he's going to kiss me *there*

A comparative feminist stylistic analysis of agency and gender in selected erotic literature for women

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ABSTRACT

The thesis paper "He's going to kiss me *there*: A comparative feminist stylistic analysis of agency and gender in selected erotic literature for women" stylistically examines agency and gender in the three novels *Dark Lover* (by J.R. Ward), *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* (both by E.L. James). The three texts are all examples of erotic literature aimed at women, published within the span of ten years of each other. The *Fifty Shades of Grey* series is often credited with creating a new awareness about erotic literature – and subsequently, initiating a discussion of the genre.

Consequently, this thesis paper will explore how different works within the genre of erotic literature depict gender roles, romantic relationships and sexual agency. Furthermore, as *Grey* is the re-telling of *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s narrative through the eyes of Christian Grey, it is possible to look at how gender influences the portrayal of relationships and agency. With the methods 'corpus stylistics', Sara Mills' 'feminist stylistics' and theory on feminism, gender and agency, both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the three texts have been conducted.

Quantitatively, there is a tendency to favor the male in *Dark Lover* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*, though it is done to a greater extent in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative, where male dominance is continuously emphasized. *Grey* favors the female, which suggests that the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative has an intense focus on the narrator's romantic interest. Moreover, *Dark Lover* does, in some of the aspects analyzed, portray an equal relationship between genders.

Qualitatively, it is shown that equal sexual agency is promoted in *Dark Lover*, which stands in contrast to *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, as the female is granted little to no sexual agency. Additionally, discourses of female shame are likewise present in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative and the access to Christian's point of view in *Grey* exposes a set of assumptions about men, which largely adheres to stereotypical, traditional expectations of masculinity.

In conclusion, all three texts stylistically portray stereotypical gender roles, though it is more prominent in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative, but differ greatly in terms of agency, where *Dark Lover* favors a gender equal depiction of sexual agency and *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* foreground the male as the aggressor at, almost, all times.

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2. Introduction

Since its publication in 2011, *Fifty Shades of Grey* has arguably been the subject of much heated debate. In addition to debates about its depiction of BDSM (Barker, 2013), Christian's questionable behaviour (Bonomi, Nichols, Kiuchi, & Perry, 2016) and the spike in the sales of sex toys following the publications of both books and movies (Klonowska, 2017), the *Twilight* fanfiction-turned-book likewise sparked a debate about erotic literature – especially in relation to women. Though erotic literature is not a new phenomenon, the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy certainly started a conversation about what erotic literature should be and incidentally, what else was out there (Meg, 2019). The trilogy engages with the relationship between soon-graduate Anastasia Steele and the young billionaire Christian Grey, who has some very specific erotic preferences. The union is not unproblematic for the couple as Christian's dark past continues to be an obstacle for their relationship, but ultimately, they end up living the American dream as they marry and have kids together (James, 2012).

Six years before E.L. James published her book, author J.R. Ward began her Black Dagger Brotherhood series with the publication of the novel *Dark Lover* (2005). Within the series, a universe where vampires are a species at the risk of extinction unfolds. A complex mythology, complete with both deities, a sacred language and the equivalent of the Devil (fittingly named 'the Omega') is presented over the span of now 21 books. The male vampires are extremely strong and masculine in their appearances – and likewise the female vampires are described as remarkably attractive and beautiful (Leavenworth, 2009, p. 443). The series engage with many different characters and couples, but *Dark Lover* describes the relationship between half-vampire Beth and vampire king Wrath, as Beth realizes her vampiric nature and her feelings for the intimidating and gorgeous Wrath.

This new focus on erotic literature (in particular for women) sparked a couple of questions for me: how are gender and gender roles presented in erotic literature – and do the women within the narratives have agency? Many studies and articles have been written on *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but very few has engaged with the specific linguistic patterns present in the works – and as for *Dark Lover*, it has not (yet) been the subject of much academic scrutiny. Another perspective on gender arose with the publication of *Grey*, which is the first *Fifty Shades of Grey* novel re-written from the point of view of the male protagonist, Christian Grey. Subsequently, these ponderings lead me to formulate two research questions: **how are gender and sexual agency portrayed stylistically in** ***Dark Lover***, ***Fifty Shades of Grey*** **and** ***Grey***? And **how are the stylistic portrayals of relationships, gender roles and sexual agency influenced by the gender of the narrator**? The first research question will be answered through a comparative analysis of all three novels, whereas the second will be most evident in the comparison of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, as access to the same narrative from both a female and a male point of view allows for a discussion of how gender influences a story.

In the pursuit of answering the research questions above, a variety of different theories and methods will be employed in this project. First and foremost, as this project is engaged with stylistics, the theory and analysis will mainly engage with Sara Mills' theory of feminist stylistics. Additionally, theory regarding feminism, gender and agency will be outlined in the theory, which will also include a brief examination of erotic literature as a genre. Lastly, this project will discuss how gender and agency is presented in the works, how the access to two different point of views allows for a discussion of masculinity and why it matters how erotic literature is written.

3. Theory

My theory will largely be divided into two sections: firstly, I will account for the theory and the methodological approach I will use as my primary analytical tools and secondly, I will provide background information, which will prove useful in accessing my research questions. My primary analytical tool and method is stylistics and I will likewise employ both feminist stylistics and corpus stylistics as means of uncovering my works. I have chosen to foreground my analytical tools, as my project is first and foremost a stylistic analysis. In addition to this I will account for, discuss and outline a variety of different concepts which will be used to establish a more profound understanding of the many factors that will contribute in making my project well-balanced. I will briefly account for feminism, as this relates both to feminist stylistics and the general discourse of the project. As gender-theory likewise plays a large role in my project, I will account for both gender in general, gender roles and heteronormativity. In continuity of this I will discuss agency, both as a psychological concept and in relation to sexual relationships. Lastly, as this project wishes to explore erotic literature, I will provide a discussion of the term 'erotic literature', briefly outline the literary history of erotic fiction and lastly debate how women and erotic literature are interconnected.

3.1. Stylistics

Stylistics may be defined as "the linguistic study of style" (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 142) and a more profound way to describe the discipline can be seen in Simpson's introductory segment of his stylistics primer, in which he describes stylistics as "a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to *language*" [original italics] (Simpson, 2004, p. 2). A stylistic approach can be applied to a variety of different types of texts (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 197), but for the sake of this project a clear focus on stylistics in relation to fictional texts will be evident, as

this is also the preferred object of study in stylistics (Simpson, 2004, p. 2). Simpson also highlights that though stylistics and literature are closely connected, it is important to recognize that "the techniques of stylistic analysis are as much about deriving insights about linguistic structure and function as they are about understanding literary texts" (Simpson, 2004, p. 3), meaning that stylistics is capable of revealing aspects regarding both the literature analyzed, but equally as capable of unveiling characteristics about language.

Language, like concepts such as gravity, is "one of those things with which everyone is familiar but few can adequately describe and explain" (Graddol & Swann, 1989, p. 4), so for the sake of clarity, this project will devote a few lines to Simpson's definition of language within the realm of stylistics. Language can be described as "an intricate web of levels, layers and links" (Simpson, 2004, p. 5) and the following table is based on his description of these levels of language:

Level of language	Branch of language study
The sound of spoken language; the way words are pronounced	Phonology
The patterns of written language; the shape of language on the page	Graphology
The way words are constructed; words and their constituent structures	Morphology
The way words combine with other words to form phrases and sentences	Syntax; grammar
The words we use; the vocabulary of a language	Lexical analysis; lexicology
The meaning of words and sentences	Semantics
The way words and sentences are used in everyday situations; the meaning of language in context	Pragmatics; discourse analysis

Table 1: Levels of language, based on Simpson (2004, p. 5)

It is, however, vital to understand that these levels are interconnected, as they represent "multiple and simultaneous linguistic operations in the planning and production of an utterance" (Simpson, 2004, p. 5).

This project will employ stylistic theory regarding fictional dialogue, which will be presented below. An analysis of how the main characters verbally interact with each other may prove useful in the pursuit of answering this project's research questions, as it can be used to discuss the nature of the protagonists' relation – and this enables a discussion of balance of power in a given relationship (Short, 2014, p. 347). In addition to this, this project will also look at the use of adjectives, adverbs and verbs, as they may serve to highlight a variety of characteristics in the novels.

3.2. Feminist stylistics

'Feminist stylistics' is a term coined by Sara Mills, in her book *Feminist Stylistics*, which was published in 1995. The book presents a form of linguistic analysis which is based on the theory of stylistics, but with an emphasis on gender and "the way that point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly closely related to the matters of gender" (Mills, 1995, p. 1). Mills argues that readers are typically inattentive to the actual language or structure within a text and "do not always read suspiciously" (Mills, 1995, p. 1). Additionally, when one is used to certain types of messages in a text, it may not appear oppressive or pernicious, especially if a reader is only critical of the content (if critical at all) (Mills, 1995, p. 1). In summary, feminist stylistics attempts to lead stylistics "away from analysis of the language of the text, as if language were simply *there* to an analysis of socioeconomic factors […]". Through an analysis of socioeconomic factors, as suggested by Mills in the quote above, it can be seen that gender is "foregrounded in texts at certain key moments" (Mills, 1995, p. 17).

3.2.1.   *Transitivity choices*

This section will take its departure from transitivity choices, as they play a key role in this project. It will account for transitivity choices and their function, present the different processes within transitivity choices and lastly, a discussion about why this type of analysis is interesting will be conducted – namely, what this type of analysis might reveal about a text and how this relates to the research questions put forth by this project.

