INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf's famous words of advice: "it is fatal for any one who writes to think of their sex" (Woolf, 1929: 104) have not found much resonance in contemporary horror theory, neither in the case of the writer nor the literary work itself. And at the inception of the Gothic novel, when women were still struggling with positioning themselves within the literary field, the gender of the writer was all conclusive. The poetics of horror and the Gothic were developed in what came to be known as different modes and schools within the genre. These different subgenres were created due to differences in thematic and stylistic patterns, but soon they were categorized by the gender of the most dominant writers within the particular mode, although their gender was not representative for every single writer within the school (Kelly, 2002: lvi). What is known as the Female Gothic originated in Ann Radcliffe's School of Terror, and what is categorized as either Male Gothic or Male Horror saw its rise in Matthew Lewis' School of Horror (Norton, 2000: viii). It does not require an extensive investigation to show that what is categorized as either 'Male' or 'Female' Gothic in contemporary theory no longer comply with the original features of these schools.

The first Gothic novels were written during the Enlightenment, a period which started to break with the previous eras' superstition, by valuing reason over emotion and thought over feeling (Heiland, 2004: 3). The Gothic novel did the exact opposite. Whether the fantastic events played out in the Gothic narrative had a logical explanation, exemplified by the works of Ann Radcliffe and Henry James, or a supernatural explanation as in the works of Matthew Lewis and Mary Shelley, the prime effect on the reader was of an emotional character, one of terror, or of horror. A long tradition of a division of entities into binary oppositions in Western thought associates rational thinking with 'maleness' and emotions with 'femaleness.' It did therefore not take long before the Gothic was claimed to be a female genre, a majority of female writers within the genre helped generalize this claim. In more recent times, however, after the invention of the horror film, it has come to be seen as male after a feminist attack on the violence these films portrayed, violence which they found to be primarily aimed at the female body.

The Gothic genre was thus, from its inception, not only divided into different subgenres, but ascribed different genders, which may very well be one of the reasons why there is so much confusion among theorists as to whether the umbrella genre of the Gothic

should be classified as male or female. This question has created two camps in contemporary theory: one that claims the Gothic to be a female genre that provided silenced women with a weapon of literary authority, a weapon with which they could rise from their oppressed and victimized position in society; and one that deems horror and the Gothic a male genre, which strives to victimize women. For the first camp horror and the Gothic is a feminist method, for the latter it is misogynistic. A rather simplistic solution to this confusion has been to ascribe gender, not to the genre as a whole, or even the subgenres, but to every single piece of literature, in accordance with the sex of the writer. According to this categorization women write within the genre of the 'Female Gothic' and men write 'Male Gothic'. But the terms 'Female Gothic' and 'Male Gothic' are still associated with terror and horror, respectively, so the old prejudice of women writing romantic terror and men writing graphic horror still persists.

In the Christian myth of Genesis, gender came into existence when 'woman' was created. Similarly, gender was born into the literary field when women began to write. Even though women constituted the vast majority of horror writers during the rise of the genre, their gender's influence on their work was persistently scrutinized by critics and their male precursors, an issue that was never of much concern in regard to male writers and poets (Atwood, 1976: 103). The critics were not concerned with whether the established male writer was able to create realistic female characters, but when women began writing it was thought impossible that they should be able to identify sufficiently with a male viewpoint as required for producing believable male characters. It is important to note, however, that gender has always been present in literature in form of representations, even though it was not found to be a relevant point of literary inquiry before women began to write.

In the eighteenth century, when the first Gothic novels were written, it was firmly believed that the minds of women were radically different from the minds of men (Howard, 1994: 62). It is therefore understandable why gender was thought so important in literary production, but in this day and age, almost all the old prejudices concerning gender differences which founded such ideas have been deconstructed. The past decades have, however, continually found it necessary to categorize horror in terms of gender (Norton, 2000: ix). Horror writers have been praised for the imaginative and creative qualities of their works in terms of the fantastic landscapes depicted, and the supernatural inhabitants

of these settings. Their works can escape the realm of reality, but the authors cannot, it seems, escape their bodies.

Problem Field

This study strives to show that it is indeed possible for the author to write outside his or her body. Through an analysis of two novels, one written by a woman, one by a man, which feature protagonists opposing the gender of the authors, this paper seeks to show how it is possible for both men and women to take on a presumed gender identity, not necessarily compatible with their identity as either male or female, since gender itself is a fluid category. The novels in question are Anne Rice's *The Tale of the Body Thief* (1992), the forth volume in the Vampire Chronicles, and Stephen King's *Gerald's Game* (1992), both bestsellers, published in the United States, within the same year. Whether one looks at the gender representation offered in the characters, or the identification of the author with her or his protagonist, one will see a transgression of gender boundaries and gendered identities. In writing about experiences that are strongly connected to the minds and bodies of the opposite sex, Rice and King succeed in writing outside the body. However, an analysis of these works, with the authors' gender in mind, might show traces of ambiguity on this matter. It might be possible that an author can write outside his or her body without escaping his or her gendered identity, since the two are not necessarily connected.

The paradoxical nature of writing and/or escaping gendered identities is what holds paramount interest in this paper and the inquiry will thus be guided by the following thesis statement:

- How are sexuality and gender construction as well as identity represented on the literary and linguistic levels of Anne Rice's *The Tale of the Body Thief* and Stephen King's *Gerald's Game*?
- Moreover, to which extent does the gender of the authors influence these representations?

The structure of this thesis statement is twofold. The first part focuses on the literary aspects of thematic and stylistics, whereas the latter is more author-oriented. The first part of the thesis statement will take up the greatest part of this paper's analysis, whereas the latter part will only be touched upon briefly in comparison. But the final part of the analysis which combines the findings of the previous chapters with the notion of the gendered author also functions as a reflection on the previous chapters. The thesis

statement further explains that the paper will partly engage in linguistic investigations, this is mostly meant in terms of literary stylistics though, for which feminist discourse analysis, for example, is a fitting method. The relationship between the stylistic and thematic levels of the inquiry will be described in a more detailed manner in the following section, which will focus on the structure of and methodological contemplations behind this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The previous section stated that the main aim of this paper is to investigate the authors' gender vis-à-vis the gendered representations in literature. This section will now describe the framework for this study, focusing on the overall structure of the paper and the various approaches and methods that will be applied.

Including the previous introductory chapter, and this section containing the study's methodological contemplations, this paper is divided into five main sections. The remaining three consist of the following theoretical section which will provide necessary material for the following main section, the analysis of the chosen works. The last section will offer a conclusion to the questions and paradoxes posed throughout the paper. The overall structure of this paper is thus influenced by a retrospective perspective, but individual sections will additionally show traces of a prospective perspective, by discussing strong points of considerations and arguments when relevant.

The project will first and foremost make use of comparative analysis, since it is concerned with the comparison of two novels and their authors. Moreover, the analysis will take form of a discussion in which a comparison of different claims within feminist and horror theory will hold strong interest in relation to the comparison of the chosen works. The study will also have qualitative tendencies though, by looking into only one piece of literature, within the horror genre, from each gender.

There is no one single theory or method which this paper follows. Since the aim is to dismantle both the stylistic and thematic categorizations of masculinity and femininity a variety of different theories must be visited. The theoretical section consists of five main chapters that all look into different theories. The first chapter focuses on binary oppositions and deconstruction. Even though this study contributes to the deconstruction of these binary oppositions it is not fully without traces of this dichotomy. The very nature of the comparative analysis to come opposes a male and a female writer. But this structure is only applied as a method that allows a deconstruction of this precise opposition. The second chapter in the theoretical section is about gender constructivism, which will become important for analyzing the gendered positions of the characters in the chosen novels. Hereafter follows a chapter that explains some of the linguistic theories that will be applied when the paper looks into the stylistic levels of the novels. The next chapter will also

provide theory for an investigation of the novels' stylistic planes, focusing on theories concerned with male and female writing. The fifth and final chapter will focus on horror theory which will prove relevant for both the thematic and stylistic analysis.

The structure of the analysis is threefold, because it will look into the different planes described above in addition to how the findings on these levels relate to the concept of the gendered author. The first chapter looks into the novels' thematic levels, focusing mostly on character analysis. The next chapter looks at the language employed by the writers as well as their style of writing. The final chapter will then look at how what was seen on these different levels relates to the gender of the two writers, and how they fit the image of the gendered horror writer. The two first chapters are thus concerned with the first part of the twofold thesis statement, and the third chapter focuses on the latter part.

Choice of Literature

Academics have long deemed horror a genre not worthy of their attention. But throughout the history of horror some writers devoted to this genre did manage to gain canonical status, and it has become more and more common for literary critics to show interest in mainstream literature as well. Neither Rice nor King's works have become part of the literary canon, but both have earned tremendous popularity among well educated and academically oriented readers, and serious critics as well (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1996: 1). Their continuous popularity has made Rice and King into two of the most important voices in contemporary horror, and both authors have managed to transgress and reinvent the genre in their own terms (Stuprich, 2001: 179). Both *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Gerald's Game* became immediate best-sellers and sold extensive amounts of copies (Badley, 1996: 141). Both Rice and King have concentrated on other things than horror fiction in the course of their careers, King has published essays and even a novel on horror theory and writing, and Rice has written several Bildungsromans besides experimenting with religious and pornographic novels. Both writers have, however, produced a great amount of horror novels and are already part of horror's collective memory, which makes their works ideal for a study of contemporary horror. Due to the qualitative tendencies of looking at only two novels this paper will not be able to make any generalizations on the topic in question, it will, however, have the opportunity of looking closely into how the topic relates to two of the most popular horror writers of our time.

The two particular works chosen moreover offer great potential for this study of the gender of the author in connection with the literary work as well as an opportunity of looking into the tradition of categorizing horror literature by gender. Not only do the authors write from the focalization point of the opposite sex, both novels also contain themes highly relevant for the topic by touching on issues of a feminist nature. There has for long been a tradition in horror of questioning not only conventional gender roles, but the very basis of gender as well. True to the tradition, sexuality, gender and identity construction are foregrounded in the chosen novels' thematic. The metafictional levels of the novels which are detectable in *Gerald's Game*, and impermissible not to detect in *The Tale of the Body Thief*, make these works even more favorable for this exact study, since these levels offer a propitious opportunity for distinguishing the authors' voices from those of their protagonists.

Approach

The overall approach of this study will be of a feminist nature. This is, of course, not very informative since the term feminism is not homogeneous but is the umbrella term under which we find various schools of thought, so this section will now sort out which kinds of 'feminisms' this paper's framework combines. First of all there is a division to be made between the theoretical and methodological approach of this paper, since the first is constituted of a poststructuralist and constructivist feminist standpoint while the latter concerns feminist literary theory and feminist discourse analysis. Poststructuralist and constructivist feminist theory are strongly tied up both to each other and postmodernist feminism in their view on gender. Gender and sexuality are not viewed as essential but fluid and artificial terms constructed and performed in the context of culture.

Feminism has long seen female behavior as learned and performed, whereas male behavior has not so much been thought of in this manner, but has instead been accused of contributing to a demeaning construction of female roles. Simone de Beauvoir, for example, one of the founders of this line of reasoning, states that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (de Beauvoir, 1949: 13). But that men also 'become' men have not been given much attention until more recent studies (Horrocks, 1995: 171). Woolf writes: "Have you any notion about how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?" (Woolf, 1929: 26). These words do indeed sound plausible. Woolf is of course criticizing the constant scrutiny under which women have found themselves, but the fact that men have been left out is just as interesting and has certainly left many feminist theories seeming almost anti-male due to their exclusive interest in women. But more contemporary theorists, such as Judith Butler, have been attentive towards this issue and have been careful not to produce new totalizing hierarchies. This study, as well, is not only interested in women but in gender, and that concerns men as well as women and also every individual who finds it hard to be categorized by either one of these terms.

The different theories that make up the methodological approach of this paper are as compatible with each other as those of the theoretical approach. The point of focus does of course shift depending on whether one concentrates on feminist linguistic or literary

theory, but if one considers literature as a variation of language, of linguistic communication (Johansen, 2002: 73), the two approaches complement each other in elucidating the topic of this paper, as will be explained in further detail after a brief introduction to the approaches in question.

A common approach within feminist literary criticism is the 'images of women' approach, which focuses on how femininity is represented within a text (Ruthven, 1991: 70). This paper will of course focus on how both femininity and masculinity are represented within the chosen works, focusing thus on 'images of women *and* men.' Similar to feminist literary criticism, feminist linguistic theory is interested in gendered discourse. Although here the focus is directed towards how language represents and produces gender. What has long concerned linguists, including those that do not have a feminist agenda, is whether we speak language or if language speaks us (Cameron, 1992: 13-14). Some theorists, leaning toward linguistic determinism, or 'Sapir-Whorfian' determinism, claim that since language structures our thoughts, it produces and structures our identities as social beings (134). Many feminist linguists have shown interest in this matter, seeing language as patriarchy's resource for perpetuating inequality, since language reflects the ruling ideology of society (30). Language is therefore used to naturalize categories such as masculinity and femininity, but an analysis and deconstruction of this aspect of language can be used to show the fallacy of this naturalization.

Feminist literary criticism focuses on the textual representational level of gender, feminist linguistic theory concentrates on linguistic productions of gender in a text, combining these two approaches therefore offers this paper an opportunity of investigating how femininity and masculinity are both represented and produced in the chosen texts. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist CDA, which moves in the space between the two fields of literary and linguistic theory, is in this paper used as a mediator between the linguistic and literary methods applied. This form of analysis has usually been applied to discourse in action, direct spoken communication, but when literature is viewed as functional discourse as well, there is no reason for Feminist CDA not to be applied in studies interested in how language influence gender production in literary works.

So far, the methodological approach seems solely of a literary nature, but the immediacy of both feminist linguistic and literary theories lies in their connection with culture. In these theories, the reiterate practice of gender construction and performativity is

either partly or wholly constituted by language and discourse. In this study, literary texts are seen as part of culture not only on an aesthetic level, but as a direct product of culture, and something that directly produces culture. And a literary analysis can thus function as a gateway to our contemporary culture.

THEORY

As mentioned in the previous section this section will now handle the theoretical background of this study. The section begins with a chapter on the binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, which will also touch upon Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction. Hereafter follows a chapter on gender construction and performativity, focusing mainly on the theories of de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. The third chapter investigates male and female language, followed by a chapter on male and female writing based mainly on the theories of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. The section will be concluded by a chapter that looks into how the topics of the previous chapters are connected to horror literature. So now the attention will lie on how masculinity and femininity are constructed as binary oppositions.

The Binary Opposition

Western thought has for long been highly influenced by the Greek philosophical tradition of structuring the universe in concepts of dichotomies, where entities are understood as binary oppositions such as good versus evil, light versus darkness, mind versus body, and masculine versus feminine. What is important to note about this way of structuring is that it not only creates categorization, but a hierarchy as well. The opposition is not considered neutral; one of the entities is viewed as positive, one as negative. As 'good,' 'light,' 'mind,' and 'masculine' were found to be positive, 'evil,' 'darkness,' 'body,' and 'feminine' were thus considered negative (Cameron, 1992: 84).

This line of reasoning is detectable also in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the linear nature of the signifier. Saussure states that a sign gains meaning only in connection to other signs. What is feminine is therefore 'feminine' not due to inherent qualities, but because it is not 'masculine.' Without the opposing term, neither 'masculine' nor 'feminine' would exist (Saussure, 1916: 966). Saussure found the sign to be a double entity, consisting of a concept and a sound-image which describes the concept, more popularly known as the signified and the signifier (963-964). What is important when understanding this double structure of the sign is that the combination of the two, the signifier and the signified, is fully arbitrary meaning that there is no natural connection between them. The signified may be a natural entity, but the signifier is artificially created and the connection between them is based on nothing more than culture and convention

(965). Saussure further states, "Since I mean by sign the whole that results from associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: the linguistic sign is arbitrary." (964). The sign itself is therefore removed from the signified, even though the signified is part of the sign.

Many feminists have noted, though, that this connection is often viewed as natural in society, especially when the signifiers concerned are ’masculinity’ and ’femininity.’ Saussure himself noted how this artificial structure is not created by a single individual but a long tradition in different communities, so over time it can come to be seen as natural. Deborah Cameron sees this form of naturalization of the gendered categories ’masculinity’ and ’femininity’ as the template for an essentialist view on gender, in which these two gendered categories come to embody the ’essence’ of the two genders, constructing them as fixed, natural categories (Cameron, 1992: 83). Cameron, however, agrees with Saussure on the fact that these categories are created in a cultural context:

> “[…] binary oppositions, such as masculine/feminine, are not themselves the first principles of semantics and human cognition, they are a system grafted on in the attempt to analyze those things. Their content is determined by cultural considerations, rather than natural facts.” (88-89)

There is nothing natural about masculinity or femininity; they are the structures through which culture categorizes other terms as associable with the cultural constructs of men and women. Masculinity and femininity are created as monolithic concepts and different traits are thus associated with either men or women, limiting the potential of both genders (Allgeier and McCormick, 1983: 5).

Anthropologist Margaret Mead points to the fact that what is associated with these terms may vary from culture to culture, explaining how they can therefore have no singular identifiable meaning. Nevertheless, Mead finds that regardless of how a culture defines the terms, masculinity is seen as the positive one of the two throughout, fitting well into the old Greek hierarchy (Mead, 1939: xxvi). For Cameron this definition of the ’feminine’ as negative in comparison with ’masculine’ is a logical outcome when language is produced and maintained in a society based on patriarchal values. She believes that this gender dichotomy is a product of male speculation. Aligning herself with de Beauvoir, Cameron claims that the binary opposition male/female is created by men, as a group, in order to construct the woman as the Other. Women are that which men are not, and when all

positive traits are being categorized as ’masculine’, women must embody all the opposing negative traits (Cameron, 1992: 84).

Theorists have been arguing whether words become negative by being associated with ‘the feminine‘, or by not being associated with ‘the masculine‘. Cameron positions herself in the first camp but claims that the solution to this paradox is to reverse it through a revaluation of the other negative words that can be found in binary oppositions. If the words that ‘the feminine’ was associated with were positive, ’the feminine’ would be seen as positive as well (85). One could say that when slang such as ‘black is beautiful’ became popular in the 60s and 70s, the opposition black/white became somewhat more neutral, since ‘black’ was not thoroughly negative anymore. But femininity did not become more positive by association back then, so maybe the focus should not lie on association but the very structure itself. Even though Cameron’s method in its own way attempts at least a partial deconstruction of the binary oppositions, it still reinforces the structure of difference, simply by acknowledging it. Why should we for example celebrate unreason instead of making people see that reason is also feminine, that what is feminine is not unreason and so on. Of course, holding on to seeing these things as negative is to follow patriarchal rule, but celebrating these things as positive female traits follow patriarchal rule just the same, by accepting the pattern of the dichotomy.

