trauma scholarship; future studies incorporating postcolonial or non-Western frameworks may yield different readings of monstrous motherhood. For scholars, this framework offers a productive methodology for reading other contemporary Gothic works, particularly texts by authors such as Carmen Maria Machado or Oyinkan Braithwaite, whose narratives similarly explore the

intimacy of violence within domestic and familial spaces. Cross-cultural comparative analysis could also examine how monstrous motherhood is constructed differently across literary traditions, including Indonesian Gothic fiction, where maternal authority has been theorized through distinct cultural frameworks (Reggy Capital 2023). For literary education and criticism, this study underscores the importance of recognizing how literature represents trauma not as dramatic rupture but as the quiet fabric of everyday life, particularly in the interpretation of contemporary Gothic narratives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her deepest gratitude to Ice Sariyati, S.S., M.Pd., and Hasbi Assiddiqi, M.A., for their guidance, meaningful feedback, and valuable insights that greatly supported the completion of this research. The author also thanks her family and friends for their unwavering support, encouragement, and prayers, all of which became a driving force throughout this journey. This research would not have been possible without the dedication and perseverance that carried the author through every stage of the process.

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