The study of transitivity is interested in how actions are represented, or in Mills' words: "what kind of actions appear in a text, who does them and to whom they are done" (1995, p. 111). Mills' bases her discussion of transitivity choices within feminist stylistics on Michael Halliday and before diving deeper into Mills' use of transitivity choices, this section will briefly account for Halliday's work. Halliday developed the influential "systemic functional linguistics" model of language and his book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* from 1985 gives a thorough account of transitivity choices, amongst another things. According to Ryder, transitivity refers to "the linguistic system used to create experiential or ideational meaning, which is concerned with how entities and actions in a situation are coded in the language" (Ryder, 2006, p. 40). When a writer makes choices about different types of processes and the roles of the participants in a given text, a specific type of text is produced, which may, in turn, say something about world-views, interpersonal relations or how characters view their position in the world (Ryder, 2006, p. 144). Transitivity choices are engaged with three different sets of processes: material, mental and relational. Material processes refer to outer experience and the processes of the external world (Halliday, 1996, pp. 106-107) and can be categorized "into those elements which are actions" (Mills, 1995, p. 143). The mental processes refer to inner experience and the processes of consciousness (Halliday, 1996, p. 107) and lastly, the relational choices merely relate two elements together (Mills, 1995, p. 143). Within material action processes, two further choices exist: namely that of 'material action intention' and 'material action supervention'. The first action process shows

something, in which there is a clear will to do something, whereas the second action process can be used for an analysis of "those verbal processes where things are not done intentionally" (Mills, 1995, p. 143). In schematic form, material processes can be shown like this:
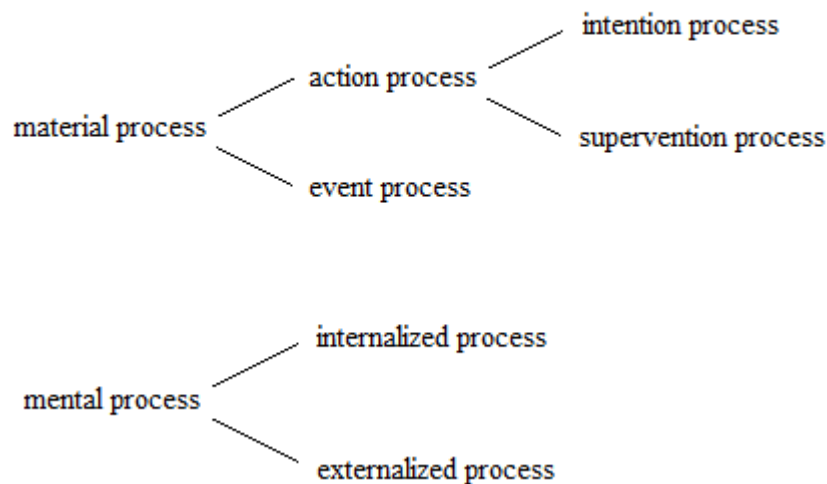
Figure 1: Transitivity processes, based on Mills (1995, p. 144)

An analysis of transitivity, according to Mills, is done by "counting the ratio of choice of types of process" (Mills, 1995, p. 144). This type of analysis is useful when conducting a stylistic analysis, especially one relating to feminism, as the analysis reveals character relations and can be used to analyze the balance of power. A very active character, who seems to be in control of their own decisions and actions "might be expected to show […] a relatively high number of material-action-intention processes" (Mills, 1995, p. 112) – and vice versa. This is especially useful when comparing representations of for instance male and female character, in terms of who does what to whom (Mills, 1995, p. 146). If a character has a large amount of material process intention in relation to another character, it is possible to discuss how this might affect the balance of power.

3.2.2. *Fragmentation*

When discussing transitivity choices, gender and balance of power, it is important to dedicate a few words to the concept of 'fragmentation'. Mills discusses the phenomenon in her book, where she highlights the importance of the affected entities in terms of transitivity choices (Mills, 1995, pp. 146-147). She further expands her discussion, as she highlights the question of fragmentation of the female body, especially in pornographic literature – though it is not limited to merely those types of texts (Mills, 1995, p. 172) – where the body is "depersonalized, objectified, reduced to its parts" (Mills, 1995, p. 171). It is relevant in terms of feminist stylistics, as Mills points out the gender inequalities of these representations – as women are far more often fragmented into anatomical elements than men (Mills, 1995, p. 171). In addition to this, fragmentation likewise has the effect, since the female is not represented as a "unified conscious physical being" (Mills, 1995, p. 171), that it is impossible to focalize a scene from a female perspective – effectively rendering her experience unimportant and thus writing it out of the text (Mills, 1995, p. 171). Consequently, fragmentation of the female and female body is correlated with male focalization, as the female is represented as an object for the male gaze (Mills, 1995, p. 172).

3.3. Corpus stylistics

As a means of answering this project's research questions, it is vital to account for corpus stylistics, as it will be a key element of the analysis. As suggested by the name, corpus stylistics is closely related to the fields of stylistics and corpus linguistics. As a method, it requires a tool which is suitable for processing large amounts of data and categorizing them into appropriate clusters (Mahlberg, 2010, p. 292). This section will first account for corpus linguistics, as this is a vital component when discussing corpus stylistics. Both corpus linguistics and subsequently corpus stylistics are relatively new phenomena, which have been developed concurrently with the development of computing technology (Mahlberg, 2010, p. 292). Corpus linguistics is used to study

language "on the basis of samples of naturally occurring language" (Mahlberg, 2010, p. 292) and these samples are stored electronically in a 'corpus'. Corpora may contain a variety of different things, such as written language and transcriptions of spoken language. Harvesting and processing a given sample of language is done through corpus software, as this quantifies linguistic phenomena and displays data which the researcher can use to investigate linguistic patterns (Mahlberg, 2010, p. 292). However, it is important to note that corpus-based research depends on both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Baker, 2008, p. 74). This project will utilize both approaches.

It is likewise possible to use corpus software to analyze fictional texts, and this method is called 'corpus stylistics'. Corpus stylistics "employs methods and approaches of corpus linguistics and links them with concerns in literary stylistics and literary criticism" (Mahlberg, 2010, p. 295). This project will use the corpus software AntConc, which will be further elaborated upon in the methodology section. Shepherd and Sardinha (2013) argue that there are three possible corpus analytical approaches to text: corpus-assisted analysis, corpus-based analysis and corpus-driven analysis (p. 70). They do however point out that these distinctions are "not water-tight categorizations, but rather means of identifying common analytical practices, which may even be used in succession […]" (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013, p. 70). Corpus-assisted analyses "may be carried out in order to check out a stylistician's intuition about the stylistic effects of a particular target text" (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013, p. 70) and conducting this type of analysis does not require the construction of specialist corpora or demand expertise in computing. When an analysis is focused "entirely on the target text in order to extrapolate information relating to that text alone" (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013, p. 71), it can be viewed as an intratextual analysis. Corpus-based and corpus-driven analyses differ from corpus-assisted analyses by treating the target text (or texts) as a corpus "in its own right" (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013, p. 71). The foundation for analysis is based on a comparison between the target corpus and a reference corpus and this type of analysis may be

called an intertextual analysis (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013, p. 71). This project's approach will largely relate to the latter two approaches.

3.4. *Feminism*

As this project is concerned with gender, both in terms of its research questions and primary methodological approach, this section will account for the term 'feminism'. However, this project does acknowledge that feminism can be a tricky term to define and I will use this section to describe the overarching features and concepts within feminism, rather than to discuss diverting ideological beliefs or the many different sub-movements, as it does not serve as a means to answer my research questions.

Before an account of key concepts within feminism, it is beneficial to briefly outline the history of feminism and the different waves of feminism. Though the idea of women's rights is not foreign or absent from earlier history, this section will only account for 'modern feminism'. Sara Gamble argues that modern feminism begins with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, but this era is perhaps primarily known for the suffragettes, who "fought hard to give married and single women a stake in the country's political process" (Gamble, 2001, p. 26) . First wave feminism was primarily concerned with marriage reforms through the 1850s, educational reforms in the 1860s and 1870s and – of course – the fight for women's right to vote (Gamble, 2001, pp. 22; 25-26). The Second Wave of Feminism saw its rise in the 1970s, after a period in which feminism had had no special acknowledgment – in fact, it was regarded as largely dead in 1963 (Gamble, 2001, p. 29). Second Wave Feminism diverges from First Wave Feminism, as it was the product of "a changed political and social context" (Gamble, 2001, p. 29). It aimed to voice women's immediate, near and personal experience and sought to make the personal political, uniting women in a shared sense of oppression (Gamble, 2001, p. 33). However, this period was also characterized by internal disagreements within the movement, as

different minority groups emphasized different aspects. Lastly follows 'post-feminism', or 'third wave feminism' or 'fourth wave feminism' – a favorite child has many names. It is rather difficult to define or describe this last 'wave', as it can be argued that it is still on-going – or it does not exist, as some argue – but some key points can be identified: post-feminist debate "tends to crystallise around issues of victimization, autonomy and responsibility" (Gamble, 2001, p. 43).

The key concepts within feminism that this project wishes to emphasize is that of balance of power, autonomy, and agency. Relating to this is the concept of gender, subsequently, gender roles and heteronormativity – as these will prove vital in answering this project's research questions. These terms will be accounted for below.

3.5. Gender

As this project wishes to explore how gender and point of view are interconnected in the analyzed texts, an account of gender will be provided. As a point of departure, the difference between sex and gender should be described. The term 'sex' refers to the biological characteristics attributed to either 'male' or 'female'. During the Second Wave of Feminism, the term 'gender' came into being and it sought to further nuance a debate, which had mainly focused on the before-mentioned characteristics. 'Gender' is used to describe traits which are socioculturally attributed to either female or male – and, most importantly, those traits which are considered appropriate for each gender (Unger, 1979, p. 1085). Generally speaking, 'sex' is used to describe your biological traits and 'gender' is used to describe your sense of identity. Most people experience accordance between their assigned sex and gender, though some experience a discrepancy, either due to a feeling of belonging to the opposite gender or not wishing to fit into either category.

At its core, both feminism, and subsequently feminist stylistics, are concerned with gender and how this may influence people's lives. Judith Butler is a well-known figure within feminist academia and is perhaps most known for her theory of gender performativity. Gender

performativity will not be used as an analytical tool in this project but will rather serve as a

theoretical foundation for a more comprehensive and extensive understanding of the intricate

mechanics of gender.

A central concept in Butler's writing is the idea that one's gender is constructed through

repetitive performance of gender, a stylized repetition of acts (Butler, 2007, p. 45). The

performance is based on imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender, which will be

further discussed later in this project. In Butler's theoretical framework gender is "a process which

has neither origin nor end, so that it is something that we 'do' rather than 'are'" (Salih, 2007, p. 46).

Though she argues that gender is performative in nature, it is vital to understand that this does not

mean that Butler is suggesting that one is free to choose which gender one wishes to perform: "'The

script', if you like it, is always already determined within this regulatory frame, and the subject has

a limited number of 'costumes' from which to make a constrained choice of gender style" (Salih,

2007, p. 56). Butler diverges from the traditional distinction of sex and gender which has been

outlined above. She argues that sex, like gender, is culturally constructed and disputes the idea that

the two can be distinguished. However, this project will not be overly concerned with her

discussion on the gender/sex debate, but rather use Butler's theory of gender performativity as a

means to debate agency and gender roles, both vital concepts to this project.

3.5.1.   Gender Roles

Now that an elemental account of 'gender' has been outlined, an assessment of gender roles will be

made. Traditional gender roles might appear to be fairly forward to define, but it is important to

acknowledge that gender roles are highly influenced by culture. An example of this difference in

culture could be the fact women in Israel are drafted into the military, but women in America are

not, or that Scottish, Irish and Colombian men wear kilts (Smiler, 2016, p. 2), while American men

do not. This section aims to account for Western gender roles, with an emphasis on American

gender roles; however, even within this culture, perceptions of feminine or masculine values may differ within different social groups (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). It is also essential to keep in mind that gender roles are not fixed concepts but are rather in constant – albeit slow – development.