Cameron describes how this opposition of the masculine and feminine pervades the English language. One example is how ungendered objects and substances are bestowed with what she calls ‘metaphorical gender’. This metaphorical gender becomes clear when ungendered objects are viewed through the structure of binary oppositions. Cameron describes how, in the opposition knife/fork, the knife is considered male and the fork female, but if ‘knife’ is replaced by ‘spoon,’ the fork is repositioned as male and the spoon is seen as female instead (82). What Cameron aims to prove with this example is not only how persistent this categorization into male/female actually is, but also how the gender ascribed has nothing to do with an actual gender of the object or substance in question. As in Meade’s theory, she finds that these gendered terms have no actual qualities or essences since it only takes a different context for the opposition to be reversed or deconstructed. The gendering of horror literature which was described in the introduction is another example of metaphorical gender. If one follows Cameron’s line of reasoning, the horror genre has only been divided into a male and female current, because this is how human

beings have learned to categorize almost everything. The gender of each piece of horror literature has followed the work's author, since the author is part of the context in which we view the particular work, but if the context of the author is removed there is no longer any reason for the particular gendering of the work.

Deconstruction

One of feminism's greatest weapons in the war on binary oppositions is *deconstruction*. Contemporary critics quite disagree on the proper usage of this term; whether it should be seen as a form of method, critique, analysis, reading, writing, wordplay or putting words under erasure (Leitch, 2001: 1815; Tyson, 2006: 249). Deconstruction is, however, almost always associated with Derrida, and with exposing the hegemonic structures of binary oppositions, whether this is done through critique, analysis or wordplay (Cameron, 1992: 84).

Derrida also finds language to be a cultural construct. He states:

> "Since language, which Saussure says is a classification, has not fallen from the sky, its differences have been produced, are produced effects, but they are effects which do not find their cause in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general, a being that is somewhere present, thereby eluding the play of *différance*." (Derrida, 1972: 404)

Derrida finds Saussure's notion of language being comprised by differences to be even more ambiguous than Saussure stated. Derrida elaborates: "In a language, in the *system* of language, there are only differences." (404), and this system of differences is always fluid, meaning that not only is the relationship between the signifier and the signified not causal, it is not permanent either (404). The fluidity of language makes it almost impossible to get behind or beyond language, since human beings, like language, are cultural constructs. Moreover, since language is only a culturally constructed categorization and communication system, it will never have any 'real' meaning (419). Derrida does therefore not try to go beyond language; his agenda is to be found *within* language. Since he does not find much credibility in the notion of binary oppositions, he focuses on revealing the endogenous differences of the opposite poles. The focus thus shifts from a difference between masculinity and femininity, for instance, to differences within either masculinity or femininity (Ruthven, 1991: 57). Revealing endogenous differences of binary oppositions

exhibits their contradictory nature, and Derrida's deconstruction is thus a way of showing how binary oppositions deconstruct themselves (Tyson, 1982: 265).

Derrida is also interested in the implications this has for writing. For if people's thoughts are governed by language so is their writing. Writing, and therefore also the writer, cannot escape the structures of language. Derrida says:

> "[…] the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system." (Derrida, 1967: 1825)

A critical reading must thus focus on how the binary oppositions thematically structure the text, and thereby show that the text deconstructs itself. The only meaning in a text is to be found in its ambiguity and in contradictory readings, for the ideology of the text exists within this system of differences. Derrida claims: "[…] il n'y a pas de hors-text […]" (1825), often translated as 'there is nothing outside the text,' or 'there is no outside-text.' This claim is not as radical as it sounds, for what Derrida means by it is that the inside of a text is symptomatic of its outside. By investigating what is inside the text, one can expose the outside structures that formed the inside, similar to how an examination of the differences inside the binary oppositions revealed the fallacy of the structures outside.

Gender Construction

As explained, this chapter will focus on the theories of gender construction and performativity employed in this paper. It may seem as a reversal of matters to go from deconstruction to construction, but this choice has simply been made because the theories about to be described are best viewed in the context of how gender is structured as binary oppositions.

The constructionist theories began as a critique of essentialism, claiming that gender was far from the essential quality which it was believed to be earlier. In the previous section it was described how different cultures recognize different roles for males and females, but how these roles may vary from culture to culture. The fluidity of gender undermines the idea of a fixed nature; if no agreement on the proper roles of men and women can be found, perhaps such roles does not exist. But the fact that gender does not 'exist' does not make it less real, for around the age of four and five most boys and girls do indeed start developing different gendered behaviors (Figes, 1970: 10). That different gender roles evidently exist in society has prompted ideas such as de Beauvoir's: that gender is an act of becoming. De Beauvoir finds this to be the reason why gender roles vary over time and space:

> "Evidently it is not reality that dictates to society or to individuals their choice between the two opposed basic categories; in every period, in each case, society and the individual decide in accordance with their needs." (de Beauvoir, 1949: 1408)

Herein lies a very problematic issue for de Beauvoir, for if society is patriarchal so are its needs. Gender roles function as powerful ideological behavioral regulators and through them individuals become what society needs them to be. It is through the patriarchal placements of gender that men have been exalted and women have been denied subjectivity: "To pose Woman is to pose the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being." (1407). In a patriarchal society the male is the universal subject, and the female is thus positioned as his Other, leaving her to be that which he is not (1410). Once more, gender is constructed as a binary opposition. For de Beauvoir, femininity is nothing more than a myth, which males have created in order to justify female objectification and subjugation (1408).

Butler takes her departure in de Beauvoir, but for her the matter is not one of men 'creating' women, but of society 'creating' women *and* men. For, as she says about the famous de Beauvoir-quote: "There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female." (Butler, 1990: 11)[1]. Butler breaks with the binary opposition; for her, gender is not the simple matter of masculinity and femininity. Butler even goes beyond the poststructuralist notion of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' for she does not find these categories to be inclusive of everything around and between them. Butler does not deny that gender is culturally constructed, but in Butler's theory, gender is not only a matter of construction, but of performativity as well: "The mark of gender appears to 'qualify' bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, 'is it a boy or a girl?' is answered." (151). From infancy, every individual is forced into the reiterate practice of an assumed gender which is aligned with human identity. Butler sees gender as a becoming, but this act is far from static, it is an ongoing process without a beginning or an end, and gender is thus an iterative fiction, a discourse practiced through specific bodily acts (45; 152).

Cultural theory often makes a distinction between sex and gender, where sex is seen as the biologically determined body and gender as socially and culturally determined. But Butler views sex and sexuality in the same light as gender: "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all." (10). Since the biological constituters of 'sex' can be changed or ignored, and since sex obviously does not limit gender in the sex/gender distinction, Butler does not view sex as reducible to a binary opposition of men/women, but as a category that is itself gendered and therefore indistinguishable from gender (152-153).

Butler points to the fact that both gender and sex are naturalized in society as the conventional dichotomy, she states: "The naturalization of both heterosexuality and masculine sexual agency are discursive constructions nowhere accounted for but everywhere assumed […]." (58). The hegemonic rules of gender seek to discipline individuals, forcing upon them an assumed gender and sexuality compatible with the

[1] This view is similar to Judith Halberstam's more contemporary notion of 'female masculinity,' for as Halberstam claims femaleness does not necessarily produce femininity, and maleness does not necessarily produce masculinity.

binary opposition of gender and compulsory heterosexuality. Butler draws on examples of drag in order to prove the fallacy of these ideological constructs: "I would suggest as well that drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity." (186). Some feminists have found drag and cross-dressing to be an imitation of gender which mocks women and the feminine identity, but Butler finds that it ridicules the notion of a true gender identity. According to Butler, drag is not a parody of the original, but a parody of the idea of an original in showing how all gendered acts are performances (188).

For Butler, the problematic issue resides not in the fact that gender is performed, but that the audience to this performance, as well as its actors, believe that what they are witnessing is reality (192). Since the performers do not question its nature, gender is continually interpreted and performed as the ideologically biased structures of 'masculinity' and 'femininity.' But, as Cameron argues: "[…] our socially-constructed selves are our *real* selves: culture is not a thin veneer applied to some pre-existent consciousness and capable of being stripped away." (Cameron, 1992: 219). As de Beauvoir states, it is the actions of a person that constitute his or her identity (de Beauvoir, 1949: 1410). Even though gender is a fiction, a cultural construct, a becoming and a performance, in other words artificial through and through, it is 'real' for those who believe in and perform it.

Even though the structures of gender do indeed seem inescapable, for example in how the cultural norms of femininity and sexuality have a history of being forced upon individuals through discipline and punishment, Butler argues how singular cases proves that escape, and thus change, is possible. Gender is not a simple case of men and women, if it were she would not be able to talk about drag, cross-dressing, transsexuals, homosexuals, and butch/femme identities, which is why she argues that gender should be seen as more than two single categories (Butler, 1990: 9).

Fe/Male Language

This paper has already briefly touched upon the idea that language, like gender, is a cultural construct. This chapter will now elaborate on this issue, focusing on how gender is regulated by and represented in language.

In the previous chapter it was described how Butler finds gender identity to be discursively produced. For Butler, as well as many others interested in gender construction, language is one of the main constitutors of identity. In structuralism language is a product of human thought, but in a shift to poststructuralism language has come to be seen as that which facilitates human thought, which is why poststructuralism finds everything, including identity, to be discursive (Haas and Haas, 1996: 58). Learning language means learning to interpret the world in a certain manner, biased by culture and social assumptions (Gibbon, 1999: 26). The poststructural answer to the question of whether we speak language or if language speaks us is that it is indeed language that is doing most of the speaking. This paper, however, finds that the relationship between culture and identity is necessarily reciprocal. In order for language to speak us we must speak language. If our identity and culture are constituted by the hegemonic power relations of language, then culture must have influenced language in order for language to reflect patriarchal ideology. But the claim that language speaks us does of course also entail a belief in a gradual reciprocity, which is important in the realization that language is somewhat beyond individual control.

Butler further explains: "Moreover, neither grammar nor style are politically neutral. Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself." (Butler, 1990: xix). In order to be part of and communicate within society, one must conform to language. But language is far from neutral. As Luce Irigaray explains: "As animal endowed with language, as rational animal, man has always represented the only possible subject of discourse, the only possible subject. And *his* language appears to be the universal itself." (Irigaray, 1985: 227). For Irigaray, as for many others, the English language is patriarchal and thus male-dominated, offering only a male perspective and a male point of view. Cameron goes even further and states that the totality of language is directly sexist and misogynistic: "All words embody sexism because their meaning and usage is fixed by men from an antifeminist perspective." (Cameron, 1992: 104). Cameron

clearly moves inside the logic of binary oppositions, for everything that is male is apparently anti-feminist. But what about the words she herself employs, does not such a word as 'sexism' criticize and bring attention to these hegemonic power relations in language? But what Cameron does is stress the point about the preferential generic masculine found throughout language. Since language has been in the hands of patriarchy much longer than under the scrutiny of feminist linguists, language reflects an ideologically biased and therefore distorted reality: "It is the business of language to represent reality, so to the extent that it is stuck in a vanished world where woman's place was in the home, and so on, language is misleading us and failing to do its job." (103). Language is outdated for Cameron, but society clings to the old conventions out of habit, so sexist language is not necessarily used with a sexist intent. But even though sexist language is not intentional it remains a patriarchal regulator of thought and expression (129).

As long as language remains influenced by patriarchal ideology there is need of a feminist critique of language. The fight for equality has involved many different battles for feminists throughout time, of which a battle against words may not seem the most important, but as Cameron argues: "Clearly feminists do not consider language a side-issue or a luxury, but an essential part of the struggle for liberation." (1). Many linguists see language as our 'ground of being,' that which forms and enables all other thought, which is why it is of highest importance for many feminists.

For Cameron the bias in language has two main effects on the discursive production of gender. On the one hand, since men and women are taught different ways of utilizing language, male and female subjects 'speak' language differently (70). On the other hand, if it is true that language speaks us, and that we do not speak language, Cameron argues that the inherent patriarchal values make language 'speak' male and female subjects differently (14). Many theorists describe a 'women's language' which is, in juxtaposition to 'men's language,' more simple-minded, irrational, emotional, gossipy, chatty, trivial, uncertain, and marked by language features such as tags, hesitations, intensifiers and qualifiers (Key, 1975: 15; Cameron, 1992: 73; Lanser, 1992: 10; Eagleton, 1996: 288). Cameron describes how women are encouraged to follow these subordinate patterns of speech from early childhood, so they, through language, can prepare themselves for their subordinate place in society. If 'women's language' is deprived of authority, women will find it difficult to

obtain authoritative status in society (Cameron, 1992: 70). If women fail to live up to the communicative regulations laid out for them they will be branded 'unfeminine.' Cameron explains: "Adult women will have the unappealing choice between rejecting women's language and so becoming 'less than a woman', or embracing it and thus acquiescing in their inferiority - becoming 'less than a person'." (70). This paradox has left many feminists wondering whether women have a place within language at all, as Irigaray states: "The female has not yet created her language, her word, her style." (Irigaray, 1985: 4). For Cameron, the implication of this is that language fails to encode the 'female' experience (Cameron, 1992: 131).

K. K. Ruthven agrees that women might be alienated from language, but he also proposes that men may feel foreign from it as well: "If men are so much at ease in language, why do male writers complain so often about compositional agonies and writer's block?" (Ruthven, 1991: 61). The dichotomy of male and female language proves strictly regulatory of male behavior as well, if men trespass into the realm of 'women's language' they are ridiculed and not seen as properly masculine (Key, 1975: 55). Roger Horrocks mentions an interesting example on how sexist language is used to punish males who do not live up to the masculine standard in sports: 'you play like a bunch of girls' (Horrocks, 1995: 18). What has escaped Horrocks' attention here is that this use of sexist language is demeaning toward both men and women. To say that language fails to encode 'female' or 'male' experience is to buy into the essentialist notion of gender. The linguistic representations of gender fail to portray reality because what we know to be 'masculine' and 'feminine' is discursively produced.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Within the field of feminist linguistics we find Feminist CDA. This linguistic critique functions as a bridge between the stylistic and thematic levels of this study, for it concerns itself with some of the linguistic matters mentioned in this chapter, but approaches these issues through discourse, whether social or literary. CDA focuses on how hegemonic power systems structure discourse, and Feminist CDA thus focuses on how patriarchal power structures pervade discourse. By revealing and deconstructing these hegemonic power structures, Feminist CDA works towards a non-sexist language and an indiscriminating social order (Lazar, 2005: 5). Even though Feminist CDA is generally

viewed as a social science it offers much to literary analysis, for it concerns itself with issues such as lexical choices, focalization points and transitivity choices, which is what this chapter will look into in the following.

One of the best known feminist critiques of lexical choices is the matter of words that are used to describe the body. In society in general, and especially for females, words used to describe the female body are taboo. They often show a negative and insulting quality in both use and etymology. In general, language is more hostile towards women than men, for example are words meant to insult women much greater in numbers than those available to insult men (Cameron, 1992: 107), and it has already been stated in the beginning of this section that otherwise neutral words can take on negative connotations by association with the feminine. The English language contains various other lexical features that are either exclusive of or degrading towards women. One of the most common is that of pronoun-use. In discourse one often finds what is referred to as the generic masculine, where ‘he’ or ‘man’ are used to represent the entire human species (102). Cameron explains how this problem can easily be avoided by using for example ‘he or she,’ ‘her or his,’ singular ‘they,’ or by reconstructing the sentence, but generic masculine is still the most frequent use (117).

In literature the generic masculine is also found in the mainly male focalization point (Wareing, 1994: 129). Shan Wareing says: "The importance of the concept of focalization is that it slants the emotive and ideological content of a text, and represents the experience of the protagonist partially." (131). A male focalization point thus offers an identification with a male viewpoint, normalizing the male characters’ subject position while representing the female characters as passive, or as mere objects for male speculation (131). The female characters are thus represented as they are viewed by the male characters, as anatomical elements:

> "The stylistic patterns which are most frequently used in the representation of a female protagonist create her as an object, and not the originator, of design, and view her through the eyes of a male observer, fragmenting her body for his speculation." (136)

These same gender positions are found, in most literature, when one looks into the transitivity choices of a text.

The concept of transitivity was inaugurated by Michael Alexander Kirkwood

Halliday in the late 1960s, and was soon employed by Feminist CDA which was itself a new school at the time. The study of transitivity focuses on the representations of actions in a text, in other words, who does what to whom or what (119). Wareing argues that in texts which feature both male and female characters, the actions are normally done *by* men *to* women. The actions carried out by the male characters are authoritative and assertive, leaving them in control of the actions, whereas female characters are more often the agents of mental actions, and thereby left physically passive (122). Even novels that feature a female protagonist position her as a passive heroine and supply her with a male hero to carry out any actions necessary (136). Ruthven points to the fact that not only are the female characters cast as passive, but they are usually only present in the function of their relationship to the male characters. Not only does this representation ignore the full identity of the female characters thereby denying them subjectivity, but the relationships to men in which they are seen are often of an exploitative or even abusive nature (Ruthven, 1991: 72-73). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf contemplates the state of literature if male characters were only represented in their relationships to female characters. She concludes: "[…] literature would be incredibly impoverished, as indeed literature is impoverished beyond our counting by the doors that have been shut upon women." (Woolf, 1929: 83). But no matter how deeply rooted the literary tradition of the passive female character is, or how integrated the gender representations in language are, whenever one opens one's mouth to speak, or sits down to write, one does have a choice in how to use language and the representations of gender found within language (Gibbon, 1999: 32).

Fe/Male Writing

How language speaks gender, and how genders speak language, have affected theories on writing as well. This chapter will mainly focus on how Gilbert and Gubar view this issue and its implications on literary production.

This paper's introduction described how gender entered literature when women began to write, or, that the first women writers raised awareness about gender amongst literary critics. Because being a writer was not a proper occupation for women at the time of the novel's inception, writing was seen as an exclusively male quality. This prejudice made Gilbert and Gubar raise the question: "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 3). The pen was considered a tool only to be used by men, and its metaphorical gender was thus male. The analogy between literary creativity or production and active male sexuality makes Gilbert and Gubar view the pen to be more than a figurative phallus (4).