Gender roles are typically divided into masculine and feminine roles, or masculinity and femininity. They used to be viewed as opposite concepts, which contradicted each other; but due to extensive feminist critique in the 1970s, they are now rather viewed as "independent constructs, not opposites" (Smiler, 2016, p. 3). Femininity carries traits such as being emotionally expressive, putting other people before oneself and being tender, caring and loving. The last three traits are also highly associated with traditional feminine jobs, such as nurses, nannies or teachers (Nadal, 2011, p. 687). This stance partially originates from a practical history. Before the invention of modern contraception and infant formula, "women often had multiple children over a span of 15 to 20 years and needed to stay near their infants and younger children so they could nurse" (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). This meant that women's tasks had to be restricted to chores which would be done with children in close proximity, did not acquire extended absence from the home and which could be started and stopped quickly without loss of quality (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). These circumstances required a caretaker, someone who was exactly tender, caring and loving (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). Femininity is also depicted as a passive role, interdependent and relationship oriented. Likewise, this role is described as being helpful, kind, gentle, warm, sociable and empathic (Nadal, 2011, p. 688).

Masculinity is defined as a role which includes emotional stoicism, focus on obtaining status and avoidance of being perceived as feminine (Lindsey, 2016, p. 281; 286). The last trait can be argued to be related to not being perceived as homosexual, something which is also highlighted as a male characteristic (Lindsey, 2016, p. 2937). Masculinity is also described as relating to independence, violence, and toughness – all traits that are active. And like women, these traits in part come from practical history, where men – unlike women – had the ability to work outside the

home. They often worked in order to provide for themselves and their families – and used their physical abilities to do so. Inhabiting this role required men "to be active and do things (versus having certain characteristics), create objects (crops or goods) and make decisions" (Smiler, 2016, p. 5). A lot of these characteristics are still believed to constitute a 'real man' today, alongside being competent, assertive and achievement-oriented (Lindsey, 2016, p. 287). However, defining masculinity is not always as straightforward. As a reaction to the emphasis on specific sets of attributes, it has been argued that members of different social groups – in particular, different social classes – may "define masculinity in different ways and may encounter structural barriers that limit their ability to enact the dominant or "hegemonic" form of masculinity" (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). Hence, different masculinities may stress different characteristics, some even rejecting them all together (Smiler, 2016, p. 4). The discussion of masculinities is on-going and though it is theoretically possible, not much work has been done on different femininities (Smiler, 2016).

3.6. Heteronormativity

Not unconnected to gender and gender roles is the notion of 'heteronormativity'. It plays a vital part in a discussion of gender stereotypes and in the pursuit of answering this project's research questions. The term heteronormativity is related to sexual orientation and is used to describe a set of cultural, organizational, interpersonal and socio-legal practice that derives from "and reinforce a set of taken-for-granted presumptions relating to sex and gender" (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 478). In sum, heteronormativity refers to the many ways in which heterosexuality is produced as a natural, ordinary, and unproblematic phenomenon. When heterosexuality is presented and perceived as the most dominant discourse in terms of sexual orientations, it, in turn, reinforces systems of power and privilege – and those who adhere to the dominant social identities of being cisgender[1] and heterosexual are positioned with privilege, whereas those who do not identify this way and fall

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[1] 'Cis-gender' refers to people who identify with their assigned sex

outside the spectrum, are devalued, marginalized and oppressed (Smith & Shin, 2015, p. 1460). Heteronormativity assumes that only two sexes exist, that the default sexual orientation is heterosexuality and that the family is "appropriately organized around different-sex pairings" (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 478); homosexuality is always described as a 'variation on' or as an 'alternative' to the heterosexual couple.

3.7. Agency

As this project's research questions are concerned with the question of agency, this section will briefly define and discuss the concept, both in the broader sense of agency, but also in terms of sexual agency. The discourses which will be presented will be used to discuss the portrayal of agency in the data at hand and will alongside the question of transitivity choices form a thorough discussion.

Agency is defined as "the freedom of individual human beings to make choices and to act on these choices in ways that make a difference in their lives" (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, p. 1). The extend and form of such freedom has historically been the subject of heated debate, since first broached by Chryssipus, Aristotle and other classical Greek philosophers (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, p. 1). Martin, Sugarman and Thompson (2003) argue that the assumption of agency is a metaphorical cornerstone to Western culture, though they acknowledge that this is seldom recognized (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, p. 3).

Agency is a crucial component of human existence, both socially and personally. Without agency and the freedom to choose and act freely, one's social life loses its responsibilities and one's personal life loses its possibilities (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, p. 1). If people do not play an active role in the initiation of their actions, it proves difficult to understand how they might have a moral responsibility for their behaviour, deserve their achievements and how to behave appropriately when they receive admiration, gratitude, indignation or resentment from others. In

addition to this, Martin, Sugarman and Thompson (2003) argue that without some concept of agency, it is difficult for people to view themselves as autonomously creative, as active contributors to their own lives and as capable of engaging in meaningful relationships (p. 1). In order to dignify our sense of ourselves as fully human, it is necessary to be able to commence actions based on the idea of an open and not predetermined future (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003, p. 1)

3.7.1.   Sexual agency

Another aspect of agency which is vital to this project, is the question of sexual agency. Sexual self-efficacy and sexual assertiveness are critical components of sexual communication. Sexual self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his or hers capacity to perform a skill and it is used to determine how much effort a person will invest in a task (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 492). In recent years, research acknowledges that self-efficacy is an important predictor of behaviour change and health behaviour and having a general sense of self-efficacy may predict a perceived ability to decline invitations to sex (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 492). Sexual assertiveness may result in better sexual communication, which in turn is found to be an "important behavioural factor in the reduction of risky sexual behaviour and the promotion of healthy sexual decisions" (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 492). On the other hand, sexual discourses which may promote a double standard for men and women may contribute to a discrepancy in power. Additionally, several studies have indicated that women who live by traditional gender ideologies experience a decrease in sexual assertiveness, sexual-risk knowledge, sexual agency and condom use self-efficacy (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 492).

Levin, Ward and Neilson account for three common sexual discourses, namely that of the gender-specific sexual double standard discourse, the abstinence discourse and the positive-sexuality discourse. The gender-specific sexual double standard discourse is commonly encountered by young people during their formative years and is a sexual discourse in which "men are

encouraged to show sexual desire and pursue sex outside of a relationship, but women are not" (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, pp. 489-490). Adolescent boys and girls are socialized differently and often receive conflicting messages about their sexuality. Heterosexual scripts – which can be closely linked to gender roles – often underline women's urgency to avoid being seen as a 'slut'. The scripts likewise draw up vastly different sexual expectations of women and men; women should be passive, please their boyfriends and not show signs of desire, whereas men are encouraged to pursue sex, objectify women and devalue emotion (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 490). In addition to this, the gender-specific sexual double standard discourse is a contributory factor in women receiving more negative sexual messages from both their parents and peers (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 490). This discrepancy is likely to increase an imbalance in power between the sexes and reinforce traditional gender roles.

The abstinence discourse, like the gender-specific sexual double standard discourse, is a cultural discourse young people are likely to be exposed to. The abstinence discourse emphasizes waiting to pursue sexual relations until after marriage and often neglect vital health information (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 490). As abstinence is linked to religious factors, this sexual discourse is most prevalent in the predominantly religious states of America, but also exists as a broader theme in American sexual discourses (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 490). The messages of the abstinence discourse may not appear explicitly gendered, but "there is often a gender differential in the messages conveyed" (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 491). Like the gender-specific sexual double standard discourse, this type of discourse may reinforce unequal power-dynamics and embeds the idea that women should be sexual gate-keepers (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 491).

The last discourse is the positive sexuality discourse, which is less common. It carries the notion that sex is positive, egalitarian and natural (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 491). The

discourse promotes sex as a healthy and positive expression of love and affection (Levin, Ward, & Neilson, 2013, p. 491).

3.8. Erotic literature

In an attempt to uncover the research questions put forth by this project, this section will outline, define and discuss erotic literature. This project's main focus is that of erotic literature for women, but it is vital to first account for erotic literature as a genre, before descending into a discussion of the gender aspects of eroticism. This section will account for erotic literature as a genre, briefly outline the history of erotic literature and lastly discuss the role of erotic literature for women.

Erotic literature is "a global cultural expression represented in nearly all literary forms from the ancient world to the present" (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. ix). In *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* (2006), the editors Brulotte and Philips define erotic literature as literature where 'sex-talk' is the dominant discourse and emphasize that the history of this discourse goes as far back as the history of writing itself (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. ix). In addition to this, they further expand their definition of erotic literature to works in which sexual desire or sexuality has a prevalent presence (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. ix). This project will likewise subscribe to this definition of erotic literature. However, when discussing erotic literature, it is essential to dedicate some thought to the both antagonistic and kindred relationship of 'erotic literature' and 'pornography'. Scholars have had difficulty differentiating erotic literature from pornography or from love stories containing sexually explicit descriptions (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. x). Brulotte and Phillips argue that neither erotic literature or pornography are neutral terms, but that erotic literature is usually used to refer to an acceptable form of sexual representation, whereas porn "designates a form that is socially and politically unacceptable" (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. x). The distinction between erotic literature and pornography depends on stereotypes and arguments that are fundamentally subjective, which makes it difficult to provide a proper distinction. However,

it is possible to apply both an ethical and sociological point of view in an attempt to uncover the differences between erotic literature and pornography. An ethical point of view suggests that pornography is what other people find erotic and that it presupposes a sexual norm, which one group of people use to judge and reject what they may dislike (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. x). A sociological point of view regards eroticism as the pornography of the primary social class. Eroticism presupposes aristocratic associations, whereas pornography is related to lower class activity (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. x). Another perspective in the erotic literature versus pornography debate comes from Bradford Mudge. He argues that an attempt to think about erotica cannot avoid being influenced by a larger discursive conflict between 'literature' and 'pornography' which is inherited from The Victorians (Mudge, 2017, p. 13). In addition to this, Mudge further elaborates his argument by stating that common usage suggests that 'eroticism' names an acceptable middle ground, "a place where human desire is varied and complex, a place where – ideally at least – mystery and respect can coexist with danger and excitement" (2017, p. 13). Lastly, he states that "somewhere between the stolid truths of literature proper and the crass and blatant displays of pornography, the erotic works its magic" (Mudge, 2017, p. 13). This project acknowledges that the discussion of the distinction between erotic literature and pornography is intricate and complex, though it will largely subscribe to Mudge's notion of eroticism.

The last vital aspect of erotic literature is that of its place – or rather, how it is regarded in terms of quality (however subjective this term may be). It has often been argued that erotic texts are "mediocre in quality and repetitive in form and subject-matter" (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. xii). However, the eroticism of 'high literature' is as capable of subversion as more popular forms of writing about sex and both literary master pieces and pulp fiction can be regarded as erotic literature (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. xi; xii). In conjunction with this, it is important to recognize that erotic literature cannot be reduced to sexual arousal alone. Erotic literature is inspired by a large

array of objectives, embracing both social, political and moral themes and forms that are just as diverse as any literary genre (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. xii).

3.8.1. *A brief history of erotic literature*

As highlighted in the previous section, the history of erotic discourse is as old as the history of writing itself. This section will provide a brief account of the history of erotic literature, taking its point of departure in Ancient Egypt and providing selected downstrokes, before concluding its account with the prevalent erotic literature of the 21st century.

Ancient Egyptian love poetry have survived in the form of four papyrus collections, one large ostracon and a number of small fragments. The materials all hail from the period 1300-1150 BCE, but the language employed reflects a more archaic stage of development which suggests that the poems may be copies from earlier love lyric traditions (Noegel, 2006, p. 399). The erotic features of the poems include descriptions of a perpetual sensual desire and accounts of alluring bodily features (Noegel, 2006, p. 399). Even before this, Sumerian erotic literature from as early as 2200-2000 BCE exists, both in the form of erotic myths and love songs (Leick, 2006, p. 888) which often explicit deals with female sexual enjoyment and concentrates attention on the vulva (Leick, 2006, p. 889). Likewise, Ancient Greek and Latin were often concerned with sexual acts, which is evident in the broad lexicon of terms to describe pleasure and sexual acts (Orrells, 2017, p. 17). Roman author Petronius Arbiter (dead 66 CE) is the probable author of *Satyrica*, a lengthy novel which deals with themes of prostitution, pedophilia – though the Greeks did not have such a concept (Orrells, 2017, p. 2) – and sexual degradation (Pollard, 2006, p. 1027).

Jumping to the 18th century, both the French author Marquis de Sade and the book *Fanny Hill* are prevalent in an account of erotic fiction. Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) produced four 'libertine' novels, composed over a 12-year period (from 1785 to 1797); *The 120 Days of Sodom, Justine, Philosophy in the Boudoir* and *Juliette*. The four books are among the most excessive works of erotic

literature ever produced (Phillips, 2006, p. 1152). According to Phillips, Marquis de Sade has become a creature of myth, largely due to the violent and shocking sexual themes displayed in his works (2005, p. x). *Fanny Hill* is written by British novelist John Cleland (1710-1789), who without a doubt is "the most well-known of British writers of eighteenth-century, erotic literature" (Mudge, 2006, p. 247). The book caused such controversy that it was banned in the United States until 1963 and in Great Britain until 1970 (Mudge, 2006, p. 247). *Fanny Hill* (also called *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*) deals with themes of circumstantial prostitution and the female protagonist's slow realization that she enjoys performing sexual acts "only to have sex, only to feel pleasure and satisfy her own desires" (Mudge, 2006, p. 250).

Gamiani, which is a minor pornographic classic of the French Romantic period, is generally attributed to the French novelist Alfred de Musset and was published in 1833, marking it as part of the erotic literature from the 19th century (Falconer, 2006, p. 933). *Gamiani* is lesbian erotic fiction, which deals with the 'unnatural' desire of the main protagonist – whether this is her lesbianism or the fact that she is a woman experiencing sexual desire is unclear (Falconer, 2006, pp. 933-934).

When discussing erotic literature of the 20th century, it is difficult to avoid *The Eleven Thousand Rods* by French writer Guillaume Apollinaire, which deals with themes such as sadism, transvestism, incest, necrophilia, pedophilia and a variety of other non-conforming sexual activities (Bates, 2006, p. 35). Likewise, as stated previously in this project, *The Story of O* (1954) deserves to be mentioned, as it was quite controversial, partly due to the fact its origin was shrouded in mystery for a long time. *The Story of O* deals with the passion of a young woman who submits herself to total sexual obedience, largely relating to sadism (Réage, 1954). It was published under the synonym Dominique Aury, but critics frequently discussed the gender of the author, not believing a woman capable of imagining such crude sexual scenarios. In 1994 French novelist Pauline Réage, no longer fearing her deceased family's disapproval, admitted that she had written the book in response to her

lover Jean Paulhan's claim that women were not capable of writing erotica resembling that of de Sade (Destais, 2006, pp. 1080-1081).

Lastly follows contemporary erotic literature. The section below will discuss internet-based erotic fiction, meaning this section will only account for erotic literature published by a publishing company. In 2011 E.L. James published the book *Fifty Shades of Grey* which is arguable the most popular contemporary erotic fiction (Singh, 2012). Other notable contemporary writers of erotic literature include Alison Tyler (Bussel, 2006), Kristina Wright (Wright, n.d.) and Janine Ashbless (Ashbless, n.d.).

3.8.2. *The role of erotic literature for women*

What role does erotic literature play for women? It is a rather tricky question to answer, but this section will attempt to discuss three different aspects of erotic literature for women: women's relationship with erotic literature, a discussion of porn versus erotic literature in terms of gender and lastly the online communities concerning fanfiction and how this relates to both women and erotic fiction.

Brulotte and Phillips point out that the question of whether a work was considered pornography or eroticism was often measured by the gender of the author (Brulotte & Phillips, 2006a, p. xi). This view subscribes to the rhetoric that men produce pornography and women the erotic, which Brulotte and Phillips argue is not a sufficient definition of a distinction between eroticism and pornography. Often pro-censorship feminists regard "any depiction of sexual behaviour which degrades and abuses women as pornographic", which is a highly subjective view according to Brulotte and Phillips, and likewise raises the question of what constitutes degradation and abuse. An example which has previously been mentioned, is Réage's *The Story of O*, which is a strikingly obscene and abusive book – and it is authored by a woman. It is difficult to distinguish

between written works of pornography and written works of erotic fiction, as it has been discussed above. But it is possible to see a shift in the frequency of female writers of fiction with sexual elements. Though the section outlining a brief history of erotic fiction primarily names male authors, it is not to say that women have not written and published erotic fiction before the 20th and 21st century. A large amount of the erotic fiction which can be found online is categorized as 'fanfiction', which refers to, often lengthy, works which are written by unpaid, voluntary writers who are fans of a given cultural phenomenon, let it be a TV-series, a movie, a band, a comic book or similar products. It is not a requirement for fanfiction to include erotic elements, but several subgenres – or at least several tropes often present in fanfiction – include erotic elements in some shape or form. A discussion of fanfiction as a cultural phenomenon would prove quite difficult and prolonged, which is the reason this project will only briefly discuss fanfiction in relation to female writers of the erotic. Fathallah argues in her book *Fanfiction and the Author* (2017) that "the most distinct transformation fanfics makes is the attribution of authority to women" (p. 13), continuously throughout her book emphasizing women's role in both creating and engaging with fanfiction through online communities (Fathallah, 2017). Interestingly enough, *Fifty Shades of Grey* started as a *Twilight* fanfiction, which proved to be so popular that the author decided remove all references from the *Twilight* franchise and submitted it for publishing, resulting in an incredible commercial success (Cuccinello, 2017). *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s popularity is also credited with changing public perception of erotica (Dunneback, 2013, pp. 1; 6-7). Dunneback claims that libraries experienced an increased demand for erotic literature in the wake of E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* and likewise contribute the rising demand for erotic literature to the increasing use of e-readers, which allows readers to hide the true nature of the texts they are reading (Dunneback, 2013, p. 3). This section emphasizes the immediate and complicated relationship between women and erotic literature, which proves to be in perpetually changing.

1. Methodology

Overall, this project has employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct the analysis of the selected works. In pursuit of answering the research questions put forth by this project, the analyses have mainly revolved around notions of power, gender, agency, sex – and, of course, language. By starting off with a corpus-based quantitative analysis, I provide both knowledge of the topic of interest, as well as anticipate the more in-depth qualitative analysis. Ebensgaard Jensen (2014) argues that though quantitative analysis may lack "certain types of depth" (p. 123), it enables a more "objective and empirical statements about patterns and trends in literary genres, periods, and authorships" (p. 123). The advantage of conducting both a quantitative and qualitative analysis is that it allows a funnel-shaped analysis, which embellishes a thorough quest for the answer to this project's research questions and the combination of a quantitative and qualitative analysis facilitates a project that both engage with patterns and trends, as well as provide depth. This section will account for the works this project engages with, the tools used and how both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis have been conducted.

1.1. The works

Before an account of the different works is made, I will briefly clarify the criteria for the selection of the data. As this project is engaged with erotic literature – and subsequently, how gender and agency are portrayed stylistically in selected works – I had a few criteria in the selection of the works this project will revolve around. Firstly, I wished to explore works which were produced within a relatively short span of each other, as this ensures the works are written within the same conceptual frame. Secondly, I wanted to explore how female and male point of view might influence the representations of gender and agency and lastly, though I do recognize that erotic literature for women has flourished online for many years, both in terms of fanfiction and sites

providing written pornography for women (Leavenworth, 2009, p. 445), I wished to explore erotic literature for women which has been published through a recognized publishing company. *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Grey* and *Dark Lover* all honor these criteria.

The *Black Dagger Brotherhood* is a series of books engaging with paranormal romance and erotica. It is written by author J.R. Ward. The first book, *Dark Lover*, was published in 2005 and to this date, 21 books have been published within this universe. Each book follows a different pair of lovers in the *Black Dagger Brotherhood* series and is often engaged with telling the story of a couple's first romantic encounter and blooming relationship, resulting in a multitude of explicit sex scenes. In addition to its supernatural elements, *Black Dagger Brotherhood* also engages with more progressive themes, such as portraying a homosexual, male couple (Lover At Last).

Dark Lover depicts the relationship between Beth and Wrath. Wrath is the last pureblood vampire and leader of an ancient order of vampire warriors called the Black Dagger Brotherhood. One of his comrades, Darius, desperately tries to persuade Wrath to help Darius' half-human daughter Beth, who is on the brink of her transformation – which will either turn her into a vampire or kill her. Despite initially declining, Wrath feels pressured to take on the responsibility of helping Beth after Darius is brutally murdered by the vampires' enemies, the Lessers. The Lessers are soulless creatures, whose sole purpose is to kill vampires – and they are led by the mighty entity the Omega, the evil counterpart to the vampiric entity the Scribe Virgin, who originally created the vampires and is this universe's equivalent of the Christian God (though she is far more accessible). As the story unravels, the relationship between Beth and Wrath grows stronger, as both the couple and the Brotherhood face new threats from the Lessening Society.