The women who did take up writing were therefore often considered insane by their surroundings. But when Gilbert and Gubar write about 'the madwoman in the attic,' they are referring to the writer's own mental stability. For Gilbert and Gubar all female writing, regardless of time and space, share a common theme of 'disease' on a variety of levels. The thematic disease functions as a representation of the female author's own feelings about her writing. Gilbert and Gubar state:

> "[…] a life of feminine submission, of 'contemplative purity,' is a life of silence, a life that has no pen and no story, while a life of female rebellion, of 'significant action,' is a life that must be silenced, a life whose monstrous pen tells a terrible story." (36)

Not only is a life of oppression a gruesome tale to tell, but telling it is here all the more gruesome. This hidden but 'uncontrollable' madness that Gilbert and Gubar detect in female writing stems from what they, in a wordplay with Harold Bloom's concept of the artist's 'anxiety of influence,' call 'anxiety of authorship' (49). The first female writers had no 'female' tradition to lean against and could only try to conform to the already established 'male' literary tradition. The anxiety thus originates in a feeling of alienation, and a fear of not complying with the standard of their male precursors.

But this theme of madness is not only to be found on the writers' behalf, there is a long tradition of madwomen among their literary characters as well. Many female writers

created their female characters in terms of doubles, where one represents the angel society urges her to be and the other the monster she fears she is (77). Gilbert and Gubar state: "It is debilitating to be *any* woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters." (53). According to Gilbert and Gubar the female writer can only know herself in terms of the double bind of angel and monster because these are the pre-established images of her male predecessors (17).

Writing Inside the Body

So far, women's writing is marked by anxiety, anger and madness; features expressing the maladjustment of the writer in the literary field. But why should this be seen as a uniquely female experience? Surely, many male writers must have felt themselves misplaced in relation to the literary current of their contemporaries as well as precursors. Gilbert and Gubar state about the male writers of their own time: "The son of many fathers, today's male writers feel hopelessly belated; the daughter of too few mothers, today's female writer feels that she is helping to create a viable tradition which is at last definitively emerging." (50). Obviously male writers encounter difficulties in their writing as well.

However, for Jacqueline Howard the reason behind the female alienation from literature is to be found in women's alienation from language: "Language must always fail women, leaving them split between their experiences and the difficulties of articulating them. And in this position, one analogous to mutedness, silence, absence, and madness, woman's writing can be marked by some form of textual disruption or subversion." (Howard, 1994: 54). The male universal subject found in language governs literary authority as well, so because women have no place from which to speak, and no language in which to speak, her writing will necessarily be disruptive or subversive of the norms. For Ellen Moers, the main reason for gender differentiation in literature resides not in language but in gender role socialization:

> "Being women, women writers have women's bodies, which affect their senses and their imagery. They are raised as girls, and thus have a special perception of the cultural imprinting of childhood. They are assigned roles in the family and courtship, they are given or denied access to education and employment, they are regulated by laws of property and political representation which, absolutely in the past, partially today, differentiate women from men." (Moers, 1963: xi)

Whatever the reason, many theorists firmly believe that the experiences of men and women are so uniquely different that they will necessarily produce different literary traditions. Up until now, the focus has lain on the stylistic differentiation between male and female writing, on the thematic level Moers' opinion on the matter seems less essentialist. Moers draws on the female experience of childbirth in her example:

> "What in fact has the experience of giving birth to do with women's literature? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relatively few important women writers bore children; most of them, in England and America, were spinsters and virgins. […] the subject of birth was first brought to literature in realistic form by the male novelists, from Tolstoy and Zola to William Carlos Williams." (92)

Through science, knowledge, and not least socialization with their fellow human beings, women, men have gained access to what seems a solely female experience. Ruthven argues:

> "[…] it was possible for certain male writers to reconstruct themselves temporarily as women for the purposes of certain female characters so untrammeled by contemporary conventional representations of womanhood that women readers even nowadays are amazed that men should have had such insights into what it means to live as a woman in a male-dominated society." (Ruthven, 1991: 12)

However, Mary Ritchie Key claims that a history of female subordination has left women without the same opportunities to gain insight into male experiences. Because women have for long been confined to the domestic sphere and denied access to education and the public realm, their writing is limited to their own experiences (Key, 1975: 123). This does not, of course, explain all the female writers who let their heroines go on adventures across the globe visiting places they would never themselves see, nor does it explain the male characters present in female writing. And many female writers clearly tried to escape the four walls of their experience in the very act of writing, denying the role demanded of them. If a female author intends to bestow on her work a more universal appeal, she must ignore female experience. To quote Woolf more elaborately than in the introduction: "[…] it is fatal for any one who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly." (Woolf, 1929: 104). Woolf does indeed believe that the experiences of men and women differ greatly, but these differences must be set aside by an aspiring author. The author must, in some sense, write

outside his or her body.

Often criticized for not creating realistic male characters, women writers have not been praised for writing outside their own experiences (Key, 1975: 119). Key poses the question: “How can writers put words in the mouth of a person of the opposite sex?” (124-125). Probably with no more difficulty than that of putting words into the mouth of another person of one’s own sex. Key’s question presupposes an essential female and male quality, which the opposite sex cannot identify with. If one recognizes that women are also different from other women, and not only different from men, then which sex one writes about should not be of any major consequence. Gilles Deleuze sees writing in the same manner as de Beauvoir sees gender, as an act of becoming. He claims: “Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible.” (Deleuze, 1998: 1). If a male writer writes about a man, he has to ‘become’ this man, as well as he has to ‘become’ a woman if this was the sex of his chosen character. Even though Deleuze’s opinion on male and female writing is far from neutral, he moreover states: “Even when it is a woman who is becoming, she has to become-woman, and this becoming has nothing to do with a state she could claim as her own.” (1). If one denies essentialism then there should be no reason for not writing about a different gender than the one the writer has learned to perform.

Horror

The function of this chapter is to combine the issues of the previous chapters with theory on horror. But before looking into the male and female horror writer, and the gendered representations in their writings, the chapter will touch upon some of the main features of contemporary and American horror.

Many of the features found in contemporary horror have persisted since the genre's inception, but a deeper look into the genre's thematic reveals that much has changed since the Gothic novel had its first heyday around the time of the French Revolution (1789-99). Some of the most prominent points of development are to be found in the representations of the family unit, gender roles, and the relationship between the self and the body. All three points of development express a dissolving of the bourgeois-patriarchal universal subject.

In contemporary horror, American horror in particular, the family is no longer a safe haven, but the site from which horror springs. Both parental relations and the institution of marriage are revealed as sources of physical and psychological violence (Jancovich, 1992: 85). The family and the heterosexual marriage function as upholders of a patriarchal social order, an order which horror narratives often strive to transgress (Heiland, 2004: 3). Contemporary horror similarly disrupts patriarchal social order in its representation of gender roles. The myth of the passive heroine is almost entirely discontinued and replaced by tales of self-assertive, independent, sexually liberated, and active heroines (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996: 5-6). The male characters have undergone severe transformations as well. What we generally see in contemporary horror is a partial deconstruction of the binary opposition in gender. The roles of hero and heroine, and victim, are blended and reversed, leaving male characters in possession of traits that normally belong to the feminine side of the dichotomy, and vice versa (Horrocks, 1995: 11). The male characters are bestowed with a greater sensibility, their bodies often become eroticized or objectified, and more frequently they can be found in the position of the victim, a position conventionally reserved for the female characters (88; 170).

The constant invention of new bodies and gendered identities and a constant literal, as well as intellectual, dissection of the body have made many critics label horror a body genre (Leffler, 2000: 55). The genre almost shows an obsession with the body and how it

relates to identity and gender (Badley, 1996: 8). According to Linda Badley this obsession is a symptom of how the body is losing its status as a sign of identity. Our body and gender no longer govern our identity, instead we manipulate and transform our body and gender in order to express our identity. The body has thus both lost and gained importance as sign of the self. For Fred Botting this dissolving of the human subject is an expression of a postmodern alienation from and fragmentation of the self:

> "[…] the world is fictional in its broadest sense, an effect of narratives, identifications, fantasies and desires that no longer bow to the grand narrative dominated by the reality principle." (Botting, 1996: 170)

Everything is discursive and constructed, even our bodies and identities, and the world around us.

The Monstrous Body

The transformation of the male and female character positions expresses the discursive construction of gendered identity, but the fears and anxiety of the fragmented self are best seen in the character of the monster. Whether this character is represented as human, supernatural or extraterrestrial, its development throughout history depicts an increasing fear of the self. But since the late 1980s the supernatural elements are left out more and more often, and the boundaries between monster and human are blurred (Morrison, 1996: 23). Once again we see a disruption of patriarchal society, for in horror narratives of earlier generations the monster was alien from society and posed a threat against its normal order (Cettl, 2003: 7). In contemporary horror the monster is a product of that very order, showing the monstrous placement of marginal subjects within the patriarchal hierarchy. The contemporary monster is a boundary creature on various levels. It questions the previous distinction between monster and protagonist (Leffler, 2000: 162). And even in its human form the monster's body transgresses the boundaries of gender as binary oppositions (Pinedo, 2001: 58). If one takes an essentialist stand on gender, then it will often be problematic to detect whether the monster is gendered male or female, for its body frequently crosses the boundaries between these categories.

The vampire is one of these androgynous creatures. The male heterosexual vampire of John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) has been replaced by ambiguous creatures crossing

the boundaries of both gender and sexuality (Morrison, 1996: 22; Horrocks, 1995: 89). Even though the bodies of vampires often appear male, their nature unifies them with what is generally viewed as 'female' elements such as darkness, the moon, and blood. And the Apollonian sun is the most destructive force known to the vampire (Badley, 1996: 130). Their genital sexuality is replaced by an oral sexuality, shown in the sucking and sharing of blood, leaving their bodies almost entirely androgynous and thus in a sense universal (McGinley, 1996: 87). Furthermore, the vampire finds its victims, and thus sexual experiences, amongst men as well as women, thereby combining a homo- and heterosexual eroticism (Badley, 1996: 113).

The American Nightmare

Many of the developments the genre has undergone were initiated when American writers adapted the horror narrative. Writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne soon inaugurated their own tradition of horror, the American Gothic (Magistrale and Morrison, 1996: 1).

One of the most obvious distinctions between British and American Gothic lies in their representations of the past. The British preoccupation with the past often goes back several generations, for it is the ancestral past that haunts the present. In American horror, the hidden secrets that will unravel the mysteries of the narrative are often to be found in the protagonist's own past. This should not be understood as a refusal to deal with history, but as a way of dealing with the contemporary horrors of for example sexism, racism, war, terrorism and pollution that show how the American dream is really based on a nightmare (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1987: 9). Since the American horror narrative does not have a share in the medieval history of Gothic castles with mystic and hidden rooms and dark dungeons, the horror is brought closer to home: "The house, not the castle, becomes the site of trauma; its terror deriving from the familiar inmates instead of some external threat […]." (Lloyd-Smith, 2004: 75). The exotic locations of the first horror narratives are no longer necessary since the new setting symbolizes the horror next door, or in one's own home.

The Gendered Genre

Not many theorists deny the claim that horror is a gendered issue, or that sexuality is 'part

of the horror,' as Horrocks states (Horrocks, 1995: 84). But whether is should be gendered male or female is an ongoing discussion.

Some find horror to be a male genre due to its gruesome and violent contents (Badley, 1995: 102). For this camp the themes of female sexual monstrosity, repression and oppression reflect a patriarchal fear of women and women's sexuality (Jancovich, 1992: 10). And the violence which is often directed against the female body is viewed to be a symbolic way in which to punish the sexually liberated female (Freeland, 2000: 162). When one views horror in this manner it reinforces and polices conventional gender roles. But the opposing camp focuses on the exact same themes, only reversing their symbolic function. The concern with violence against women and female sexuality informs feminism in this view, depicting the horrific victimized position of women under patriarchy (Heiland, 2004: 157; Howard, 1994: 29-30). The monstrous ways in which women are represented in horror, for example as victim or monster, are strongly associable with de Beauvoir's notion of female Otherness (Hogle, 2002: 10). And for Badley, horror narratives are the closest one can get to a feminist language, since it put words on female victimization and rage (Badley, 1995: 103).

In comparison to other genres horror has seen a great percentage of female readers and writers, a fact the latter camp also often draws upon in their arguments (Howard, 1994: 51). It is also this overwhelming female presence within the genre which made Moers coin the term 'Female Gothic' in 1963. According to her the Female Gothic is: "[…] the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic." (Moers, 1963: 90). However narrow this categorization might be, the term has been well established in studies on horror as well as gender (Howard, 1994: 57-58). Already in the introduction it was mentioned how what is now known as Male and Female Gothic have been blended and confused with the old categorization of terror and horror. But there is no such unity. Many men write terror, and many women write horror, especially in more modern times. In terms of binary oppositions, this equalization of men with horror and women with terror can easily be deconstructed by associations. Horror is the literal, graphical and thus the more 'physical' depiction of gruesome actions and entities, whereas terror is viewed as the more 'psychological' and intellectual approach to such a depiction (Radcliffe, 1802: 315). According to the structures of the binary opposition, then, horror should be seen as the 'physical' and thus 'female,' and terror as

‘psychological’, intellectual and therefore ‘male.’ Furthermore, contemporary horror is not solely concerned with the sexuality and proper gender roles of women, men are included in this concern as well. Horror and the gothic are about transgressions of all sorts, which include both male and female sexuality as well gender roles.

Some theorists, however, claim to have found exact differences between how women and men write horror which are differentiated from the reasons stated above. These differences include a fundamental theme of rape, expressed as a fear of rape in horror written by women, whereas horror written by men often contains depictions of actual rape (Norton, 2000: x). And, furthermore, a division between an external and internal enemy, where the first is found in horror literature by male authors, and the latter in horror written by women (Hoeveler, 1998: 8-10).

Seeing that the critics are divided into at least two camps on this issue of the gendered genre, is it not possible that the horror authors themselves similarly have different opinions about how gender and sexuality should be represented in their works? Some authors may write with a feminist message in mind while others write in order to debase this feminist ideology found in much horror literature. The focus of this paper will now turn to how the two writers Anne Rice and Stephen King represent their own as well as their character’s gendered identity, and how they do this through language and the horror medium.

ANALYSIS

Now that the theoretical background has been laid out the study can turn its focus to *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Gerald's Game*. The structure of the analysis is threefold. The focus will initially lie on what is said about gender roles at the thematic level of the novels, by investigating the represented gender and sexuality of the main characters. Secondly, the study will concentrate on how gender is represented on a stylistic plane, focusing on metafictional levels and language. Lastly a chapter will discuss how these findings on the thematic and stylistic planes relate to the gendered identity of the writer.

Thematic Representations

In *Gerald's Game* a female protagonist takes center stage. The way in which she introduces herself is a suitable starting point for an investigation of her character: "[…] Jessie Mahout Burlingame, wife of Gerald, sister of Maddy and Will, daughter of Tom and Sally, mother of no one […]." (King, 1992: 4-5). Jessie is far from a marginal character, as the plot of the novel is driven almost solely by her actions and memories, and other characters only enter the stage through her descriptions. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the novel she identifies herself in terms of her social relations, marking her own identity as nothing but absence. She is a wife, a sister, a daughter, and not a mother, all identities forged by her connections to other people; her own person is nowhere to be found in such a description. The physical ordeals and psychological regression and progression she must endure throughout the course of the novel mark her journey towards claiming an independent identity, or, in other words, a full subject position. Her horrors and sufferings are brought to her by her relationships to men, her father and husband in particular, and also the killer who stalks her. But her final victory depends on the relationships she shares with the women in her life, represented to the reader as the voices in her head, and not least her relationship to herself.

In the theoretical section it was mentioned that Ruthven and Woolf criticize the tradition of displaying female characters only in their relations to men. In *Gerald's Game* this tradition is reversed. Here, it is the male characters that are presented to the reader through their relationships to Jessie as father, husband, stalker, and lawyer/potential boyfriend. Female-female bonds are valued higher than male-female bonds, since the first

kind enables the positive actions of the novel, while the latter controls all negative actions. Male-male bonds are nonexistent in the novel and thus not considered.

In *The Tale of the Body Thief* the situation is much different. In this novel the protagonist is male, and so are the majority of the other central characters. The protagonist of this novel, Lestat de Lioncourt, is far from modest in his introduction of himself. The very first lines read: "*The Vampire Lestat here. I have a story to tell you. It's about something that happened to me*." (Rice, 1992: 1). The absence of Jessie's own identity in her description of herself is replaced by a presence in the very first line: The Vampire Lestat *here*. Following the proclamation of his presence Lestat reveals that the story is all about him. The novel does not, however, align itself completely with the old tradition, for even though the female characters are marginal in juxtaposition to the male character, they do influence the actions throughout the narrative. Lestat engages himself in three different relationships with female characters that hold importance for this study. These include his relationship to Gretchen, who affects him in a positive manner; the relationship to Claudia, who affects his actions negatively; and the brief relationship to the girl he rapes, whom he has a negative effect on. These male-female relationships in Rice's novel are thus of a more reciprocal nature than those found in King's, because Lestat both affects and are affected by the female characters, whereas Jessie's actions are affected by the male characters but she does not influence them in return.

All these different relationships detectable between the characters within both novels will provide the basic structure for this chapter. Firstly the focus will lie on the male-female bonds found in both novels. Hereafter follows an investigation of the male-male bonds in *The Tale of the Body Thief.* And lastly the chapter will look at the female-female bonds found only in *Gerald's Game*.

Male-Female Bonds in *Gerald's Game*

Studying the relationships found between men and women in *Gerald's Game* reveals that King is firmly rooted in the tradition of American horror. In this novel the site of trauma and horror is the home, or more specifically, the summer house by the lake. As in many of King's other novels, the horrors Jessie encounters are accompanied by the entry of sexuality into her life through the relationships to the men of highest importance to her, her father and her husband (Casebeer, 1996: 53). The narrative action centers on the

similarities of two traumatic experiences: the present situation between Jessie and her husband, Gerald, as well as her stalker situated in Jessie and Gerald's summer house; and the past situation, presented through memories, between Jessie and her father in her family's summer house. Choosing the home as the site of horror was a way for American horror to criticize the problems found inside the family and marriage. But King sends his characters to their summer house, the place one goes to escape the problems of everyday life. This can be read as King's attempt to show how 'the horror of it all' lies not only in American life, but the dream behind it as well. The summer house in the fall moreover carries with it connotations of solitude and escape from society, a place one can escape the chaos of the modern society, be reunited with nature and be in harmony with oneself. For Jessie the problems start in the summer house in her childhood, and going back as an adult resuscitates the repressed horrors, but it is similarly this return which eventually sets her free.

Jessie's identity position in her marriage is, similar to its placement in her own introduction, marked by absence. This is exemplified in the beginning of the novel: "She had ceased to be here when the keys made their small, steely clicks in the locks of the handcuffs." (King, 1992: 5). For Gerald, women are sexual objects:

> "The men's adventure magazines of Gerald's teenage years had been replaced by a pile of skin magazines […] magazines in which women wearing pearls and nothing else knelt on bearskin rugs while men […] took them from behind. In the backs of these magazines […] were ads for inflatable women which were supposed to be anatomically correct – a bizarre concept if Jessie had ever encountered one." (5)

When Gerald has secured her to the bedposts with handcuffs and thereby limited her opportunity for movement, Jessie realizes that for Gerald she could just as well be inflatable and made out of plastic:

> "She thought of those air-filled dollies now, their pink skins, lineless cartoon bodies, and featureless faces, with a kind of revelatory amazement. It wasn't horror – not quite – but an intense light flashed on inside her, and the landscape it disclosed was certainly more frightening than this stupid game […]." (5)

Jessie has been married for 17 years to a man who does not want to listen to what she has to say and would refer it if she did not say anything at all. For when she attempts to be set

free he says: “You are just so goddamned *inconsistent*, so goddamned *sarcastic*. I love you, Jess, but I hate that goddam *lip* on you. I always have.” (12). Trying to reason with a man who hates hearing her speak does not turn out well for Jessie for Gerald creates his own reality consistent with what he has been taught about women: “*Some women can say they want it, but some need a man to* tell *them they want it.*” (142). Gerald is so firm in his belief in women as sexual objects that he sees it as his responsibility to teach Jessie a lesson for trying to escape this objectification: “’I’ll teach *you*, me proud beauty,’ he said.” (7).

The beginning of the novel marks the beginning of Jessie’s revelation. What is revealed of her relationship to Gerald is not how they first fell in love or why she married him, but how Gerald made her quit her teaching job which she valued very highly, and that they sleep in separate rooms due to his drinking and snoring (53; 127). When Gerald smiles at her even though she is desperately trying to get free of the handcuffs she recognizes her true feelings toward her husband: “She didn’t just dislike that dumb grin, she realized; she despised it.” (4). And it is not just the smile she despises: “*Are you really sure you want to have* any *sex with this man?*” (4). After she kills him she does feel regret and remembers some of the good times she shared with him (34; 86), but when the situation of her incarceration dawns for her it is Gerald she blames: “*What I think is this: Gerald died before he ever had a chance to climb into the saddle, but he fucked me good and proper just the same*.” (52).

The murder of Gerald, even though accidental, indicates her first step toward liberation, psychological as well as sexual. This point is emphasized by the discursive imagery of Jessie’s red footprint on her husband’s skin (22). It is the first time she stands up for herself and her own needs. She admits to have been curious about the ‘game’ when they initiated it. But as the game becomes more and more serious and Gerald becomes more and more violent she starts to fear the game and the nightmares that follow it. “*I guess maybe I’m just tired of pretending*, she thought, and this idea led to another: she might have her own sexual agenda, and if she did, this business with the handcuffs was definitely not on it.” (8). Jessie does not have any interest in this game, nevertheless she continued to play in order to please Gerald and in order to live up to her own image of a loving wife: “[…] she had gone on with the game longer than she had really wanted to because she had liked that hot little gleam in Gerald’s eyes. It made her feel young and

pretty and desirable." (6). For Jessie, a woman's duty is to be desirable and satisfy her husband's sexual needs, regardless of how much humiliation that entails: "Because this wasn't *their* game; this game was all his. She had gone on playing it simply because Gerald wanted her to." (9).When Jessie decides to end the game, the prospect of raping his wife and raising the level of violence in the game excites Gerald even more and Jessie's disgust towards him quickly turns into fear and a decision to end not just the game but their marriage (10; 16; 17). Jessie kills Gerald before he rapes her, but she is violated just the same: "Then his hand – his soft, short-fingered hand, its flesh as pink as that which capped his penis – reached out and grasped her breast, and something inside her suddenly popped like an overstrained tendon." (7). This association between the hand and the penis, and later the association between saliva and sperm (19), indicates a rape that is not literal but symbolic.

Gerald is, however, not the main antagonist of the novel. King provides him with a reason for his actions: culture has taught him from childhood to view women as sexual objects; he is therefore only partly to blame. The real antagonist is the patriarch, upholder of patriarchal order, embodied in her father.

> "*Who was the one, Jessie? Who taught you that you were ugly and worthless? Who picked out Gerald Burlingame as your soulmate and Prince Charming* […]*? Who decided he wasn't only what you needed but exactly what you deserved?*" (42)

It is the repressed memory of her father's sexual abuse that has controlled her gendered and sexual identity, and she cannot escape this identity until she faces these childhood horrors and connects Gerald's abuse to her father's: "Except it isn't Tom Mahout standing there; it's Gerald. He's naked. The penis of an Attorney pokes out at her from below the soft pink bowl of his belly. He has a set of Kreig police handcuffs in each hand." (142). Her father abused her before she fully understood what this meant, and this first sexual experience is how she learns about sexual relations. And Jessie thus realizes that it is no coincidence that she has an abusive husband. For Gerald is like her father. Similar to Gerald, Tom Mahout believes that a woman's job is to please men sexually. An example of this is seen in how Tom blames his wife's lack of affection towards him for the sexual abuse of their daughter: "She hasn't been very … well, very affectionate lately, and that

was most of the problem today. A man has … certain needs. You'll understand that somed–" **(**225). Gerald represents the horrors in the heterosexual marriage but Tom brings this representation to a higher scale, he represents the horrors in the family. In the patriarchal family, woman is oppressed both as wife, mother and daughter. And for Jessie, Tom represents everything that has been done to her:

> "'Who did this to you, Jessie?' Jimmy asked. I tried to answer him but couldn't get any words out. Which is probably just as well, considering what I was trying to say. I think it was 'My father.'" (368)

That it is Tom who is the main antagonist is also evident in how Jessie's horrors continue long after she kills Gerald. Killing Gerald did initiate her liberation, but it also brought with it a whole new wave of horrors. When she is near dehydration and starvation and starts questioning her sanity, a man with a chainsaw and a bag made out of human bones and skin appears in the corner: "It was a (*monster it's a monster a boogeymonster come to eat me up*) man, not a monster but a *man*, standing there motionlessly and watching her […]." (155). But the relationship between Jessie and her stalker, Raymond, is a bit more complicated than the usual case of stalker and victim, for he is an interesting figure regarding his gendered position. Gerald and Tom are figures of the patriarch, the misogynist, who objectifies and abuses women and/or children. Raymond stares at Jessie, using his active male gaze as a tool with which to objectify her: "It watched her. Only that and nothing more." (159). But his gender and sexuality are nevertheless questionable. He wears women's underwear, and uses dead male bodies instead of women for his sex games (397-400). He displays a perverse sexuality which positions him outside the binary oppositions of male and female. He is thus, like Jessie, Other to the patriarchal order. Another similarity is found in how they see each other. The first time Jessie sees Raymond standing in the corner she is not sure whether he is real or a figment of her imagination (153). And when she confronts him at his trial he exclaims: "I don't think you're *anyone*! […] You're only made of moonlight!" (411). Jessie nevertheless projects all her fear into Raymond: "It would come for her. When it was dark it would come. The dead cowboy, the outsider, the specter of love." (276). She also projects into him the anger she feel towards Gerald and her father, convincing herself that Raymond's goal is to rape her. The figurative element of a man in the corner symbolizes the threat she finds men to be. And all

the abusive and oppressive encounters she has had with men spill over into a categorization of men in general:

> "She had read that there were even sexual free spirits who hanged themselves in their closets and then beat off as the blood-supply to their brains slowly decreased to nothing. Such news only served to increase her belief that men were not so much gifted with penises as cursed with them." (30)

As Gerald thought that all women were sex objects, Jessie comes to believe that all men treat women as sex objects:

> "That slit was the object of every man's lust – the heterosexual ones, at least – but it was also frequently an object of their inexplicable scorn, distrust, and hate. You didn't hear that dark anger in all their jokes, but it was present in enough of them, and in some it was right out front, raw as a sore: *What's a woman? A life-support system for a cunt.*" (40-41)

Jessie does find herself interested in a man once again after the ordeal is over. But that does not change her general view on men:

> "Brandon thinks I did a damned good job, a damned *brave* job … for a woman. In fact, I think […] he had sort of decided I'd behaved the way he would have in a similar situation … if, that is, he'd had to deal with a high fever at the same time he was trying to deal with everything else. I have an idea that's how most men believe most women think: like lawyers with malaria. It would certainly explain a lot of their behavior, wouldn't it?" (381)

Her continuing anger towards men is caused by the prejudices men meet her with. She is angry at men for judging her by her gender but she does exactly that as well: "When you look at it that way, there's no difference at all between Brandon Milheron in his natty three-piece suits and old Constable Teagarden in his satchel-seat bluejeans and red firehouse suspenders. Men still think the same things about us they have always thought, Ruth – I'm sure of it." (380).

Gerald's Game is rich on imagery. But King paints a picture for the reader, far more vivid than any other in the novel, which seems to have escaped the critics' attention. Linda Badley states about the novel: "[…] Jessie's bondage represents the sexual slavery of women." (Badley, 1996: 66). This is a very obvious symbol, but still important. Her escape

from the handcuffs represents freedom, not only literally but figuratively as well; freedom from the shackles of patriarchy. But there is another, very well-known, symbol displayed right before the reader throughout the novel which King continuously returns to in his descriptions: "She watched him from where she lay on the bed, her arms raised and splayed out […]." (King, 1992: 1-2); "Her wrists had been secured to the mahogany bed-posts with two sets of handcuffs. The chains gave each hand about six inches' worth of movement. Not much." (2); "[…] lying here with her arms raised above her head and nothing on but a pair of bikini panties […]." (3). This picture of Jessie on the bed, with her arms spread out and only wearing bikini pants, in addition to the heavy bleeding from the wounds on her hand and wrist: "The red was still sinking through the layers of paper; soon she would be able to take off the pad and wring blood out of it like hot red water." (321), seem to be allusions to Jessie as a symbol of Jesus on the cross. Jessie bears the sin of all men, embodied in the father, and is to be sacrificed on the cross patriarchy has secured her to. There is also a striking similarity between the outline of her body on the bed and the face of Jesus imprinted on Veronica's veil:

> "[…] the mattress where she had lain for so many hours, the mattress where her outline still lay, a sunken, sweaty shape pressed into the pink quilting, its upper half partially traced in blood. Looking at that shape made Jessie feel angry and afraid. Looking at it made her feel crazy." (305)

Just as Catholics have found the myth of Veronica's veil to symbolize belief in Jesus, the outline of her own body on the bed supports Jessie's belief in her own horrific reality.

Male-Female Bonds in *The Tale of the Body Thief*

There is a similar, although far more direct, image of female sacrifice in *The Tale of the Body Thief*:

> "Through the gentle downpour, I heard her praying, her low rapid whispers, and then through the open entrance, I saw her kneeling before the altar, the reddening fire of a candle flickering beyond her, as she held her arms outstretched in the form of a cross […]. And then I saw the blood dripping from her outstretched hands. I saw it on the floor, flowing in rivulets from her feet." (Rice, 1992: 499)

Gretchen must not, like Jessie, bear the sin of all men, only the sins of Lestat. She is inflicted with the stigmata when she realizes that what he has told her about his being is true. Gretchen has devoted her life to God, and therefore connects Lestat's vampiric identity with evil. That she has betrayed her vow of chastity for being with a vampire inflicts her with sin as well. The evil nature of the vampire is, however, questioned in the same chapter:

> "Lord God, was I weeping? Were my emotions now as volatile as my power? And she would see the blood in streaks on my face and it would scare her even more. I could not bear the look in her eyes." (496)

Lestat is brought to tears when he realizes he has destroyed Gretchen's faith in innocence. But the tears he shed are, like those of Jesus, made out of blood. The blood tears align the vampires with Christ and saints, as Badley states: "They are beasts who also have the healing power of bleeding statues." (Badley, 1996: 121). Lestat's relationship to his own identity in terms of good and evil is highly ambiguous. Lestat says: "[…] I thought that as a symbol of evil I'd do some good." (Rice, 1992: 309). And Lestat does attempt using his evil nature for doing good. Lestat is the 'sin-eater,' he tries to prey solely on evil human beings. By devouring their lives he takes their sins unto himself, and cries blood like the saints.

It is not just in their relation to good and evil that the vampires are ambiguous creatures. When sexuality and gender are concerned they become almost androgynous. When they become vampires they undergo a shift from genital to oral sexuality. Drinking a victim's blood becomes more than a symbolic intercourse. Lestat's first victim in the novel is exemplary of this claim: "I'd gone back to her and I'd lain with her, and I'd taken her […]" (33). And to Lestat the killing *is* a form of love-making: "We were sinking down together on the carpet, lovers in a patch of nubby faded flowers." (32). The importance of a removal of a genital sexuality lies in the fact that gender no longer holds importance in this matter. And as will be touched upon later on in this chapter, Lestat does find his lovers amongst men as well as women. Gretchen, too, displays this sexual and gendered androgyny. She has denied sexuality all together and the words Lestat uses to describe her border on androgyny as well:

> "I thought again how like the Grecian women of Picasso she was, large and fair. Her eyebrows were dark brown and her eyes light – almost pale green – which gave her face a look of dedication and innocence. She was not young, this woman, and that, too, enhanced her beauty very much for me." (320-321)

According to Badley this sexual androgyny represents a 'polymorphously perverse' sexuality. She also points to the fact that vampires procreate through their oral sexuality as well, emphasizing how the drinking of blood is a sexual activity (Badley, 1996: 123). But according to Badley, the removal of the genital sexuality represents an innocent and childish pre-genital sexuality as well (123). But seeing that the vampires undergo a shift from genital to oral sexuality, this paper would find it more proper to label their sexuality as 'post-genital.' The genital sexuality is removed not because the vampires have not come to terms with their sexuality, but because the gendered structuring of sexuality as either hetero- homo- or bi-sexual is superfluous. For this paper, the only case of pre-genital sexuality detectable in this novel is to be found in the case of the child-vampire Claudia. Lestat made Claudia a vampire before her genital sexuality was fully developed, thus freezing her forever in a childish form that will never become a fully female figure. The fact that her mind does grow even though her body does not, shows Claudia as a representation of the way in which patriarchy has infantilized females and female sexuality. Lestat, her father, has denied her a female sexuality. But she revolts against her oppression, both in terms of her oral sexuality and the attempted murder of Lestat: "Claudia, who had forced her long knife through my chest. 'I'll put you in your coffin forever, Father.'" (Rice, 1992: 58). And Lestat is indeed, in his relationship to Claudia, the patriarch: "[…] *this exquisite and delicate creature that I had fashioned with my vampiric blood* […] *to be my friend, my pupil, my love, my muse, my fellow hunter. And yes, my daughter.*" (4). He is her father, her lover, and her rapist: "Snatching me from mortal hands like two grim monsters in a nightmare fairy tale, you idle, blind parents!" (7). Lestat's relationship to Claudia is indeed polymorphously perverse, showing the horrors of both the heterosexual relationship and the family.

In *The Tale of the Body Thief* Lestat's sexuality is reversed once more. For with the acquiring of a human body he is again bestowed with genital sexuality. But the desires of this newfound sexuality are combined with his predatory vampiric sexuality, resulting in a rape the very first night in the human body. In the passage of the rape the predatory nature of the vampire is projected onto male sexuality:

> "I saw her again at the moment of my climax, fighting me, and I realized it was utterly inconceivable to her that I could have enjoyed the struggle, enjoyed her rage and her protests, enjoyed conquering her. But in a paltry and common way, I think I had." (266)

And Lestat realizes that it is not his vampiric instincts that governed the rape, rather the male instincts of the new body: "[…] the desire to kill her was almost overpowering. Some fierce purely male instinct in me wanted to claim her now simply because I had claimed her in another way before." (560). Being a human male, for Lestat, is similar to being a vampire: it is to be the predator:

> "I tried to remember what it had been like two hundred years ago when I was the terror of the village girls. Seems some farmer was always at the castle gates, cursing me and swinging his fist at me and telling me that if his daughter was with child by me, I'd have to do something about it! It had all seemed such wonderful fun at the time. And the girls, oh the lovely girls." (263)

The rape itself seems solely governed by heterosexual eroticism: "My eyes drifted down to the two tiny nipples, protruding so enticingly through the black silk of the dress." (255-256); "I pushed my hand down, felt the hairy opening, and then the juicy wet crack, which seemed deliciously small." (265). But both Lestat and the young woman display androgyny. When Lestat says that he is from Venus he reverses the usual concept of women being from Venus and men being from Mars (255). And Lestat describes the young woman's body as almost boyish:

> "All that I could conclude about her was that she was foolishly thin, as women tend to be in these times, and all the bones of her ribs showed through the milky skin, and that her breasts were almost freakishly small with tiny delicate nipples, and her hips weren't there." (261-262)

Later on, he also describes her voice as almost sexless (269). That the men he chooses as his lovers/victims display androgyny as well will be looked into in the following.

Male-Male Bonds

Many critics have labeled Rice's vampires genderless (Ingebretsen, 1996: 98), as the author herself did in a 1993 interview in *Playboy*. Rice says:

> "If you make them [vampires] absolutely straight or gay, you limit the material. They can be either one. They have a polymorphous sexuality. They see everything as beautiful." (Hoppenstand and Browne, 1996: 9)

For Rice, the vampires are neither male nor female, but since this paper has already structured the character analysis according to the rules of the binary opposition, how the vampires can be seen as either 'feminine' or homosexual will now be in focus. Badley states: "Vampire psychosexuality is overwhelmingly feminine and potentially lesbian. So in spite of Rice's alienation from the mother, the Chronicles privilege the feminine." (Badley, 1996: 129). Lestat became the patriarch in his relations to women, but the homoerotic relations he has with men places him as Other to the patriarchal society. As a vampire he not only preys upon women: "My strangler was almost ready to move from the realm of his spasmodic and fragmentary visions into the land of literal death. Ah, time to dress for the man of my dreams." (Rice, 1992: 16). As with his female victims, the act of killing is here sexual and romantic in nature; his victim is 'the man of his dreams.' But the bonds he shares with his male companions are far more intense and intimate than those he shares with his victims.