Fifty Shades of Grey was published in 2011 as the first book in a trilogy. Originally written by author E.L. James as part of a *Twilight* fanfiction, the series became the fastest-selling series in recent years and sparked controversy and discussion regarding its explicit sexual content (Grinberg,

2017). In many ways, *Fifty Shades of Grey* introduced the public to erotic literature for women, as its massive popularity made it the subject of much debate – and the series is also credited with "boosting sales of sex toys, driving women to hook-up sites and fueling a craze over sexual domination" (Grinberg, 2017). The trilogy – consisting of *Fifty Shades of Grey, Fifty Shades Darker* and *Fifty Shades Freed* – is written from the point of view of a young woman, Anastasia, as her relationship with billionaire Christian Grey unfolds. In 2015, E.L. James published *Grey*, a re-telling of the first book in the trilogy told from Christian's point of view. Subsequently, *Darker* has been published and the author is currently re-writing the final book in the series (James, 2019). The three books in the trilogy have all been adapted into movies, the last one premiered in 2018 (Fifty Shades Freed).

Fifty Shades of Grey deals with the relationship between the main protagonist, young, virginal Anastasia Steele and cold, distant billionaire CEO Christian Grey. The couple initially meets through an interview and though Anastasia is fascinated by the young entrepreneur, she is insecure regarding her own looks and her own ability to attract someone's romantic interest. Moreover, despite his distant nature, Christian is drawn to Anastasia as well – but only wishes to engage in a relationship on his terms. Christian practices BDSM and wishes to establish a dominance/submission relationship with Anastasia, including spanking, flogging and a contract outlining what she should wear, eat and drink, amongst other things. Despite his dark past and refusal to engage in a romantic relationship, Anastasia cannot abandon their complex relationship and they continue to engage in a relation, despite Anastasia not having signed the contract yet. Through ups and downs, they attempt to negotiate the boundaries of their relationship and the contract, and towards the end of the book, Anastasia asks Christian to punish her, in order to show her the extreme nature of BDSM-relationships. Fulfilling her request and beating her with a belt, Christian unfolds the full gravity of his fetish and Anastasia realizes they are incompatible and

leaves him. The other book this project will engage with, *Grey*, follows the same storyline, though it is told from Christian Grey's point of view, thus offering insight into an otherwise restricted character.

The books all share the basic premise of being erotic literature aimed at women, published within the span of ten years. However, they have more similarities than that. *Fifty Shades of Grey*, as previously mentioned, originated as a *Twilight*-fanfiction and although the plot no longer contains any supernatural elements, both *Fifty Shades of Grey* (and subsequently *Grey*) have at some point been inspired by literature including vampires. *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* do, however, have an element of BDSM, which *Dark Lover* does not. It is possible to argue that a comparative analysis between two works of erotic fiction with BDSM elements would have been more favorable – examples of such works could be the 1954 novel *Story of O* or Anne Rice's *The Sleeping Beauty Quartet* from the 1980s, both containing BDSM themes. However, this project wishes to explore more contemporary fiction and likewise wishes to explore erotic literature for women which has originated roughly around the publication of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, as this publication popularized and made the genre more mainstream, as argued in the theory section. Additionally, it is important to note that though this project only analyzes *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, the entirety of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy's narrative is recognized as existing, as well as the first 10 books within the Black Dagger Brotherhood series.

1.2. Tools

As this project is concerned with corpus stylistics, a description of the program AntConc and its relevant functions will be presented here. AntConc is a freeware corpus analysis tool kit used for concordancing and text analysis (Anthony, 2014). A 'corpus' refers to a sample of text (in the case of this project, the three novels analyzed) which is uploaded as a .txt file to the program. AntConc can then analyze and organize a corpus according to different criteria. As AntConc can only read

.txt files (which is a type of file found in programs such as Windows' 'Notepad'), all three novels have been converted into .txt files; hence, the electronic availability of the works was vital. The 'Word list' function provides a list of words, according to their frequency, in a given corpus. The functions 'Concordance' and 'Concordance plot' allow the program to search for user-generated search term (such as 'miss') and locate the surrounding tokens[2]. It can be useful when determining the word class of a given word, as the surrounding tokens often gives the necessary contextual knowledge. AntConc is unable to differentiate between different forms, tenses and word classes, unless a corpus is 'tagged' (meaning each token is tagged with a value, for instance a word class (Global, n.d.)) – and the corpora this project works with are not tagged.

In addition to the electronic corpus stylistics tool, this project will also include manual extraction. This simple refers to the manual – as opposed to automated – collection of tokens.

1.3. Extracting and processing the quantitative data

The beginning of my quantitative analysis will engage with the most frequent words in each book. The function 'Word list' in AntConc will be used to determine the most frequent words in the three works. The .txt files containing the works were used to generate the wordlist; in the case of *Dark Lover*, I have removed the glossary at the very beginning of the book, as I am only interested in the narrative, not surrounding lore (and I determined that it made no difference in regards to the most frequent words). I made the conscious choice to limit the word lists to the top 50 most frequent words, as the frequencies of the words below this number lowered significantly. Likewise, as AntConc cannot differentiate between different forms of the same word, the token "'t" has been added to the frequency of 'not', in order to present the correct frequency of this negation. The results can be seen in Appendices 1-3.

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[2] 'Tokens' refer to a word within the corpus

I will also look at instance of physical contact between the male and female protagonists (Christian and Anastasia; Beth and Wrath). In order to do so, I will draw on Sara Mills' method for analyzing transitivity choices in terms of actor and affected; 'actor' should be understood as the active character (who does something to something or someone) and 'affected' should be understood as the person or thing has been done something to. As outlined in the theory section of this project, transitivity choices contain many facets and the large corpora I work with make it difficult to explore all the aspects presented by Mills. With the research questions in mind, this project has looked at instances of physical contact solely between the male and female protagonist, as this may help to determine certain aspects of their relationship. All data regarding physical contact between the female and male protagonist was extracted manually from the three books by close reading the narratives and noting the instances they have a physical interaction. A complete list of the quotes containing physical interaction between the main characters can be found in Appendices 4-6. Each instance of physical contact was then analyzed in terms of the action process and was organized according to who the actor and affected is; this can be found in Appendices 7-9. It is, however, important to note that a quotation – or even a sentence – can contain multiple instances of physical interaction. I have made a judgement on a case-to-case basis, in order to determine whether a given sentence should be one or two interactions. Generally, I have looked at whether it referred to the same physical action or as two separate physical actions, and divided them, if the latter was the case. I have presented the data I have gained from my analysis of transitivity choices in the three novels, both in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics, the latter where I have used both a Fisher's exact test of independence and an ANOVA test to test my hypotheses (Frost, 2018). Fisher's exact test of independence is used when you have two nominal valuables and wish to see whether "proportions of one variable are different depending on the value of the other variable" (McDonald, 2014). Fisher's exact test of independence enables me to test my

hypothesis (that the variables are different) against the null hypothesis (which is the hypothesis that there is no statistical difference). If the probability value (often referred to as the p-value) is below .0.5 it suggests that one group is significantly different from the others (Hindle, 2013). This is done through an online calculator, which will be presented later on in the project. As for the ANOVA test, I have used it to determine whether linguistic patterns across the three works differ due to chance or a 'real' difference. An ANOVA test compares "the amount of variation between groups with the amount of variation within groups" (Hindle, 2013); and like the Fisher's exact test of independence, it tests a hypothesis (in this case, that there is a difference between the groups) against the null hypothesis.

Additionally, this project has looked quantitatively at verbs after utterances. Specifically, I have looked at the verbs used after direct speech (example: "I thought we'd try this again," he *said*). As with transitivity choices, this will be limited to the utterances made by the male and female protagonists – and only when they are engaging in conversation with each other. The data for this analysis has likewise be found with manual extraction, as my corpora are not tagged. The verbs were instead found by searching for quotations marks and noting the instances where they were followed by direct speech between the main characters. Appendices 10-12 contain an overview of every verb and its frequency.

Lastly, I have looked at descriptions of the main characters. I have manually extracted the data relating to this analysis through a close-reading of the three works; the relevant data can be found in Appendices 13-15. Within the project I have listed all the adjectives and adverbs used to describe Beth, Wrath, Anastasia and Christian and for the latter two, I have also grouped the adjectives/adverbs in semantic groups, as this allowed for a discussion of how they are presented.

1.4. Extracting and processing the qualitative data

The first qualitative analysis in this project is related to the language used to describe genitalia in *Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. This data has been extracted manually, by mapping the sex scenes and mentions of genitalia through the novels and subsequently extracting the words used to describe genitalia. This is done to ensure no mentions or way of naming genitalia were missed, as personal pronouns are sometimes used in the place of naming genitalia.

The final qualitative analysis relates to agency and sex scene, where I have looked at two different sex scenes in each book: the first time they have sex and a sex scene in the middle of the narrative. This is done in order to present a nuanced analysis of agency in sex scenes, as agency during the characters' sexual relationship may change as their general relationship grow closer. I have looked at the specific transitivity choices in each sex scenes, as well as who is the verbal actor (this is done by looking at the use of imperatives relating to sexual interactions) and likewise discussed how agency is presented stylistically in the specific sex scenes.

2. Analysis

As this project concerns itself with gender, power, agency, language and feminism, I will employ a variety of different analytical tools and methods in order to answer my research questions. My methods mainly derive from corpus stylistics and feminist stylistics but will likewise draw on theories of gender and feminism.

Firstly, a quantitative analysis of gender representations and power relations in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* will be presented, which, in turn, enables a deeper qualitative examination of the texts in question. My qualitative analyses will focus primarily on what type of language is used to describe sexual acts and genitalia and how agency is presented in sex scenes between the main protagonists. This facilitates an analysis of the texts in terms of how gender, power and agency are evident through the stylistic choices in the texts. As this project works with a substantial corpus, each analysis will be followed by a small section comparing the three novels, so the comparative element of the analysis is always foregrounded.

2.1. *Most frequent words*

I will begin my analysis by looking at the most frequent words in *Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* as they may provide insight into the most frequently mentioned gender – this is especially true for the frequency of possessive pronouns, personal pronouns and proper nouns but can also be seen in the frequency of character names. The exact process of extracting these data was described in the methodology section of the project and likewise the total word lists are provided in appendices.