Lestat's position as the predator and the active subject represents him as traditionally 'masculine.' The heterosexual prejudice that finds homosexual relationships to include a 'masculine' and 'feminine' partner has affected the manner in which Lestat's relationships to men are seen by several critics. Edward J. Ingebretsen, for example, claims that: "Louis, Lestat's companion, in short, is gendered female." (Ingebretsen, 1996: 96). The patriarchal dichotomy of gender positions Louis as female *due* to his relationship to the male Lestat. And Louis is indeed, in the novel, displayed as the beautiful object of Lestat's contemplations: "His beauty has always maddened me. I think I idealize him in my mind when I'm not with him; but then when I see him again I'm overcome." (Rice, 1992: 148). In their relationship Louis controls the domestic sphere and Lestat the public world: "Louis had returned to take up residence with me, and was busy searching for a desk very like the one which had once stood in the parlor over a hundred years before." (573). When Lestat is out on his adventures, Louis stays at home and takes care of their 'nesting.' But one could also argue that it is Lestat that is 'feminine' in the relationship. They are together Claudia's 'parents,' Louis took her human life and Lestat made her a vampire. Since Lestat is the one who 'gives birth' to this new vampire, he could be seen as her mother, while Louis would

come to be her father. And there are relationships in this day and age wherein the mother goes out into the public sphere while the father stays at home. Using outdated structures of gender roles in the heterosexual family is not a sufficient argument for the gendering of Louis as female. Rice herself wanted him to transcend gender, and Lestat is clearly drawn towards both genders: "'I have always loved both men and women.'" (398).

The homoeroticism is more clearly displayed in Lestat's relationship to David. David is much more than Louis gendered male in the traditional sense. Through his job he holds great authority both in the public and the spiritual realm. He is, like Lestat, the predator although the victims he hunts are animals. And also similar to Lestat he takes male lovers: "I developed a passion, shall we say, for this boy, Carlos, the very first week. I was absolutely swept away; all we did was drink and make love for days and nights on end in my suite in the Palace Hotel." (90). The homoeroticism of their relationship is also expressed through the physical likeness between David and Lestat in the human body: "[…] then I realized I was staring directly into his eyes – that for the first time we were the same height." (388). This likeness between them is further enhanced when the human body Lestat resides in is handed over to David. This sharing of the same body marks the final physical union between them when Lestat 'rapes' David and turns him into a vampire. Up until this point their relationship is marked by absence: "Our embrace was long and warm and silent, and I fought furiously not to give way to tears. Only very seldom in all this time had I ever actually touched this being." (389). The image of their suites at the *Queen Elizabeth 2*, functions as an expression of their relationship: "But the rooms were quite large, and obviously luxurious, and opened to each other with a connecting door to make one grand suite. This door was now closed." (447). The absence that guides their relationship and the obstacles they both must overcome before they can be united is similar to the classic love story. It is David who firmly governs this distance between them: "'I know,' he whispered. 'Believe me, I know. But you must be clever now. Keep it locked inside.'" (463). Even though this is a display of David's authority in the relationship it is only withheld as long as they are both in human bodies and thereby equal. Lestat's sexual desires for David are, when he is mortal, fashioned by a fantasy of reciprocal pleasure: "Ah, now I might have him in a sense without having him – in the mere human tangling with his limbs, in whatever combination of intimate gestures and delectable little embraces

he might like. And I might like." (396). Lestat longs for David and the way in which he treats him resembles courtship: "Then I did call my mortal agent, rousing him from bed and instructing him to arrange David's ticket, limousine, suite, and whatever else he should need. There should be cash waiting for David; there should be flowers; and chilled champagne." (128). But once Lestat is back in his vampire body he deprives David of all authority: "[…] and his heart pounding beneath it with rebellion, with recrimination, you betray me, you betray me, you take me against my will […]." (585). Even though this incident is clearly described as rape, it contains some of the most erotic parts of the novel, inducing the scene with a romanticism that was not found in the previous rape. As in the passage:

> "I lifted him and carried him up the beach and back into the room. I kissed the tiny wounds, licking at them and sucking them with my lips, and then letting my teeth go in again. A spasm passed through him, a little cry escaped his lips." (588)

These reversals of authority and shifting of gendered positions of Lestat according to whom he is seen in relation to show the fluidity of identity and gender. For what can be concluded about these vampires and their human companions is that their bodies is not marked by one particular gender. Being in biologically male bodies, Lestat, Louis and David nonetheless display 'feminine' traits. All have clean-shaven faces and manicured fingernails. Their beauty is described to be as delicate as that traditionally associated with femininity, like in this description of Louis: "He was pale as always, an artful glimmer in the dark." (565). And all are, due to their dazzling beauty, subjected to the gaze. This ambiguous gender position they all display is meant to connote their androgyny.

The final relationship between Lestat and a male character that this paper will investigate is that between him and the body thief, Raglan James. This relationship completely deconstructs the division between an internal and external enemy. In effect of being an individual character Raglan is an external enemy, but when he steals Lestat's body and identity he becomes, to some extent, an internal enemy. The concept of him as external enemy is also very diffuse due to the fact that the reader is only presented to him when he occupies other people's bodies: "That isn't his body! That's why he can't use its musculature Good God, that man is in someone else's body." (130). Lestat and Raglan

have not only shared one body, as Lestat and David have, but two bodies, none of which belong to Raglan. This could easily be read as two characters displaying different aspects of the same personality, as antagonists and protagonists often do in this genre. But Lestat carries within himself enough different personalities to be in need of such an antagonist.

Lestat's time as an actor at *Commedia dell'arte* in Paris when he was mortal and his career as a rock star exhibit the theatricalism of his identity:

> "*I have a keen and merciless conscience. I could have been a nice guy. Maybe at times I am. But always, I've been a man of action* […]. *And action is what you will get here, as soon as I get through this introduction.*" (2)

Lestat is an actor, and he acts out whatever identity he finds fitting. It is not a case of split personality, as it is with Jessie in King's novel, but of putting on different masks. He creates the reality or personality that he finds suitable at the moment. For example, Lestat says: "She seemed fascinated, and of course I was playacting somewhat. I was pretending to be gentle, which I am not." (259). His actions are governed by choice, not some essential identity within. There is no core to be found in Lestat's identity, save for the performer. The first identity he performs is, however, forged for him by his family and his contemporary society; the identity as the 'wolf killer.' This identity teaches him about his own identity formation; that he can be anyone he wants. He says about the incident that created him as the wolf killer:

> "I should have died that day. Not even the best of hunters should be able to slay a pack of wolves. And maybe that was the cosmic error. I'd been meant to go, if indeed there is any such continuity, and in overreaching, had caught the devil's eye. 'Wolf killer.' The vampire Magnus had said it so lovingly, as he had carried me to his lair." (59)

By going beyond that which he is 'destined' to, Lestat realizes that there are no limits to identity formation. If Lestat had denied this identity as wolf killer he would never have caught the attention of Magnus who turned him into a vampire. The vampiric body he gains by embracing his position as wolf killer transcends gender and human potential in general through its supernatural powers, emphasizing his release from an essential identity.

Lestat occupies himself with dressing up his body and taking care of hair, nails and make-up, proving the surface of his body to be as malleable as its inside:

> "I covered up my blue eyes, as always, with black glasses, lest their radiance mesmerize and entrance at random – a real nuisance – and over my delicate white hands, with their telltale glassy fingernails, I drew the usual pair of soft gray leather gloves. Ah, a bit of oily brown camouflage for the skin. I smoothed the lotion over my cheekbones, over the bit of neck and chest that was bare." (17)

And when he goes out into the sun in the Gobi desert he finds that he can alter the surface of his body more or less permanently (66-68). Lestat changes his body in order to pass as a human. This does not only epitomize the construction of a human identity, it also represents a deconstruction of Lestat's vampiric identity as the monster. For Lestat is in constant struggle with these different personas he portrays:

> "And that, further, I was behaving like a perfect coward, and not the dark hero whom I claimed to be. Now, understand, I don't really believe I *am* a hero to the world. But I long ago decided that I must live as if I were a hero […]." (242-243)

Lestat chooses the identity of hero in order to escape the identity of monster, which is an expression of a search, not for a 'true' identity, but an identity he can be at peace with.

Lestat's fluid identity formation deconstructs the binary opposition of good and evil. David says: "God doesn't know everything. The Devil is a good friend of his. And the whole thing is an experiment." (102). Good and evil intertwine in the logic of the narrative as well as in Lestat's identity, and Lestat cannot be at ease with his own identity until he realizes that these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Even the predatory aspects of his identity, the raping and killing, do not construct him as fully evil. Lestat is bestowed with a morality not found in the character of the body thief for instance, and it is therefore with Lestat the reader places his or her sympathy. As McGinley states: "Byron gave the vampire its spirit, Stoker its character, and Rice its conscience." (McGinley, 1996: 89). But this moral awareness places Lestat in a dilemma: "I couldn't kill little children anymore, could I? Or feast on waterfront harlots, telling myself it's all perfectly fine, for they have poisoned their share of flatboatmen. My conscience is killing me, isn't it?" (Rice, 1992: 22). He nevertheless continually finds himself in positions that betray the heroic image he tries to create. Lestat finds that this evil identity is forged for him by society, represented in the novel in religion and in his surroundings. He says:

> "'Claudia, listen to me, I didn't begin it, I didn't make the world! It was always there, this evil. It was in the shadows, and it caught me, and it made me part of it, and I did what I felt I must. Don't laugh at me, please, don't turn your head away. I didn't make evil! I didn't make myself!'" (319)

Lestat believes that his vampiric identity must necessarily construct him as evil, because this nature means that he must feed on human beings and thus being, in their eyes, a monster. Becoming a human therefore gains saint-like status for Lestat, but, as Louis expounds the matter: "Human body! Lestat, you can't become human by simply taking over a human body! You weren't human when you were alive! You were born a monster, and you know it." (150). And when Lestat finds that the predatory urges remain the same in a human body he reaches the same conclusion: "In fact, to say that I felt entirely monstrous as a human is to hit the perfect truth." (311).

This shifting between identities and bodies suggests a fully postmodern self. The Cartesian subject is deconstructed, for what Lestat portrays is a mind, a 'cogito,' independent from the body and thus existence. This is evident in the fact that the 'being' Lestat is free to put on different bodies:

> "Oh, what a glorious feeling, as if I could go anywhere in an instant! As if I had no need of the body, and my link to it had been a deception from the moment of birth. […] 'Down, down into that body!' I said aloud, but there was no voice audible, and then without words I forced myself to plummet and merge with that new flesh, that physical form." (231).

These experiences bring Lestat to the conclusion that the self and the body are two different entities: "It suited him; it suited the body; I suppose it suited them both." (576). This division between body and self are not meant to be seen as analogous to the religious concept of a division between body and soul. What it suggests is that the self is not determined by the body, by biologic determinism or by essentialism.

That this matter concerns the gendered body as well becomes evident several times, for example when Raglan says: "I've had everything the human body has to offer – youth, beauty, resilience. I've even been in the body of a woman, you know. And by the way, I don't recommend that at all." (177-178). The erotic passages of the book seem solely concerned with hetero- and homosexuality. But the novel's thematic seems to be focused on trans-sexuality as well and about being trapped in the gendered body. This is

exemplified in one of the short stories Raglan brings Lestat: "Well, in the Lovecraft piece, Asenath, this diabolical woman, switches bodies with her husband. She runs about the town using his male body, while he is stuck at home in her body, miserable and confused." (129). The novel suggests that since the body does not govern identity it cannot govern gender either; the self is totally performative.

Lestat does, however, feel a special connection with his vampire body: "My profile. My eyes. My body dressed in formal evening black […]. My hair, loose and full and golden in the dim light. My Body!" (451). But what this shows is that Lestat can finally be at peace with himself when he realizes that his identity is fluid. The second part of the novel is called 'Once Out of Nature,' for it is only because of his experiences with shifting bodies that he realizes that his identity is fluid. And it is this realization that makes him accept himself: "I was Lestat, drifting between hell and heaven, and content to be so – *perhaps for the first time*." (485). He can finally claim his body and his identity because he has learned that they do not control him but are under his control: "I'm the vampire Lestat. That's my body. We're going to get it back for me." (458). Lestat is 'a man of action,' and when he actively decides to be the vampire Lestat, that is who he becomes. In the beginning of the tale his identity is almost like Jessie's marked by absence: "*And I was in a dark frame of mind when these dreams began, a vagabond vampire roaming the earth, sometimes so covered with dust that no one took the slightest notice of me*." (1). But in the ending he has successfully managed to construct an identity that pleases him; an identity that is neither good nor evil. The ending of the novel reads:

> "Yes, say something – for the love of heaven and the love of Claudia – to darken it and show it for what it is! Dear God, to lance it and show the horror at the core. But I could not. What more *is* there to say, really? The tale is told." (606-607)

Several critics find that Lestat is not able to show what is at the core because there is no core (Haas and Haas, 1996: 64-65). Lestat's identity is, like the tale he tells, solely consistent of action. Identity is a 'becoming,' not governed by an essential core within, and not determined by the body without. Lestat is not a hero, not a monster; he is neither heterosexual, nor homosexual; he is the postmodern performer.

Female-Female Bonds

In King's novel, the protagonist's identity is also shown in terms of a 'becoming.' In the beginning of the novel Jessie sees herself as the sexual object Tom and Gerald have taught her she was, but the struggle for survival teaches her to consciously alter this reality. This development detectable in Jessie is not only depicted in the narrative action. Badley states: "King's characters are not introspective in the usual sense. They are postliterate schizophrenics whose inner space is laid graphically before us […]." (Badley, 1996: 25). In *Gerald's Game* there are many such examples. This chapter has already described how Jessie's psychical and physical entrapment and subsequent freedom were depicted in the images of the handcuffs and the bed. Another such graphic image which displays Jessie's development throughout the novel is the sun, or rather the eclipse. It was during the eclipse that she was first positioned as a sexual object, and the experience of her father's abuse becomes entangled in the memory of the eclipse: "[…] that whole day had been surreal and dreamlike. First the eclipse, and then her father –" (King, 1992: 191). The color scheme found in the opposition of darkness and light represents repression and remembrance respectively. When the memory is repressed her dreams and thoughts as well as the world around her are pervaded with darkness: "The room seemed to darken around her, as if the windows and the skylight had been replaced with panes of smoked glass." (20). This connection between the first traumatic episode in her life and her other problems are also evident in the fact that she anticipates the visits from her stalker at nightfall: "When it was dark it would come." (276). The darkness never fades away completely, but towards the ending of the novel Jessie no longer fears darkness and all that she associates with it: "It was starting to get dark. For the first time in a long time, this simple realization didn't fill her with terror." (416). Jessie eliminates this fear of the darkness in her life by shedding light on it; making the *unheimlich heimlich*.

Jessie finds the courage to overcome her fears and escape her incarceration through internal dialogues with the voices inside her head. The depiction of these various voices portrays the different aspects of Jessie's identity: "*I'm you, the Goodwife's you … we're* all *you, as a matter of fact.*" (91). Some of these voices are presented as familiar to Jessie, but after she kills her husband and takes that symbolical first step towards liberation, various new voices appear to epitomize this new and independent side of her.

The voice which Jessie is most familiar with is that of Goodwife Burlingame: "[…] Jessie's usual source of advice – the voice she had over the years come to think of as Goodwife Burlingame – was a wimp of the highest order." (19-20). The image of Goodwife is an image of the oppressed woman. Goodwife is the voice who tells Jessie to be a 'good wife' to her male oppressor, her husband:

> "*It's that stuff in his balls that's making him crazy, and you know it. It makes them all crazy. When he gets rid of it, you'll be able to talk to him again. You'll be able to deal with him. So don't make a fuss – just lie there and wait until he's got it out of his system.*" (19)

Goodwife is the aspect of Jessie that is brainwashed by patriarchy, the part of her that truly believes that a woman's job is to please men in every way possible. Goodwife is a personality Jessie has conjured up in order to convince herself that she deserves to be treated as a man's sexual object, thereby justifying her position in the abusive marriage:

> "*You couldn't just lie there and let him shoot his squirt, could you? Cosmo Girl Jessie Burlingame says 'No man chains me down.'* […] *Let's cut to the chase, dear: you murdered him. So maybe you deserve to be right here, handcuffed to this bed.*" (36)

Goodwife embodies the damages done to women by patriarchal culture. Not only does she advise Jessie to endure sexual oppression but encourages her to give in to several other forms of physical damage such as the female starvation rituals often found in patriarchal cultures:

> "Goody was the one who always insisted she had to lose five pounds. That voice wouldn't let up even if her ribs were showing. *Never mind your ribs!* It screamed in tones of self-righteous horror. *Look at your* tits*, old girl! And if they aren't enough to make you barf a keg, look at your* thighs*!*" (36)

Goodwife epitomizes what feminists have claimed to be one of the reasons why so many women have rejected feminism: that enduring oppression is much easier than fighting against it. For Jessie is aware of the damaging control of Goodwife but gives into it all the same:

> "She sometimes (well … maybe *often* would be closer to the truth) hated the Goodwife's voice; hated it and feared it. It was often foolish and flighty, she recognized that, but it was also so *strong*, so hard to say no to." (36)

Nevertheless, Goodwife is not the worst of the voices Jessie hears. The voice of Goodwife did indeed find that Jessie is the one to blame for her troubles, she does not, however, actively try to stop Jessie from getting free. But Jessie finds that there is another presence inside her: "[…] there was an enemy inside, a sad, bad bitch who liked her just the way she was – handcuffed, aching, thirsty, scared, and miserable – just fine. Who didn't want to see that condition alleviated in the slightest. Who would stoop to any dirty trick to see that it wasn't." (122). It has already been stated that Jessie's external enemy, the patriarch, is embodied in the figures of her husband, father and stalker. But this evil voice inside her takes the position of an internal enemy which is, similarly to the external enemy, influenced by patriarchy. For this evil presence does not want her to be liberated, figuratively or literally, from her shackles. This combination of enemies shows that female victimization is a product of both internal and external enemies; that sometimes women place themselves in victimized positions, or are victimized by other women. For later on in the novel, this evil presence becomes entangled with the voice of Jessie's mother Sally: "[…] there might be those – her mother, for instance – who would say that she had no right to complain; that she had in fact gotten about what she deserved." (169). The novel shows traces of Sally's awareness of the fact that something was wrong in Tom's relationship to Jessie: "*I swear to God, sometimes you behave as if she were your girlfriend instead of your daughter!*" (179). But she is depicted as more jealous of the attention her husband gives their daughter than concerned with the consequences of this 'attention.'