2.1.1. *Most frequent words in* Dark Lover

Rank and word	Frequency

1. he	*3517*
2. his	*2487*
3. she	*2425*
4. her	*2420*
5. you	*1898*
6. not + 't	*1565*
7. i	*1455*
8. it	*1106*
9. him	*944*
10. had	*877*

Table 2: Top 10 most frequent words in *Dark Lover*

Appendix 1 contains the full word list extracted from *Dark Lover*. Unlike the two other books analyzed in this project, *Dark Lover* is written from a 3rd person point of view, which accounts for the lack of the personal pronoun 'I' in the word list. The most frequent word is 'he', followed by 'his', 'she', and 'her'. 'He' has 1092 more occurrences than 'she', but the word list reveals that there is a fairly equal distribution of 'he', 'his', 'she' and 'her', which suggests a moderately equal relationship between the two genders – though the discrepancy between the occurrence of 'he' and 'she' is abnormal. However, it is also vital to point out that while the male protagonist ('wrath') appears 720 times, his female counterpart ('beth') only appears 394, meaning that the male protagonist is named 82,7 % times more than the female protagonist.

2.1.2. *Most frequent words in* Fifty Shades of Grey

Rank and word	*Frequency*
1. i	*7840*
2. he	*4127*
3. my	*3775*
4. you	*2998*
5. me	*2703*
6. his	*2445*
7. not + 't	*1926*
8. it	*1740*
9. him	*1036*
10. christian	*884*

Table 3: Top 10 most frequent words in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

A full list of the most frequent words in *Fifty Shades of Grey* can be found in Appendix 2. The most frequent word in *Fifty Shades of Grey* is the personal pronoun 'I', which is difficult to attach to a specific gender, as it can both embody the protagonist (the book is written from a 1st person point of view), who is female, but can likewise refer to any other character discussing themselves in direct speech. 'he' (4127 instances), 'his' (2445 instances), 'him' (1036 instances) and 'christian' (884) all appear at the top 10 of the word list, which stands in stark contrast to the feminine equivalents: 'she' (610 instances), 'her' (525 instances) and 'anastasia' (442 instances). Only one other character than Christian and Anastasia is named in the word list, ('kate', 362 instances), which stylistically suggests that Christian is the primary focus of both the protagonist and the text in general.

2.1.3. *Most frequent words in* Grey

Rank and word	*Frequency*
1. i	*8663*
2. her	*4925*
3. she	*4055*
4. you	*3206*
5. my	*3107*
6. me	*2166*
7. not + 't	*2100*
8. it	*1764*
9. do + don	*1229*
10. this	*1030*

Table 4: Top 10 most frequent words in *Grey*

As it was the case with *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the most frequent word in *Grey* is the personal

pronoun 'I', which is difficult to discuss in terms of gender bias (a complete word list can be seen in

Appendix 3). *Grey* is, as *Fifty Shades of Grey*, written from a 1st person point of view (namely that

of Christian Grey) and has both 'her' (4925 instances) and 'she' (4055 instances) in its top 10 list of

most frequent words. The male equivalents 'he', 365 instances, and 'his' (which did not make the

list) score fairly low compared to 'her' and 'she'. In terms of names, 'ana' (Anastasia's nickname)

appears with a frequency of 726 and 'anastasia' is mentioned 504 times. 'grey' (both the last name

of the male protagonist and part of the name of his company) appears 645 times and 'christian'

appears 348 times. Unlike *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Grey* does not include other character names in the

top 50 most frequent words list. This likewise suggests that the whole narrative is focused around Anastasia (and Christian), not particularly involving other characters.

2.2. Comparison: most frequent words

The word list from *Dark Lover* suggests there is a moderately equal relationship between the two genders, though it also reveals a bigger focus on Wrath than on Beth. *Fifty Shades of Grey* stands in contrast to this, where the word list reveals a clear focus on the male, with a total of 8492 instances, compared to the female, which has 1939 instances. *Grey*, which is written from a male perspective, favors the feminine, as 'her' and 'she' score high on the word list. The frequency of 'ana' and 'anastasia' adds up to 1230 tokens and if one adds the frequency of 'steele' (Anastasia's last name), the female protagonist is mentioned 1702 tokens by name throughout the text. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 'christian' appears 884 times and if one counts 'grey' (574 instances), the male protagonist is mentioned 1458 times by name. *Fifty Shades of Grey* contains 155792 tokens total, which means that mentions of Christian accounts for 0,94 % of the narrative ($\frac{1458}{155792} = 0,00935 \times 100 = 0,935$).

Grey contains 159977 tokens and 1,1 % of those accounts for mentions of Anastasia ($\frac{1702}{159977} = 0,01063 \times 100 = 1,063$). The higher frequency of mentions of Anastasia in *Grey* may suggest that Christian has a more intense focus on her than she does on him in *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Stylistically and semantically, this furthermore underlines the theme of 'stalking', which is highlighted several times throughout both books, though neither Anastasia or Christian acknowledge the problematic aspects of his excessive fixation on her, her whereabouts and her social circle.

2.3. *Transitivity choices and physical contact between the male and female protagonist*

As highlighted in the theory section, this project will utilize Sara Mills' transitivity choices in order to uncover the relationship between both genders and the main protagonists. The focus in this analysis has been on the physical interaction between the two couples (Beth and Wrath; Anastasia and Christian) and a complete list of all physical interactions between them can be found in Appendix 7 (Beth and Wrath in *Dark Lover*), Appendix 8 (Anastasia and Christian in *Fifty Shades of Grey*) and Appendix 9 (Anastasia and Christian in *Grey*); in addition to this, the full quotes describing their physical interaction can be found in Appendix 4 (*Dark Lover*), Appendix 5 *(Fifty Shades of Grey)* and Appendix 6 (*Grey*). The emphasis is on 'who does what to whom', meaning this analysis will discuss who is the actor and who is the affected, in terms of physical interactions between the two protagonists. This form of analysis will contribute to a discussion of the balance of power in their relation, which additionally can be used to discuss the main protagonists' level of agency. In addition to providing descriptive statistics, this section will also employ inferential statistics in the form of Fisher's exact test, in order to determine whether the physical interaction between the main protagonists carries any statistical significance. Additionally, an ANOVA test will also be conducted.

2.3.1. *Instances of physical contact between Beth and Wrath in* Dark Lover
Throughout *Dark Lover*, Beth is the actor 108 times (see Appendix 8) and Wrath is the actor 192 times. A chart of their physical contact can be seen below:

Physical contact in Dark Lover

- Beth touching Wrath
- Wrath touching Beth

36%
64%
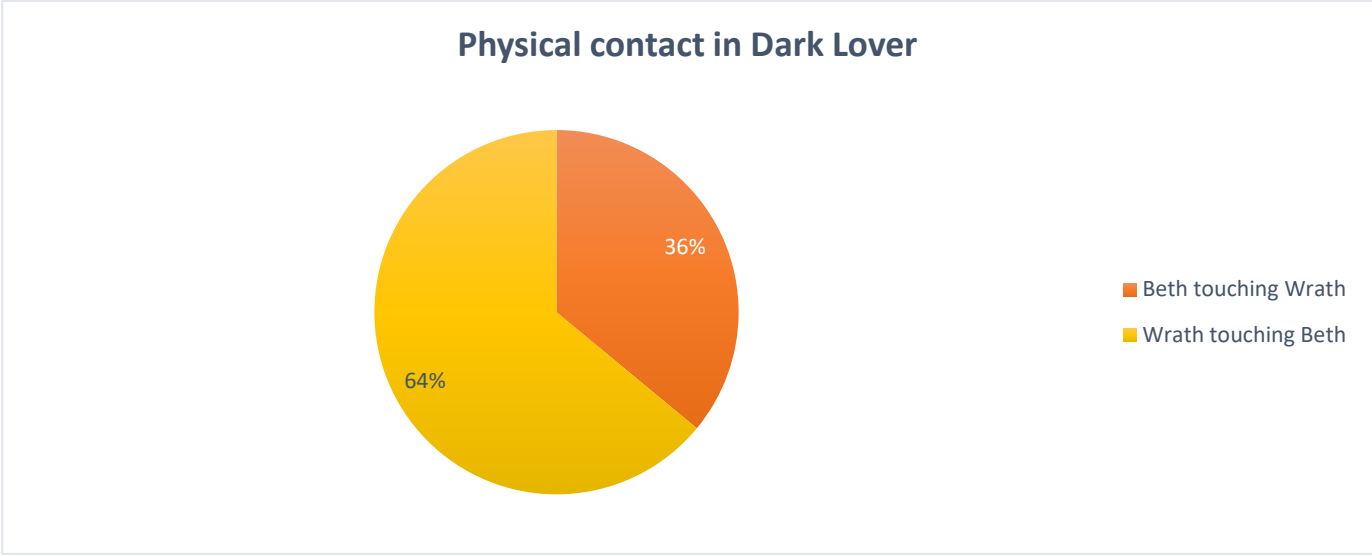
Figure 2: Physical contact in *Dark Lover*

Unlike the word list, their instances of physical contact do not reveal an equal relationship between Beth and Wrath, as Wrath is the main instigator of physical interaction – but it is not excessively skewed, meaning the female is not entirely inferior. In addition to analyzing their physical interaction, I have also looked at what Mills calls 'fragmentation', which may serve to reveal how the different characters are portrayed. I have categorized all physical interactions in terms of whether the affected is referred to as a whole person (e.g. "she slapped him") or a body part (e.g. "She wrapped her legs around his hips"). The distribution of the instances where Beth is the actor can be seen in figure 3:

Beth as actor: affected male/male body part

- Male
- Male body part

21%
79%
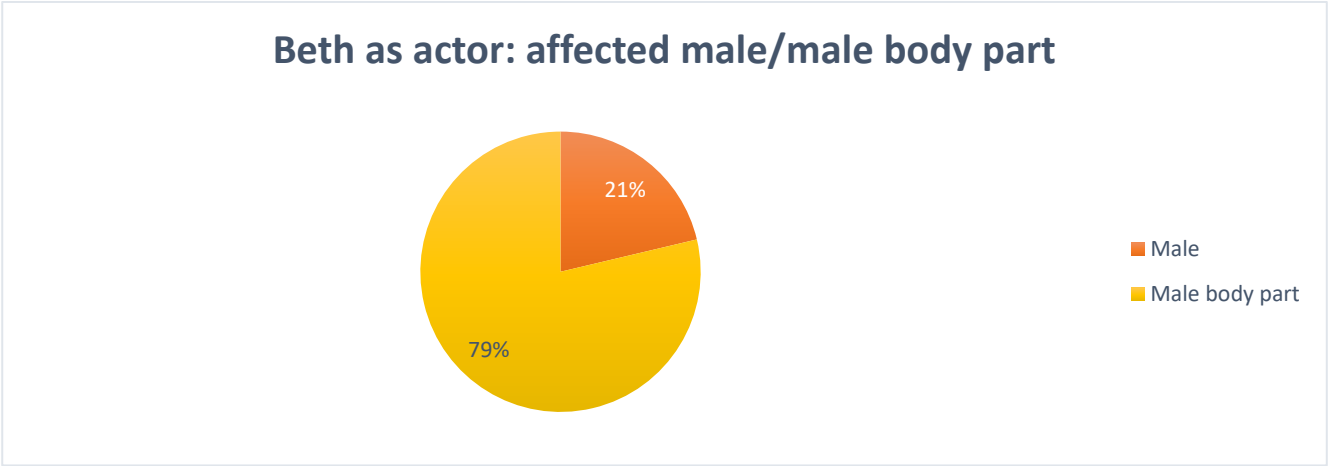
Figure 3: Beth as actor: affected male/male body part

The figure reveals a favoring of referring to Wrath by his body parts, which might suggest that Wrath is not portrayed as a whole entity, but rather as the sum of his parts. This shows an objectification of the male, which stands in contrast to how Beth is referred to:

Wrath as actor: affected female/female body part

- Female: 37%
- Female body part: 63%
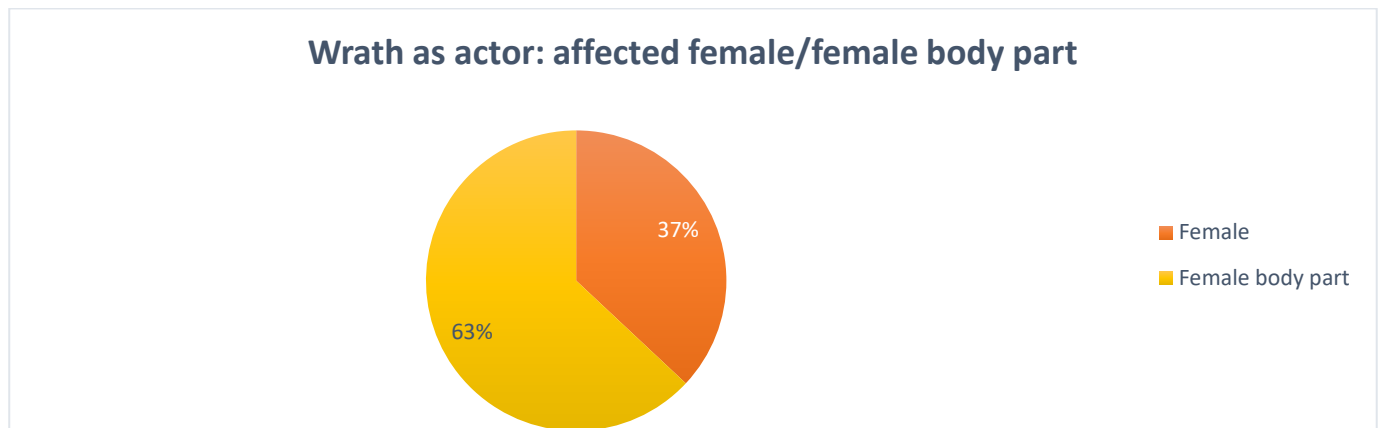
Figure 4: Wrath as actor: affected female/female body part

This shows that Beth is more often referred to as a whole being rather than merely her body parts. It is interesting to note that *Dark Lover* objectifies the male more than it objectifies the female, but this might be tied to its female audience.

In addition to discussing descriptive statistics regarding Beth and Wrath's physical interaction, this project will likewise employ inferential statistics in order to provide statistical back-up. Based on the numbers above, a Fisher's exact test has been conducted, which can be seen in figure 5:

	Beth as actor	Wrath as actor	Total
(Fe)male	23	71	94
Body parts	85	121	206
Total	108	192	300

Fisher's exact test

The two-tailed P value equals 0.0063
The association between rows (groups) and columns (outcomes)
is considered to be very statistically significant.

Figure 5: Fisher's exact test, Dark Lover

As the figure shows, the p-value equals 0.0063, which means there is a statistical significance between the groups and outcomes above. This suggests that the distribution between Beth as actor, Wrath as actor and (fe)male and body parts carries statistical significance.

2.3.2.   *Instances of physical contact between Anastasia and Christian in* Fifty Shades of Grey

As shown in Appendix 8, Anastasia is the actor 110 times and Christian is the actor 663 times. This is illustrated in the figure below:
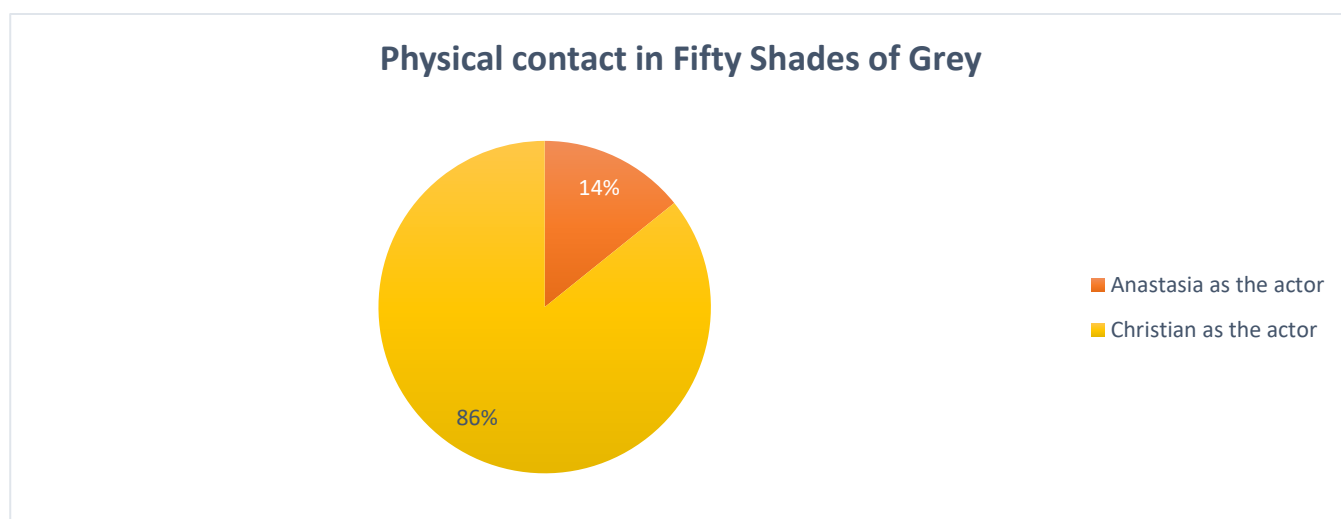
Figure 6: Physical contact in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

It is clear that there is a large discrepancy in the distribution of Anastasia and Christian as the actor. Christian is the actor 86 % of the times they have a physical interaction which underlines his dominant position in the narrative. By only being the instigator 14 % of the times the two main protagonists touch each other, Anastasia is – stylistically – being portrayed as the lesser, in contrast to Christian's superiority. In addition to this, Appendix 8 shows a fair number of instances where Christian's physical interaction with Anastasia is portrayed as forceful and coercive: (54) "[he pushes me] so I fall on to the mattress", (221b) "he slaps me hard" and (264) "He pinches me hard". It can be argued that it is within the nature of the narrative as the text deals with BDSM-themes but it is likewise clear that Anastasia does not particularly enjoy those aspects of their relationship – which suggests that she might not be entirely comfortable with those types of physical interactions.

Appendix 8 also shows whether their physical interaction deals with a whole person or a body part. Anastasia's interactions with Christian, in this regard, can be seen here:
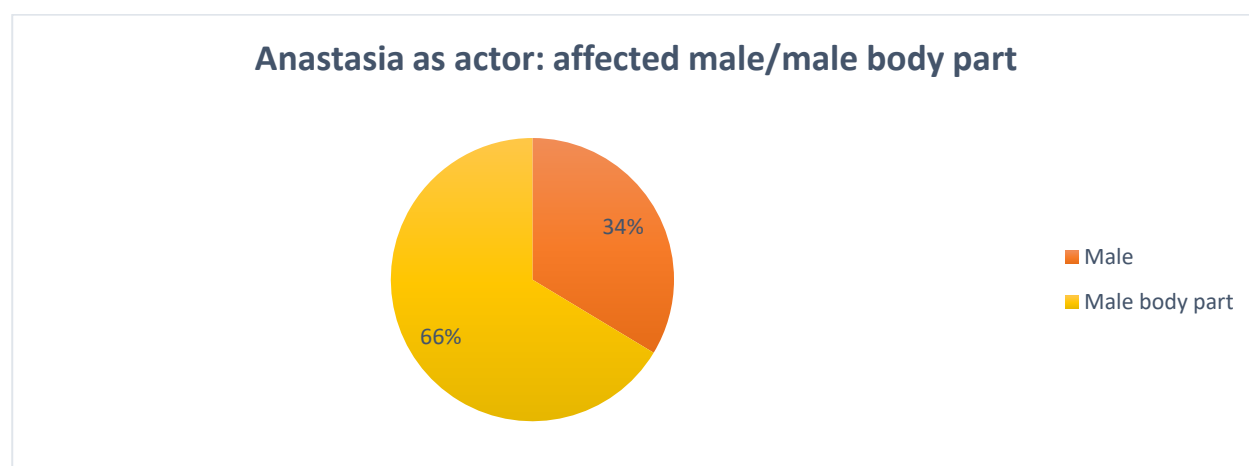
Figure 7: Anastasia as actor: affected male/male body part

The pie chart displays a tendency to refer to Christian as his body parts, rather than as a whole being. This may serve to underline that Christian is mostly reduced to his parts, rather than being

portrayed as a whole individual. However, due to the first person narrator, it is possible to see that Anastasia likewise thinks of herself primarily in terms of her body parts as evident below:
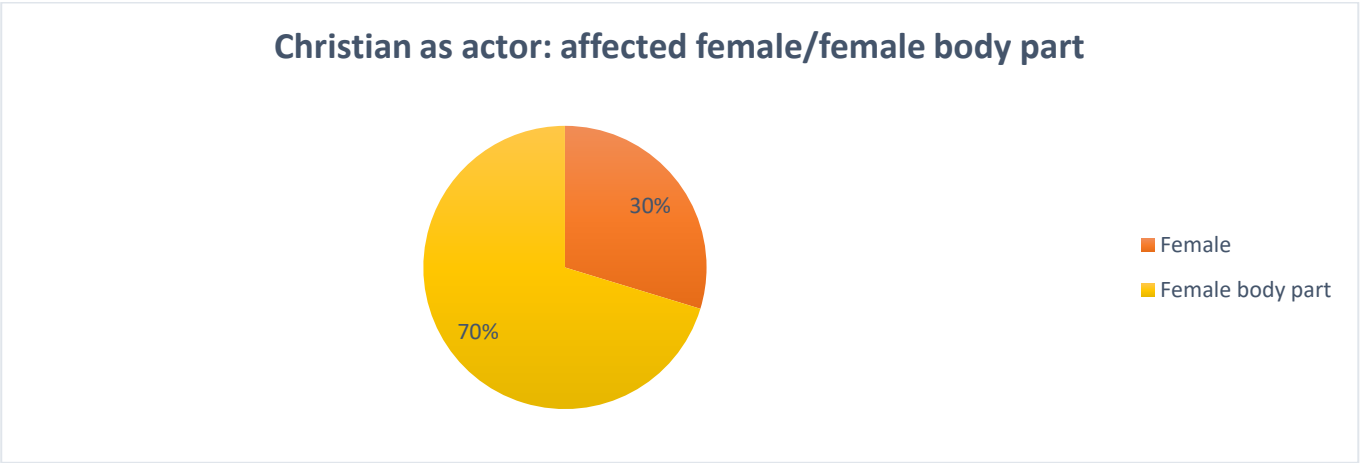
Figure 8: Christian as actor: affected female/female body part

This shows that both characters are primarily referred to as their body parts, rather than as whole beings, when they have a physical interaction with their significant other. I have likewise submitted the data presented in this section to a Fisher's exact test to determine whether there is a statistical significance in the difference in the data sets:

	Anastasia as actor	Christian as actor	Total
(Fe)male	37	197	234
Body parts	73	466	539
Total	110	663	773

Fisher's exact test

The two-tailed P value equals 0.4332
The association between rows (groups) and columns (outcomes) is considered to be not statistically significant.