Jessie does also hear voices that help her. These include her previous therapist, Nora Callighan, and her previous friend Ruth Neary. Both are women Jessie excluded from her life because they tried to help her. And at the points in her life when she knew these two women, Jessie was not ready to be helped; she had not yet convinced herself that she deserved it. But when her life is threatened and she starts to rely on basic survival instincts, Jessie is ready to accept their help. With the newfound confidence of Ruth, Jessie is able to resist the powerful voice of Goodwife: "Good advice, and she supposed she would have followed it if not for the new presence inside her." (19-20). Jessie initially calls the voice the 'no-bullshit voice,' until she recognizes it as belonging to Ruth: "[…] the first woman

Jessie had ever known who absolutely refused to shave her legs and armpits […].”(27). Ruth is represented as the 70s feminist, who is sexually liberated and takes Jessie to a meeting in a women’s consciousness group. The voice of Ruth represents the feminist aspect of Jessie’s personality, the part that does not believe that the abuse she has experienced is justifiable:

> “*You wouldn’t tell me what good old Dad did to you, but I knew two things, Jessie: that he was your father, which was bad, and that you were ten-going-on-eleven, on the childhood rim of puberty … and that was worse.*” (121)

At first the voice of Ruth is comforting and supportive, but as it closes in on the repressed memory it becomes more and more aggressive: “*Also, can’t we dispense with at least a little of this melodrama? It’s not as if he hung you from the clothesline by the nipples and then set you on fire, you know.*” (140). But the voice of Ruth only attacks her in this manner in order to raise Jessie’s awareness of her situation. And Ruth’s aggressive approach does indeed assist Jessie’s resistance of the victimized position, for Ruth forces Jessie to go back into her repressed past and relive the day when she, almost like the vampires, were born into darkness.

Reliving the repressed memory of her abuse sends Jessie into psychological regression, which is represented as the voice of the little girl inside Jessie, her ‘inner child’: “It was the child’s voice again. Now it sounded shocked and frightened. It had no interest in logic, no patience for cans and can’ts.” (85). Jessie refers to this voice as Punkin, which is what her father called her when she was a child. In her mind Jessie sees Punkin in stocks which, like Jessie’s handcuffs, represent her enslavement. Remembering that which had been repressed sets Punkin free: “The girl looked lovely and deeply happy, which didn’t surprise Jessie at all. The girl had, after all, escaped *her* bonds; she was free.” (278). Setting her inner child free enables Jessie to free herself as well. That she releases her inner child marks her subsequent psychological progression.

Jessie’s name represents both how Gerald and her father’s abuse constitute her identity and her split personality. Her name is Jessie Mahout Burlingame, the first name is her own, the next her father’s and the latter Gerald’s; the three persons who govern her identity. In the end when she signs Ruth’s letter she only writes her own name, not her father’s or

Gerald's, as an indicator of her escape from the negative influence of these two men. Ridding her identity of these negative aspects means that she is no longer in need of a split personality: "For two years I heard those voices, Ruth, and when they stopped, I forgot them. Not a little at a time, but all at once." (403). Throughout the novel, whilst Jessie is in dialogue with the voices, she differentiates them from her own voice (89). But near the ending she learns to recognize all the different voices as the different aspects of her personality they are; she is no longer in need of conjuring up identities which are separate from her in order to embody these various sides of herself. Her self is now one, marked by one name only, Jessie.

Badley says about King's writing: "He literalizes the notion of the text as a body and the body as text." (Badley, 1996: 12). The examples of Jessie's name and her split personality mark the becoming of an identity; a becoming governed by gender and sexuality. But seeing Jessie's identity and body as a text shows another side to this becoming. About Jessie's split personality Badley states: "This psychosomatic event triggers her assumption of control over her body, a matter of getting outside of her skin, quite literally, of using her body as a tool even while staying in touch with its perceptions." (67). For Jessie to liberate herself from her psychological and physical bonds and thereby become a full subject, she must escape her body. Her identity problems are governed by the physical experiences of the body, and when she rises above her problems she rises above the flesh. This escape from the body and sexual abuse against the body is symbolized in how she endures the pain of cutting off the flesh of her hand. When she decides to cut herself the novel writes: "*Now I must be Samurai Lady*, she thought, and smiled." (King, 1992: 291). Besides the sword Samurais carry for combat, they additionally carry with them their small sword Wakizashi, which is only to be used by themselves against themselves in the suicide-ritual seppuku, more popularly known as hara-kiri. The way in which Jessie views herself as a samurai is indicative of how she escapes her body: she tries to look at it through a different perspective than her own thus removing herself from the situation. Moreover, in a ritualistic manner, she is about to commit suicide. For as it was described above, when she releases herself from the handcuffs she also releases herself from her identity as the victim; she 'kills' the old Jessie, all the various voices, in order to become the new Jessie.

The whole scene wherein she cuts herself is described in terms of alienation. For instance, when she picks up the glass she intends to cut herself with, she: "[…] looked at it as a gardener might look at some unexpected specimen she had found growing in among her beans or peas […]." (291). The event is not described as if experienced from within the body, but as if Jessie is nothing more than a spectator. Jessie is not inside the body, but outside looking down at it. Because she realizes her identity is separate from her body, she can construct a whole new self which is not, like her old self, controlled by the physical aspects of gender and sexuality, or by men: "She likes Brandon, she honestly does, but her days of doing things simply because it's a man doing the telling are over." (408-409). Her body is a text which now reads a new story; no longer one of victimization, but of survival and liberation.

Stylistic Representations

This chapter will deal with how the previous chapter's findings on the thematic planes of the novels relate to the novels' stylistics. It will initially focus on intertextuality and metafiction, looking at how the author's comment on their own writing, as well as on horror literature in general. Hereafter the chapter will continue on to the linguistic side of literary stylistics, dealing with how the stories are told and the language in which they are told.

Intertextuality

King begins his novel by quoting the ending of William Somerset Maugham's short story *Rain* (1921), a story wherein a woman is mistaken for a prostitute. King quotes:

> "*(Sadie) gathered herself together. No one could describe the scorn of her expression or the contemptuous hatred she put into her answer. 'You men! You filthy dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs! Pigs!*'"

This quote certainly sums up the temper of the story to come. And in the way Jessie's father and husband treat her, Jessie is associated with the prostitute; her profession becomes to please men sexually. This is the only case of a direct reference to another piece of literature to be found in *Gerald's Game*. But there are, however, other instances of literary references, only more indirect in fashion. For example how Jessie contemplates Gerald's genitals: "Then there was the strange case of Mr Happy." (14). This is obviously a reference to *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), by Robert Louis Stevenson. In Stevenson's novel, Mr Hyde is the dark side of Dr Jekyll, and comes to represent the dark side of man. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned how Jessie found men to be 'cursed' with penises, and here she associates Gerald's penis, Mr Happy, with Mr Hyde. Once again, men are represented as sexual predators, for it is their sexuality which is shown to be their dark and evil side.

These are, nevertheless, not the most common instances of intertextuality in *Gerald's Game*. Mark Jancovich states: "King is highly self-conscious about his use of consumer culture, and he is concerned to show the extent to which it shapes the consciousness of his characters." (Jancovich, 1992: 98). With this in mind this paper would like to state that in *Gerald's Game*, King uses consumer culture as his 'intertext.' King does not so much

comment on the literary tradition of horror as comment on contemporary culture. And his text is interwoven with the discourse of consumer culture. The clearest case is that of the pop song which, in the same manner as the eclipse, guides Jessie's memory of her father's abuse: "The bad song is on the radio, the stars are out at three o'clock in the afternoon, and this […] is how the big people goose each other." (King, 1992: 141). The song in question is *Can I Get a Witness* (1963) by Marvin Gaye. The words of the song: "'*I love too hard, my friends sometimes say* … […] *But I believe* […] *Yes I believe ... that a woman should be loved that way ...*'" (190), becomes oddly intertwined with the words: "*Some women can say they want it, but some need a man to* tell *them they want it.*" (142). The patriarchal assumption that men know, more than women, what women need is not only shown to be a horrific part of the protagonist's life, but part of reality as well, so pervasive in Western culture that it is found even in 'love' songs.

Consumer culture is, however, also shown to have positive influences on the protagonist. For Jessie's survival literally comes to depend on simple household commodities such as drinking glasses, straws, moisturizing cream, a box of Always maxi-pads and Red Cross tape. That King allows his female protagonist to be 'helped' by culture dissolves the condemnation of culture as wholly patriarchal. And women are thus shown to be part of culture, not just alienated from its ideological placement as male and patriarchal.

The cases of intertextuality found in *The Tale of the Body Thief* are to a higher degree concerned with literary discourse. First of all, by using the old myth of the vampire and other supernatural elements, the atmosphere in Rice's novel is more Gothic in feeling than it is in King's. But as several critics have noted, Rice blends the Gothic formula with mythical, historical and pornographic narratives, and in the process she blurs the boundaries of these genres (Haas and Haas, 2001: 184). Second of all, the novel refers to several other literary works. And these intertextual references are often employed as hints about what is to come, in some sense they govern the narrative. An evident example of this is found in the short stories Raglan gives to Lestat, *The Thing on the Doorstep* (1933) by H.P. Lovecraft and Robert Bloch's *Eyes of the Mummy* (1938). Both stories center on body switching, although in slightly different ways, and thus present this element into the novel. The fact that Lestat has to figure out what the stories' connections are to his own situation emphasizes this point even more. When Lestat says about Lovecraft's story: "Just

wonderfully clever, and of course Asenath isn't Asenath, as I recall, but her father, who has switched bodies with her." (Rice, 1992: 129), the reader is given a hint about how the body switching in this novel will come to entail more than two bodies as well.

Two other narratives also have great influence on the plot. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1808), and William Blake's *The Tyger* (1794). For Lestat, the story of Faust first seems important in his relationship to David: "'You must remember what I am,' I said. 'When you help me, you help the devil.' I made a little gesture to his copy of *Faust*, still lying on the table." (77). But it soon becomes evident that it is Lestat who is Faust, not David, even though Lestat is reluctant to contemplate this possibility: "I can't claim to have understood it, or why David was reading it. Indeed it frightened me that the reason might be obvious and perhaps I rejected the idea at once." (45). When Goethe wrote his version of Faust, he added a love story which was never before a part of the tale; the tragic story of Faust's love for and seduction of the girl Gretchen who is executed. The character Gretchen in Rice's story *is* Gretchen from Goethe's story. The relationships of Faust and Gretchen and Lestat and Gretchen are completely analogous, for Lestat's seduction of Gretchen leads to her sacrifice, her symbolic execution. Lestat never comes to this realization, since he focuses solely on the positive aspects of Goethe's version: "Nevertheless I rather loved it, especially the ending, where Faust went to heaven, of course. I don't think that happened in the older legends. Faust always went to hell." (46). This analogy between Lestat and Faust, suggests that Rice, in *The Tale of the Body Thief*, is offering her version of the tale of Faust, in which there is neither a heaven nor a hell for Faust in the end.

The Tyger by Blake seems to occupy Lestat's attention in a much higher degree, for he hears the first line of the poem over and over again in his head not sure where it is coming from: "Tyger, tyger burning bright. *Is that his voice whispering those words or is it mine?*" (7). This line viewed by itself manipulates the rhythm of the rhyme. The next line of the poem reads 'In the forest of the night,' the last word of the first line 'bright' rhymes with 'night.' But by only quoting the first line the structure of the rhyme seems amiss, one would want the line to read 'tyger, tyger burning brighter.' By only quoting the first line Rice signals that something is amiss in this story as well. Her subsequent altering of the line emphasizes this point: "*Tyger, tyger* … David in danger." (53). Throughout the novel Lestat dreams about David and the tiger, but not until the dream comes true does he realize

its message: “Think back David. My dream of the tiger. I was afraid for you. And now the menace of the dream will be fulfilled […]. I’m going to do it to you, David. I’m going to bring you to me.” (581). When David was young he killed a tiger in India, a symbol of the prime of his status as the predator. But in the end the tiger, embodied in Lestat, comes for him and makes him the victim.

Metafiction

The boundary between intertextuality and metafiction is hard to detect in *The Tale of the Body Thief,* for the intertextual references create the metafictional level. For example in the beginning of the novel when Lestat says:

> “*Remember, beginnings are always hard and most are artificial. It was the best of times and the worst of times – really? When! And all happy families are not alike; even Tolstoy must have realized that. I can’t get away with ‘In the beginning,’ or ‘They threw me off the hay truck at noon.’ Or I would do it. I always get away with whatever I can, believe me.*” (2)

These references to the famous beginnings of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) by Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877), the Old Testament, and James Cain’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), help constitute the world of the narrative as the real world. *The Tale of the Body Thief* and the other novels in Rice’s Vampire Chronicles are as real in the novel’s own narrative universe as in the real world. Lestat refers to these books as his autobiographies. “*If you read my autobiographical books,* The Vampire Lestat *and* the Queen of the Damned*, you know all about me, also.*” (4-5). This narrative form clearly disrupts the boundaries between reality and fiction. The narrative claims to be as real as the narratives that govern our society and culture, and our history: “*You know our history, for what it’s worth – and history is never worth too much* […].” (5). Rice plays with the postmodern notion of a discursive reality, both regarding the universe of the novel and the identity formation of the characters which inhabit this universe: “*This is a contemporary story. It’s a volume in the Vampire Chronicles, make no mistake. But it is the first really modern volume, for it accepts the horrifying absurdity of existence from the start* […].” (5).

The way in which Lestat takes the reader by the hand makes him appear as a real person telling a story to the reader, instead of being the mere character in a novel which he

really is. Whenever the novel reaches a turning point Lestat appears to guide the reader through. As here, near the ending:

> "Did you think the story was finished? That the fourth installment of the Vampire Chronicles had come to a close? […] Pray continue to Chapter Thirty-three to discover what happened next. Or you can quit now, if you like. You may come to wish that you had." (572)

Asking the reader to decide whether to continue or not, makes the reader an active part of the story. It establishes a relationship between the reader and Lestat that both disrupts and intensifies the reader's identification with Lestat. As in this example:

> "Of course the faithful and zealous readers of my books would spot me here now and then. The readers of Louis's memoir, come to find the flat where we had lived, would surely recognize this house. […] I should never feed upon those tender, innocent ones – even when they bare their throats at me and say, 'Lestat, right here!' (This has happened, reader, in Jackson Square, and more than once.)" (554-555)

First of all, this example geographically places Lestat in the real world, and not just roaming the streets of New Orleans or Miami this time, but at a specific address; thus telling the readers they can find him in reality and not just in the novel. Second of all, even though Lestat is the hero of the novel, his predatory nature does position him as a monster. But here he assures the readers that they will never become his victims. For Lestat is not intended to act antagonistically towards the reader. Lestat is indeed the monster, but he is the monster inside us all. Constructing him as a 'real' person separates him from the reader, but the construction of him as the misunderstood monster brings the reader closer to him.

The metafictional level in *The Tale of the Body Thief* almost takes the form of meta-metafiction. For the metafictional plane is not simply posited as a case of fiction about fiction, at times, it becomes metafiction about metafiction:

> "But Lord God, what if the vampire Lestat hadn't ever existed, what if he were merely the literary creation, the pure invention, of the man in whose body I now lived and breathed! What a beautiful idea!" (278)

Once more the metafictional plane disrupts the boundaries of fact and fiction. Lynda and Robert Haas state: "As Rice's narratives unfold, we are constantly invited to question

historical narratives and note how they change with cultures and with narrators." (Haas and Haas, 2001: 184). *The Tale of the Body Thief* is written as though Lestat was its author, and even though Anne Rice's name is on the cover the novel ends with Lestat's name combined with the time and place of the writing as in the ending of a letter: "Lestat de Lioncourt, New Orleans, 1991" (Rice, 1992: 607). The books that follow *The Tale of the Body Thief* in the *Vampire Chronicles* are written as the autobiographies of some of the other characters such as Pandora, Marius, Armand, Vittorio, etc. Once again, Rice is depicting the fluidity of a discursive reality; everything is subjective. As Lestat says to Louis about the manner in which Louis portrayed him in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976): "'Ah, that makes you out to be a perfect liar,' I said furiously. 'You described my weeping in your miserable memoir in a scene which we both know did not take place!'" (150-151).

Rice also uses this metafictional plane in her writing to guide the readers through her novel, telling them how to interpret and understand it. For instance, when David says: "Oh, it's so bloody typical of him! […] Everything is symbolic with this madman." (411). In order for Lestat and David to find Raglan they must understand his symbolism, just as the reader must understand Rice's symbolism if he or she is to find the meaning of the novel. An interesting example of how a small symbol can rise to high importance in the novel's thematic is Gretchen's gold cross. As a Christian symbol of Christ, the cross is most often applied as a weapon against vampires in literature about such creatures. But Lestat says when Gretchen turns to her gold cross for protection against him: "Her hands went to her lips and she drew back, the little chain falling loose so that I saw the gold cross in the candle's light. Oh, thank God, a cross not a locket!" (496). The cross is shunned by the old vampires who had no conscience, the primitive male vampire who only preyed on women. But Rice's vampire Lestat, whose identity and gender position varies greatly from these old stereotypes fears not the cross, but a locket with Claudia's face painted on it. Not only does Rice, in this example, comment on the horror genre and the gender roles it traditionally displays, she is also showing how the old symbols of for instance religion have lost their power. Good and evil are, like reality and identity, discursive.

Like Rice, King uses metafiction in his novel to heighten the awareness of the text's discursive nature: "*Also, you might have an idea while you're asleep, dear,* Goodwife

Burlingame said. *That always happens in books*." (King, 1992: 125). This example does indeed create the narrative's universe as similar to the real world, in which other books exist. But more importantly, it asks the reader to take a step back from the story and consider its relation to the body of horror. For what is it that usually happens to a heroine like Jessie in books? She would survive, yes, but not on her own terms. She would have been saved by some male hero entering the stage just when the situation had become too much to handle for the female protagonist alone. She would surely never have cut almost all the skin and flesh off her hand in order to escape. No. What happens to Jessie in this book is not what always happens in books. And herein lies the importance of this particular tale: that she does it all on her own. The horrors she encounters and her initial objectified position is, of course, caused by her antagonists, but her triumph is, like the wounds that set her free, self-inflicted. In the 1812 version of *Cinderella* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the stepmother's advice is to 'cut off your toe' and 'cut a piece off your heel.' Jessie reverses this advice, first of all by cutting flesh off her hand instead. And second of all, by doing it in order to release herself from the bonds of patriarchy, and not, like the evil stepsisters in *Cinderella* in order to mold herself to fit patriarchal measures. There is, of course, nothing directly oppressing in the concept of a prince on a white horse, but in modern tales, women no longer need the prince in order to survive.

Rice does indeed make more use of metafictional elements than King does, but even though the examples are fewer in number in King's novel, they are nevertheless effective. In conclusion, the metafictional levels in *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Gerald's Game* show that both writers are highly conscious about the genre and their own representations within it. Both employ metafiction in order to emphasize how they are breaking the rules of the horror narrative; as Lestat says about 'his' writing and his actions: "*Rules, rules, rules. They always wind up talking about rules. And I love to break the rules* […]." (Rice, 1992: 6).

Language Speaks Genders Differently

Investigating the language in which the novels are written shows that the authors are aware of gendered representations within this feature of their novels as well. This is most obvious in the direct speech of the characters. Both Rice and King manage to make their characters come to life through their speech. One can almost 'hear' Lestat's French accent when he

uses words such as ‘ma chérie’ and ‘Mon Dieu’ (209; 289). And as Badley claims: “One of King’s most widely recognized ‘tics’ is the use of italics to enhance typography, lending the text acoustical power (however paradoxically through a kind of iconographic signification).” (Badley, 1996: 33). And indeed one can almost ‘hear’ Jessie raise her voice when the typography shifts to italics: “I’m not joking. *I do not want to play this game!*” (King, 1992: 16). As Badley elaborates, italics are the means by which King produces ‘noise’ in the otherwise silent medium of literature (Badley, 1996: 37).

The various characters speak language differently, and the language they employ ‘speaks gender’ differently. There are for example, many instances of sexist language in *Gerald’s Game*, but its function within the narrative is strategically planned to embody the sexist attitudes of the ones that use it. As in this example: “[…] you ain’t really had pussy until you’ve had pussy that’s jumping around underneath you like a hen on a hot griddle.” (King, 1992: 18). The misogynist attitude of this sentence is not Jessie’s own, and it is not her who uses the word ‘pussy’ to refer to women. What this sentence describes is Jessie’s reflection on the damaging effect of sexist language such as this. Jessie does, however, use language that is sexist about men, especially when describing the male body. There are no threats and violence found in the language she uses, but it does, at times, seem to ridicule the male body:

> “Two or three years ago […] she had seen a movie called *The Belly of an Architect*. She thought, *Right. And now I’m looking at The Penis of an Attorney.* She had to bite the inside of her cheeks to keep from laughing.” (4)

Throughout the novel it is apparent that King is aware of many of the topics within language that have concerned feminists. All in all his style is far from sexist, but he does, from time to time, ‘slip’ back into the old conventions of a language structured in a patriarchal context. For example when Jessie contemplates Gerald’s psyche, where the use of the word ‘girlie’ refers to women’s inferiority: “In a deep part of his mind, the bullies were still giving Gerald wedgies in study-hall, still laughing at Gerald’s inability to do anything but girlie-pushups in phys ed […].” (8). Maybe the word ‘girlie’ is hard to avoid when describing this kind of pushups, but it would not be impossible for King to convey the same meaning of this sentence without referring to women as inferior. One could of course argue that this is a deliberate move, showing Jessie’s ignorance of her own worth in

the beginning of the novel. But it seems that King has worked somewhat hard on the opposite, namely creating a language for his protagonist that avoids sexist attitudes and even the generic masculine subject. Only one single time does Jessie use the word 'man' to describe the entire human species and that is in a context where it would be very hard to convey the same meaning if the word was altered into a more neutral version, for the word in question is 'No-man's-land' (100). Had King used alternate versions such as 'no-person's-land' or 'no-human's-land,' a great deal of his readers would possibly not have understood the meaning. But otherwise, when faced with linguistic choices such as this, King reverses the generic value completely by using 'woman' instead of 'man,' and instead of neutral versions. As in this example: "[…] her straw was one of the greatest inventions ever created by the mind of woman […]." (123). King also plays with the fact that most people when hearing the words 'doctor' and 'lawyer,' for instance, imagine the persons behind these titles to be male. But here, where Jessie threatens to leave Gerald, she does the opposite: "But if you continue screwing around and teasing me, I'll go straight to my sister's from here, find out who did her divorce, and call her." (16). Jessie is referring to a divorce attorney whom she does not know, but she refers to the person as a woman, not a man.

In *The Tale of the Body Thief* there are also differences to be found between the various characters' speech. The sensitive Louis, for example, speaks neutrally about human beings: "You made me a slayer of my brothers and my sisters." (Rice, 1992: 296). One could easily imagine a less neutral sentence going: 'you made me a slayer of my brothers.' But Louis does not, like Jessie, exclude anybody from his speech. However, the man Lestat and David buys their guns from says about the weapons: "Those are man-stoppers." (427). This is of course not meant to express that women are immune to these specific types of guns, only that considering women as well as men seems superfluous to this man. Lestat sways back and forth in his usage of a gendered universal subject. Sometimes his sentences contain expressions of the generic masculine: "That is – there was no such thing until the coming of man." (487). But further down the same page he continues: "Are these humans the best thing in this Savage Garden, warring as they have done so long upon one another?" (487). Here he now uses the neutral 'human' instead of the ideologically biased 'man.' That Lestat sometimes uses the male universal subject may not so much be an expression of how he sees the man as the universal subject as it is a reflection of how he

sees himself to be the universal subject: "*The eighteenth century, my century. Century of the rogue and the rational man. My most perfect time*." (306). For Lestat it is all about *him,* not his gender in general. Moreover, the novel is about a man, for whom men are naturally generic, just as women are naturally generic for the female protagonist in King's novel.

The word 'bitch' has long been both hated and feared by feminist linguists for several reasons. First of all, this word both embodies the patriarchal view of women's subordinate position in the gendered hierarchy, by placing them below men through an association with animals. Second of all, the word expresses how words can connote negativity simply by being associated with the female instead of the male; the word 'bitch' is negative not only because it refers to dogs, but because it refers to *female* dogs. Both King and Rice have employed this word in their novels, although quite differently. In Rice's novel it is Lestat who uses the word: "Who was this nervy young son of a bitch?" (36). What is interesting about how Rice employs the word is the fact that it is connected with 'son of.' The negativity of 'femininity' is here used in a demeaning manner towards a man; connecting him with the negativity by saying he is the son of a female dog. The expression would not be as offensive if it was replaced by 'male dog,' because masculinity is not bestowed with the same negativity in the English language. King uses the word by itself, but it is, as many of the other cases of sexist language in the novel, used to express Gerald's view on women: "Gerald's dopey grin of anticipation had been replaced by a look of sulky displeasure. *You broke my toy, you bitch*, that look said." (King, 1992: 9). Even though masculinity is neutral or positive in language, King uses language to describe masculinity as negative, like in this example: "[…] her days of doing things simply because it's a man doing the telling are over." (408-409). The construction of this sentence expresses a somewhat demeaning attitude towards men, not because it contains any specific negative words expressing masculinity, but because the word 'simply' is used. 'Simply' insinuates that there is no logical reason for anyone to do what a man tells them to. The 'man' in the sentence is therefore bereft of any authority, and represented as inferior. So the language in *Gerald's Game* is not neutral after all, it *is* sexist, only sexist towards men instead of women.

Focalization Points and Transitivity Choices

The two novels not only differ from each in other in the use of sexist and neutral language. The ways in which the story is told in these two novels also differ greatly when one looks at where the focalization points in the novels lie. Throughout the entire novel Rice lets Lestat tell the story through a direct first-person narration. Kelly states about this mode of writing: "First-person narrators […] are foregrounded in the reader's experience and therefore have a particular appeal for the reader's sympathy." (Kelly, 2002: xlvi). That Lestat's tale is told in first-person narration does indeed heighten the reader's emotional involvement with this character, which is evident in how the reader sympathizes with Lestat and not his victims even though he is the 'monster.' But the way in which he addresses the reader also creates a distance between the reader and Lestat. Haas and Haas claim: "[…] Lestat refers to himself as 'I' and the reader as 'you' - creating a symbiosis between them." (Haas and Haas, 2001: 184). But normally, a first-person narration allows the reader to get 'inside' the protagonist's head, and every time Lestat directly addresses the reader this bond is broken. It does, however, create a feeling of a very intimate relationship between the reader and Lestat. The first-person narration in Rice's novel does limit the text's focalization point to one that is strictly male. But the thematic disruption of Lestat's gendered identity dissolves the 'maleness' of this vantage point somewhat. The story depicted from Lestat's point of view is about a feeling of alienation from the male body, written from within the male body. The 'male' focalization point is thus marked by a gendered ambiguity which, besides from the rape, is not solely limited to male experience.

There is no ambiguity concerning the gendered focalization point in *Gerald's Game*, for the entire story is told from a female point of view. Jessie's identity is never questioned in terms of gender, as Lestat's identity is, but the style of narration nevertheless tells a great deal about her gendered position. The story is mainly told in third-person narration but near the ending, where the novel is written in the epistolary form, there is an interesting shift to a first-person point of view. The reader is thus initially positioned outside Jessie, 'looking down' at her, and then, towards the end, invited inside. This experience is similar to Jessie's own. In the first part of the novel she is alien to her own identity because she did not shape it. The different voices in her head portray her position as a spectator to, and not an actor of, her identity and her life. She is also alienated from her own body, shown in how she has no sexual agenda of her own, and is thus, in a sense, placed outside her own

body as well as her identity. But when she takes control of her gendered identity and body she becomes a fully realized subject, and is thus positioned 'inside' her body. So this shift from a third-person narration to that of a first-person narration marks how Jessie claims her identity as a subject.

This theme is additionally emphasized in the novel's transitivity choices. Jessie's identity has been marked by what has been done to her, not what she herself has done. As in this example of her father's abuse:

> "[…] before she can do more than open her mouth, the invasion comes: a hand between her slightly spread legs, the thumb shoving rudely at the cleft of her buttocks, the fingers pressed against the material of her shorts just above her vagina […]." (King, 1992: 141)

This citation starts with the words 'before she can do more than open her mouth,' and then it continues by describing things being done to her. She is never given the opportunity for action before actions are done to her, and she has therefore no control of these actions at all. Her husband's game does likewise leave her totally out of control of the actions while Gerald is free to do anything he wants to Jessie. But the example the previous chapter described as a thematic marker of Jessie's turning point is also a stylistic indicator of the point where she starts to take control of actions: "Jessie could see the shape of a bare foot – *her* bare foot – rising on her husbands round stomach. It was a bright, accusatory red against his pink flesh." (22). The first action Jessie is in control of is her husband's murder. This symbolizes the guilt Jessie feels because she does not realize that she is allowed to take control. That all the actions she takes in order to secure her own liberation are carried into effect while her hands are 'tied' shows the development of Jessie as an 'actor.' And when she frees herself from the handcuffs she is ready for full agency:

> "She managed to step over Gerald with her right foot, but her left came down squarely on his belly. The pressure created a ghastly buzzing sound in his throat and formed and forced a brief but filthy breath of gas from his gaping mouth. 'Excuse yourself, Gerald,' she muttered, and then left him behind without another look." (307)

She no longer lets men do things to her, she now does things to men: "…So I leaned forward and spit in his face […]." (415).

In *The Tale of the Body Thief* there is no such transition to be found in the transitivity choices. Throughout the novel, Rice depicts things done by men to women *and* vice versa. Even though Lestat is a 'man of actions' his encounter with Gretchen, for example, shows how he is also willing to let other people control the actions. When he rapes the woman from the café, it is of course he who is in total control, but he does not do anything to Gretchen before she asks him to: "'Trust in me,' I whispered. 'I won't hurt you.' 'Oh, but I want you to hurt me,' she said in my ear." (Rice, 1992: 334). It is therefore Gretchen who controls not only what she does to him but also what he does to her. Their sexual encounter is somewhat marked by violence: "I could keep it back no longer, and when I rode her now, it was hard." (335). But Lestat is only doing what he was told to do by Gretchen.

Genders Speak Language Differently

The styles in which the two novels are written also differ greatly from each other. Rice's style, although postmodern, is more romantic in its atmosphere than King's. Kings style, on the contrary, is much more direct than Rice's, especially when it comes to describing the male genitalia. In the examples mentioned throughout this paper, Gerald's penis has been described as 'Mr Happy' and 'The Penis of an Attorney,' whereas the penis is only referred to as 'the organ' in Rice's novel. But Rice shows awareness about this more modest and romantic aspect of her style in the novel's metafictional plane:

> "[…]*'You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.' Can't fancy mean experimental? I already know of course that I am sensuous, florid, lush, humid – enough critics have told me that.*" (2-3)

And a sensuous and florid style must of course refer to a penis as 'the organ' and not 'Mr Happy,' although King's style, in comparison, does portray a more relaxed attitude towards the male body. But King's novel is of course not about alienation from masculinity, or alienation from a gendered identity altogether like Rice's novel, but of the claiming and production of a gendered identity.

This, more romantic, style of Rice could easily be categorized as the 'female' style of writing. As in this example: "My strangler was almost ready to move from the realm of his spasmodic and fragmentary visions into the land of literal death. Ah, time to dress for the man of my dreams." (16). If it were not for the words 'strangler' and 'death' this could

easily be a passage from a romance novel. It is, however, important to keep in mind that this is Rice's style when she writes *as* Lestat, for Rice does indeed adapt to other styles of writing when she writes as the other characters in many of her other novels in The Vampire Chronicles. It is, indeed, Lestat, who is occupied with dressing for the man of his dreams. And 'dressing up' is, as has already briefly been touched upon, just one more way for Lestat to perform, and his clothes are of highest importance to him:

> "Picking from the usual wilderness of freshly opened cardboard boxes, suitcases, and trunks, I chose a suit of gray velvet, an old favorite, especially when the fabric is thick, with only a subtle luster. Not very likely for these warm nights, I had to admit, but then I don't feel hot and cold the way humans do. And the coat was slim with narrow lapels, very spare and rather like a hacking jacket with its fitted waist, or, more to the point, like the graceful old frock coats of earlier times." (16)

And in this sensuous style of Lestat, Rice describes experiences bound to the male body, and even though these experiences are marked by alienation they can hardly qualify to be part of a female style or a feminine language. If Rice was a man who wrote in a sensuous style, it would hardly be categorized as feminine. And King is a man who, in *Gerald's Game* and other novels, writes from a female perspective about the female experience of oppression and victimization, so is this to be called a feminine or masculine style of writing? Why is it that there are so many who find it important to generalize writing by the narrow concepts of masculinity and femininity?

King obviously tries to break with patriarchal language in his writing, for example by avoiding sexist language and using more neutral forms. A patriarchal style does of course not equal a male style, but an example such as this: "He tilted his head up toward the skylight […] and voiced a high, wheezy scream. The loon of the lake cried out again just then, in hellish counterpoint; to Jessie it sounded like one male commiserating with another." (King, 1992: 20), shows traces of how King might have made this connection. This example clearly describes 'male' communication as an inferior language. The feminist attacks on patriarchal and sexist language might be a reason for King to try and separate himself from anything associable with a patriarchal style. But King does not only write in a neutral style, as shown throughout the analysis, the language and the themes of the novel tend to come out not only as respectful to women but as demeaning towards men.

The Gendered Author

The two previous chapters were concerned with the first part of the thesis statement, the thematic and stylistic levels of the two novels. This chapter can thus move on to the second part of the thesis statement, and look at how the representations on these two levels are influenced by the gender of the two authors. The chapter is divided into two parts because it deals with the authors separately, starting with King.

Stephen King: Writing Gendered Experience

In King's entire body of work, and especially in his early novels, the protagonist is normally male. But the male protagonist is not necessarily an adult, quite often King writes about small children (Casebeer, 1996: 43). As a child King witnessed when one of his friends was run over by a train. Badley states about this incident: "As a horror writer, he has been picking up pieces of the body ever since." (Badley, 1996: 45). This traumatic incident in King's childhood may very well be one of the reasons why he keeps returning to the point of view of children. It could also point to the fact that King uses his writing to work out his personal problems, as a form of 'therapy.' But already in his first published novel, *Carrie* (1974), he started to experiment with a female viewpoint. And when he started to write novels such as *Dolores Claiborne* (1992) and *Gerald's Game,* he took on a mature female focalization point as well.

In *Gerald's Game,* the portrayal of Jessie's gendered identity and relationship to her own body is what many feminists would call 'writing female experience,' or 'writing the female body.' The descriptions of the female body may seem somewhat distanced from this particular body, as in this example:

> "She raised her head a little, as if to look at the object in question, but her eyes remained closed. She didn't need her eyes to see it, anyway; she had been co-existing with that particular accessory for a long time. What lay between her hips was a triangle of ginger-colored, crinkly hair surrounding an unassuming slit with all the aesthetic beauty of a badly healed scar. This thing – this organ that was really little more than a deep fold of flesh cradled by crisscrossing belts of muscles – seemed to her an unlikely wellspring for myth […]." (King, 1992: 40)

But this distance is only employed in order to portray how Jessie feels about her identity and her body. But the portrayal of Jessie depends greatly on her experiences of the gendered body, and in some passages King does manage to depict experiences which are

gendered ‘female’: “The girl looking back at her from the mirror didn’t seem like a girl at all, but a teenager.” (181). Even though King in this passage tries to depict the point where Jessie first felt the alienation from her body, one gets a sense of how he seems to be writing from inside the female body:

> “It was a little girl’s body, too – flat-chested and slim-hipped – but it wouldn’t be that way for long. It had already started to change, and it had done something to her father it had no business doing. I never want boobs and curvy hips, she thought dully. If they make things like this happen, who would?” (202)

Badley states that one of King’s best qualities is his ability of ‘writing from the body’ (Badley, 1996: 62). But seeing that King is male, and that the physical experiences narrated are limited to the female body, King is actually, in *Gerald’s Game*, writing outside the body. Badley further states: “Writing requires the ‘female’ flesh it attempts to transcend […].” (61). So, in order to write from the female body, King must, in the words of Deleuze, ‘become’ a woman. King states about the first time he decided to write from a female perspective: “[…] I suddenly realized that I (1) had never been a girl, (2) had never had a menstrual cramp or a menstrual period, (3) had absolutely no idea how I’d react to one….” (68). King apparently believes that there are certain experiences women have with their bodies which men cannot identify with. But entering relationships with women, living with women, and coexisting with women in society must have given many men the opportunity of becoming familiar with such things as the female cycle. Even though it is women who experience menstrual periods, they would only be able to describe it in the same words available for men. But even bodily experiences such as the menstrual period are not experienced in the same way by all females. There is, in this sense, no such thing as an essentially ‘female’ experience.

The feminist theme that emerges in *Gerald’s Game* of women defying their oppression and gaining full agency has been criticized for its connections to ‘outdated’ feminism. Badley states: “Jessie’s story is also modeled on the incest survivor’s narrative that has become a reductionist psychological cliché […].” (67). The story might be a cliché, but it might also be a comment on how many women in society are still oppressed in various ways, and are ‘falling behind’ in the feminist debate. But Badley continues: “Such a text made Stephen King not an imitation feminist so much as a poor one.” (67). Why is King a poor feminist for bringing up old issues if these issues are still relevant?

Gerald's Game is about the abuse of women and children, and even though abuse of men is also important, abuse of women and children continues to be of immediate importance as long as it is a problem in our culture. Badley might be a couple a steps ahead of victimized positions in the feminist debate, but that does not help the women and children who still suffer abuse.

It does, however, seem as if King is aware of the fact that this 1970s second wave feminism which comes to expression in the novel is not the most 'fashionable' debate of the time: "[…] Ruth Neary, who had gone on from the University of New Hampshire to three marriages, two suicide attempts, and four drug-and-alcohol rehabs? Good old Ruth, just another shining example of how well the erstwhile Love Generation was making the transition to middle age." (King, 1992: 27). For it is Ruth who is the feminist in the novel. She is the one that stands for the feminist message Jessie must learn, that women too can perform an independent identity.

What this paper sees as the fallacy of King's feminism, is that he almost 'overacts' it. The story seems very close to Moers' description of the Female Gothic as *for* women and *by* women, only this novel seems to be for women, about women, but by a man. King claims that he wrote the novel in order to understand women better (Badley, 1996: 66). And of course the novel is written for men as well. But, moreover, the theme and the language as well proved to be not only empowering for women, but sometimes directly demeaning towards men. And this is what makes King a 'poor' feminist. Gilbert and Gubar stated that representations of females tend to be limited to the figures of the angel and the monster, and that women writers must try to 'kill' these images. But where does this place the contemporary male author? For surely, this feminist theory sees him as a monster, since he is blamed for producing such images to begin with. Is King trying to be an 'angel' by depicting men as monsters, by saying he is on the women's 'side'? Or is he a 'monster' for depicting female liberation as something that can only be realized on the expense of men? For King does not deconstruct the binary opposition, he only reverses it; and male oppression is as monstrous as female oppression.

It must, however, be admitted that the act of a male author writing from a female perspective is proof of how the monstrous male King depicts does not represent an essential male quality. Jessie generalizes men and believes them all to be governed by the same essence, but this can very well be King's way of showing the side effects of

oppression. So maybe King is a 'poor' feminist, or maybe he is just commenting on what this paper just criticized him for. If one follows the latter line of reasoning, King only depicts Jessie as a 'man-hater' in order to show how the structuring of human subjects in accordance with binary oppositions result in an ongoing cycle of oppression, abuse and hate. In either case, it would not have altered the story completely if a few positive male characters, such as the police officer who finds Jessie, had been more in focus. That would, maybe, have eased the ambiguity of this issue.

Anne Rice: Masks and Mad Doubles

In *Gerald's Game* we see how King writes about a woman who tries to come to terms with her own gendered identity. The same theme emerges when the gendered representations in *The Tale of the Body Thief* are viewed in connection with its author's gendered identity. Only here the theme varies somewhat, for what we see is a woman writing from a man's body in order to understand her own gendered identity.

In Ramsland's interview with Rice, Rice describes how she from childhood felt alienated from the female gender. As a young girl, Rice discovered that boys and girls were given various treatments regarding the endorsement of their sexuality (Ramsland, 1996: 15). Ramsland states on this issue: "Awareness of such gender inequalities made her view adolescence as a treacherous period. She had lost something simply because she was female, and as a young woman she was no longer a free spirit." (16). That her father had named her Howard Allen O'Brien, after himself, did not help Rice feel comfortable with a female role (Badley, 1996: 128). Moreover, Rice was raised as a Catholic and was taught that her female body and the erotic feelings she started to harbor were sinful (Ramsland, 1996: 15; Badley, 1996: 128). Badley claims:

> "Uncomfortable in 'woman's role' as it had been presented to her, openly divided against her female self, Rice seems to have found her way to the feminine only first through a complicated masquerade, by identifying with homosexuals and transsexuals in their equally self-divided gender switching." (Badley, 1996: 136)

When Rice became a young woman she started to see herself as a homosexual man trapped in a woman's body. For she found herself physically attracted to men, and had been taught that only men were able to possess erotic desires of this kind she believed the desires she

felt was governed by the man 'inside' her (Ramsland, 1996: 17). Rice also found herself drawn to the male homosexual aesthetic because gay men are, as Badley articulates it:

> "[…] authentic in existential terms: they defied patriarchal standards of masculinity and refused anatomy as their sexual destiny. Gays reinvented themselves socially as well as physically, constructing new models for relationships." (Badley, 1996: 123)

The homosexual aesthetic taught Rice how gender and sexuality need not only be defined in the terms of the binary opposition she had previously understood them through.

Rice's focus on gender in her novels is not concerned with the 'female' debates of feminism; but gender studies. The rape scene, for instance, is not meant to depict the horrors of women under patriarchy; it is one of Rice's fantasies about an active 'male' sexuality. Writing of a rape from a male perspective is a way for Rice to investigate gender. For Rice's preoccupation with gender is an attempt to transcend it: "And a person who transcended gender, she felt, could achieve clarity and wholeness. Lestat provided Rice with an animus, an active 'male' principle that allowed her to transcend her female body. *The Vampire Chronicles* also provided a gay utopia." (123). When Rice writes as Lestat, or some of her other male characters, she finds that she can express her true identity (Ramsland, 1996: 27). As she says to Ramsland: "Lestat is the dream of the male I would love to be." (24). Maybe there is even a part of Rice in Raglan when he says: "I've even been in the body of a woman, you know. And by the way, I don't recommend that at all." (Rice, 1992: 177-178).

In *The Tale of the Body Thief,* Lestat is foreign to his new human body, and this alienation is mostly described as caused by the male genitals:

> "I unzipped these modern pants, and removed my organ, which immediately astonished me with its limpness and size. The size was fine, of course. Who doesn't want these organs to be large? And it was circumcised, which was a nice touch. But this limpness, it felt remarkably repulsive to me, and I didn't want to touch the thing. I had to remind myself, this organ happens to be mine. Jolly! And what about the smell coming from it, and the smell rising from the hair around it?" (240)

What this passage describes is not Rice's alienation from the male body, however, but the alienation she feels from her own body. And the lack of control Lestat has over his new

sexual urges displays Rice's wish for a sense of control over her own desires: "Go down, I was saying to the organ. This is not the time yet for that." (256).

Lestat's action of 'putting on' a male body in *The Tale of the Body Thief*, is analogous to Rice's writing: "And in writing about gay men, she writes covertly in the masked and self-divided tradition of the Female Gothic – about women, about her divided self." (Badley, 1996: 128). This 'divided self' comes to expression in her various characters which Rice explains to contain different aspects of her personality: "'I just get into their skin,' she insists, 'and everything happens- It's not hard for me to create these various characters because they all represent longings and aspirations in myself.'" (Ramsland, 1996: 31). That Rice feels most comfortable in Lestat's skin is evident alone in the number of novels she has written from his perspective[2]. But it is also evident in how she has constructed Lestat as a performer of different identities. Like the numerous aliases of Lestat (Rice, 1992: 114; 195; 226), Rice takes on different pseudonyms for her various forms of writing. When she wrote pornography, she did so under the name A. N. Roquelaure, which is inspired by the French word for cloak (Ramsland, 1996: 22). She has also written books under the name Anne Rampling, inspired by the title of the short story that initiated The Vampire Chronicles. But using different names as different identities and masks is not new for Rice who, before she decided to call herself Anne, experimented with Francis, Barbara and Gracie in order to change the name her parents had given her (13).

Rice recognizes her own inability to fully identify with female characters, she says: "[…] the feminine side of me is suffering and the masculine side is always the one with the sense of humor. The women invariably turn out like Claudia." (Badley, 1996: 130). Claudia is a mature woman who is trapped inside a child's body, and her body will thus never live up to her sexual desires. Rice describes how Claudia initially represented her own daughter Michele, who died from granuleucytic leukemia when she was five years old, but that she soon grew into an image of Rice's own sense of a misplaced femininity (Ramsland, 1996: 18-21). If one considers Gilbert and Gubar's notion of the angel and the monster, then Claudia fits well with the problems of femininity Rice experienced growing up. Claudia embodies both the sexually innocent angel Rice was taught to be, and the predatory monster she felt was lurking inside of her: "A child staring back at me out of the mask of innocence. Or was this a mask?" (Rice, 1992: 583). Like Lestat, Rice appears to

[2] Rice has written five novels from Lestat's perspective. He is the only protagonist she has returned to that many times.

be haunted by this angelic monster: “Get thee behind me, Claudia. Take your locket, please ma chérie, and go.” (209).

Overall, Rice’s writing can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with a female identity, as well as an attempt to transcend this gendered identity. The ambiguity she expresses about a gendered identity is what creates the fluidity of the gendered representations in her novel. Rice writes outside the body in order to understand her position within it.

CONCLUSION: DISRUPTION OF THE BODY AND GENDERED IDENTITIES

After the section containing the analysis has investigated the various aspects of the thesis statement this final section will now sum up the main reflections and conclusions of this study.

This paper initially set out to investigate the literary and linguistic representations of sexuality and gender construction as well as identity in the two chosen novels. In order to understand the thematic plane of the novels the analysis viewed the characters in their relations to each other. What was found was first and foremost a total deconstruction of the Cartesian subject and the binary opposition, since identity was shown as discursively constructed, fluid in form, and neither limited nor connected to essentialism or biological determinism. *The Tale of the Body Thief* depicts androgynous creatures as well as an eroticism that transcend age, gender, and even the body: a post-genital sexuality. The manner in which Lestat's sexuality is displayed was found to break with the notion of a naturalized heterosexuality, although not completely with the naturalized masculine sexual agency. Nevertheless, the various characters show no agreement on proper gender roles because such categories do not exist; the characters can construct the gender they wish. The androgynous gender the central characters embody shows that gendered oppositions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. When Lestat realizes the fluidity of identity and gender construction he starts to perform his own identity, one that transcends gender. Lestat is thus always in drag because there is no true gender or identity to perform.

In *Gerald's Game*, Jessie must come to terms with the fact that a gendered identity is constructed in order to perform a gendered identity. In the character of Jessie, King depicts a shift in constructivism from de Beauvoir to Butler. Jessie's female identity is initially constructed by men, similar to de Beauvoir's theory. But when she shapes her identity through the influence of for example Ruth, who embodies feminist theory, and Nora, who represents psychoanalysis, Butler's theory about how it is culture that constructs gendered individuals takes over. Jessie's identity is in every sense a performance, and even though it does not transcend gender it displays a new and more empowering femininity. King seems to still be concerned with men and women, masculinities and femininities, while Rice is interested in a gendered identity of human beings that goes beyond these categorizations.

Both authors critique the traditional representations of gender roles, but Rice does so by a deconstruction of the binary opposition of gender, King only reverses this dichotomy.

When the paper further investigated the stylistic levels of the novels the findings here were more or less in unison with those on the thematic level. The metafictional planes of both novels supported the theme of a constructed identity that disrupts the traditional gender roles, since metafiction was employed as a way for the authors to comment on and emphasize this theme. The focalization point and transitivity choices in *The Tale of the Body Thief* emphasized Rice's deconstruction of the binary opposition of gender while they, in *Gerald's Game*, emphasized King's reversal of it. When the language in which the novels were written was studied, it showed how both authors tried hard to speak language and not let language speak them. None of them did, of course, move beyond language, but both disrupted the conventional structures of gender within it which they both showed by altering language for different characters and purposes.

The linguistic level of the gendered representations once more showed how Rice almost transcends the binary opposition while King is still caught in its structures. In King's occupation with including women, he excludes men. That Rice does not reverse sexist language, but writes in a more neutral style instead has the effect that her work, more than King's, conveys the feminist message of equality. It seems that it should be of great concern for a feminist linguistics not to exclude men in the search for an alternative to a patriarchal language and style. Feminists often talk about promoting a 'feminine' or 'female' language; a 'language of our own.' But a separatist idea like this does not sound like a solution so much as an intensifier of the problem at hand. Why not try to create a 'neutral' language that is neither 'male' nor 'female,' a language that is not sexist, against women or men, or exclude any of them as equal human beings. This want for an alternative female language, should it just reverse patriarchal language, constitute women as the universal subject, and include demeaning words about men and masculinity? That would not be a solution but a reversal maintaining language as an entity which excludes approximately half of the population. It seems that too many feminists are concerned with putting men down in the process of empowering women, why is it not all about equality regardless of sex? For equality 'on the behalf of men' is not equality, but a reversal of the existing hierarchy.

The study further sought to investigate how the gender of the authors influenced the representations described above. It does seem as if King, more than Rice, escapes his own gendered identity in the novel. King identifies with a woman in order for him to better understand women, while Rice identifies with a man in order to understand her own identity better. However, King writes about being inside and outside the body and so does Rice, but she also disrupts, dissects, and deconstructs the body. Claudia's infantilized sexuality may represent Rice's unease with femininity, but Lestat represents a transcendence of gender, and it is, after all, Lestat whom she identifies with. Moreover, Rice does not, like King, prove any of her points on the 'expense' of men. The predatory nature of male sexuality only represents the active sexuality Rice feels is denied femininity, it is not meant to literally align men with predators. In King's novel it is showed how some men – although not all men – are constructed as sexual predators. King's novel is focused on female sexual liberation, but a male sexuality liberated from the predatory placement does not seem to be of any concern. The writers were not seen as separate from their writing throughout this study, for 'there is nothing outside the text.' Like their works they are discursively produced. Both writers put new bodies on in their novels, and by so doing they are writing outside their gendered experience and outside their bodies. Their writing is therefore not only deconstructing the gendered representations in the novels, but the gendered representation of the author as well.

Cameron's notion of metaphorical gender, as well as the poetics of the Male and Female Gothic are dissolved in the same manner as representations within the novels. Neither work can be categorized as belonging to either one of these traditions. Both investigate gender through a reversed gender position, and both drift in and out of the modes of horror and terror, body and mind. It is in Rice's novel that an actual rape is displayed, while King's novel only portrays a symbolic rape. And both authors dissolve the concepts of interior and exterior enemies. Furthermore, the way in which these two horror novels occupy themselves with marginalized subjects is not caused by an association with femininity. For it is both male, female, and genderless subjects which are shown as marginalized. What these two horror novels express is not a particular gender but a move away from gender. So is it fatal for one who writes to think of their sex? For both Rice and King seems to be very much occupied with their own sex and gender as well as multiple other forms of performances. But they only occupy themselves with these gendered

categories in order to move beyond them; the move into the body is only the first step towards moving outside the body. The theoretical section of this paper stated that a division of human subjects into the binary opposition of masculinity and femininity limits human potential. But this dichotomy can be broken and new potential can be discovered if only one writes outside the body.

SUMMARY:

The intention of this Master's thesis is to investigate how sexuality and gender construction/identity is represented in the novels *The Tale of the Body Thief* by Anne Rice and *Gerald's Game* by Stephen King. Moreover, it seeks to investigate the extent to which the authors' gender is connected to these representations thus looking at how the authors fit the image of the gendered horror writer. In order to do so the paper draws on various theories and approaches, mainly feminist and poststructuralist. The theoretical approach is mainly governed by the feminist constructivist theories of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. The methodological approach consists of a mixture of feminist discourse analysis along with various literary theories and linguistics, where the theories of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida and Deborah Cameron are in focus.

The overall structure of the paper's inquiry is twofold but in the first part there is a subsequent subdivision into thematic and stylistic representations. The thematic representations of sexuality and gender are studied through character analysis, where the characters are seen in their relations to each other. It shows how King's representations focus on female liberation and agency, whereas Rice tries to transcend categories of gender in the representations of her characters. The investigation of the stylistic representations firstly looks into the metafictional planes in the novels, which shows how the authors employ these levels in order to emphasize and comment on their themes. Secondly it concentrates on linguistic and discursive productions of gender in the narratives, where King's novel once again focuses on female agency whereas Rice displays a far more neutral style of writing. On all the levels under investigation, both writers show gendered identity as something the individual produces. The self is a *tabula rasa* on which identity is written. When the paper turns to the latter part of the inquiry, concerning the authors' gender, it looks first at Stephen King and then Anne Rice in connection to the findings of the previous sections. It describes how both authors identify with the gendered experiences and gendered bodies of their protagonists who both oppose the gender of the authors, thereby dissolving the established notion of the gendered horror writer. The main focus lies on the first part of the analysis whereas the latter part is only investigated briefly in comparison. But the latter part functions as a form of reflection on the first part and is a necessary bridge between the analysis and the conclusion.

Overall the paper seeks to dismantle the old conceptions of the gendered horror genre and the gendered horror author. Moreover, it suggests that the horror medium and its writers often tend to transcend gender, and the body, in the writing found within the genre. The conclusion to this inquiry is, in relation to the two novels investigated, that it is indeed possible to write outside one's body.

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