Figure 9: Fisher's exact test, *Fifty Shades of Grey*

The p-value is 0.4332, which shows that there is no statistical significance between the groups and outcomes.

2.3.3.   *Instances of physical contact between Anastasia and Grey in* Grey

Lastly, I will comment on and discuss the physical contact in *Grey*. As evident in Appendix 9, Anastasia is the actor 124 times and Christian is the actor 665 times. Below is a figure outlining their physical contact:
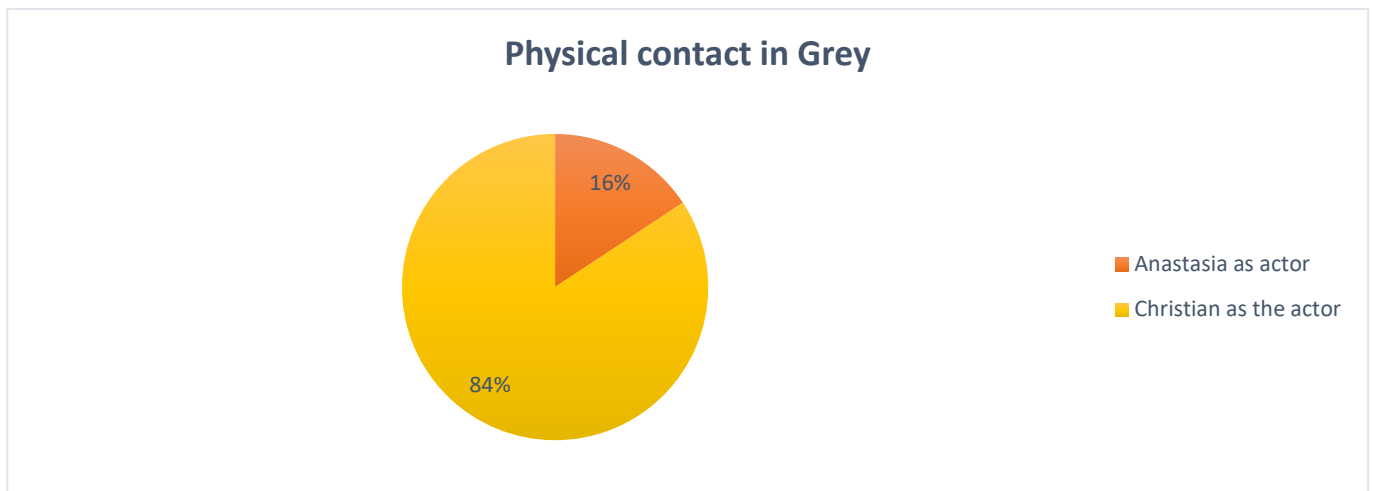
Figure 10: Physical contact in Grey

As with *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Grey* shows a disproportionate relationship between male and female agency in terms of physical interaction. Christian is once again portrayed as the superior, dominant and prevailing participant in their relationship, while Anastasia is reduced to being the instigator of their physical contact a mere 16 % of the time. Figure 1 shows how Christian is referred to when Anastasia is the actor:

Anastasia as actor: affected male/male body parts

- Male 30%
- Male body parts 70%
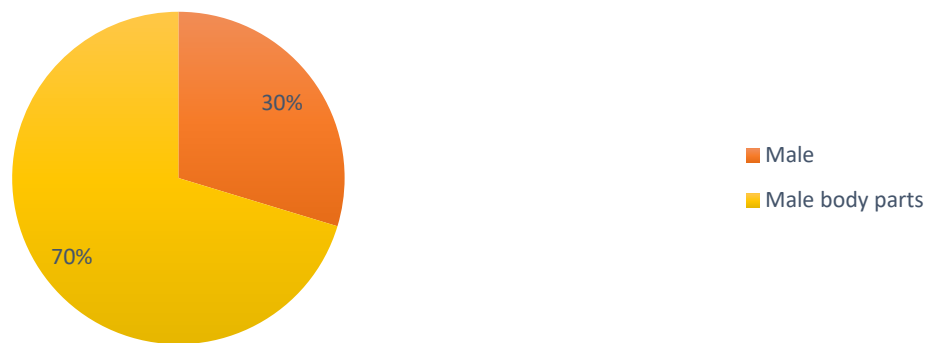
Figure 11: Anastasia as actor: affected male/male body parts

Christian refers to himself by his body parts 70 % of the time, only referring to himself as a whole individual in 30 % of the instances. This exactly matches how Anastasia refers to herself in *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It largely appears the same way when Christian is the actor, see figure 12:

Christian as actor: affected female/female body parts

- Female 32%
- Female body part 68%
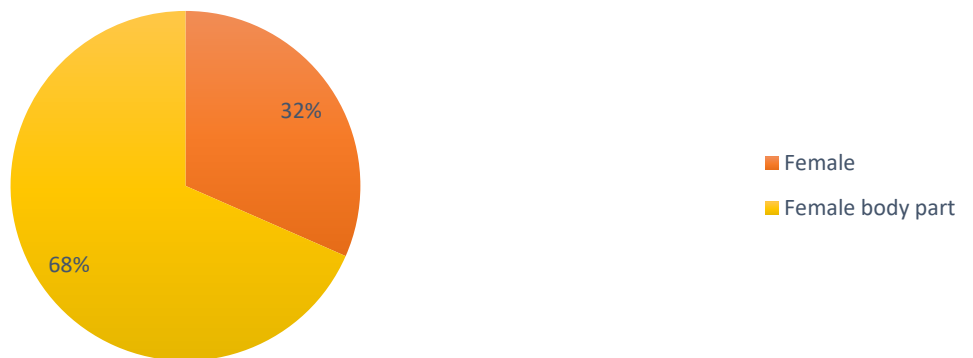
Figure 12: Christian as actor: affected female/female body parts

Here, Anastasia is likewise primarily referred to as her body parts, almost by the same percentage as Christian is. Though it is natural to refer mainly to body parts in erotic fiction (due to the explicit

descriptions of sexual interactions), it is still interesting to note to what degree *Grey* – and *Fifty Shades* – reduce the main characters to their body parts.

The physical interaction in *Grey* was submitted to a Fisher's exact test and yielded the following result:

	Anastasia as actor	Christian as actor	Total
(Fe)male	38	210	248
Body parts	90	455	545
Total	128	665	793

Fisher's exact test

The two-tailed P value equals 0.7549
The association between rows (groups) and columns (outcomes)
is considered to be not statistically significant.

Figure 13: Fisher's exact test, Grey

Similar to the results from *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the Fisher's exact test does not suggest there is a statistically significant difference in *Grey*.

2.4. Comparison and discussion: physical contact

The physical contact in *Dark Lover* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* differ greatly as it is primarily the male who instigates physical contact in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. Though Wrath is likewise the main instigator in physical interactions between him and Beth in *Dark Lover*, a comparison to *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* highlights that the latter two significantly favor the male as the instigator of physical interaction. This suggests that Anastasia does not have the same agency as Beth which will also be discussed in the qualitative analysis of the sex scenes in the texts. The Fisher's exact test of independence did point out that there is a statistically significant distribution between the actors and whether they touched a body part of a whole person in *Dark Lover* – and not in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and Grey. And while that is definitely interesting, it is also important to acknowledge that this does not suggest that the discrepancy in the distribution of

actor/affected in the latter two is not distinctly skewed. As pointed out numerous times throughout the analysis, Anastasia is continually portrayed as inferior to Christian, both in terms of bodily and sexual agency, and from her own point of view, she perpetually foregrounds his presence – and he has a radical fixation on her, even surpassing her focus on him. Either way, their relationship as reflected in the analysis above proves to subscribe to traditional gender roles where the man is the active, aggressive participant while the woman remains passive.

In all three texts, the analysis shows an overarching tendency to refer to both protagonists as their body parts; however, by comparing the instances where the female is the actor and where the male is the actor, it highlights that the emphasis is on female body parts:

(Fe)male and body parts in Dark Lover

- Male
- Male body part
- Female
- Female body part

8%
28%
24%
40%
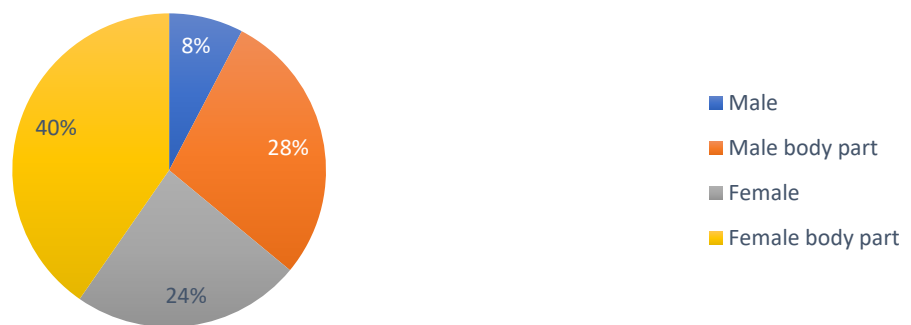
(Fe)male and body parts in Fifty Shades of Grey

- Male
- Male body part
- Female
- Female body part

5%
9%
26%
60%

(Fe]male and body parts in Grey

Legend:
- Male
- Male body parts
- Female
- Female body part
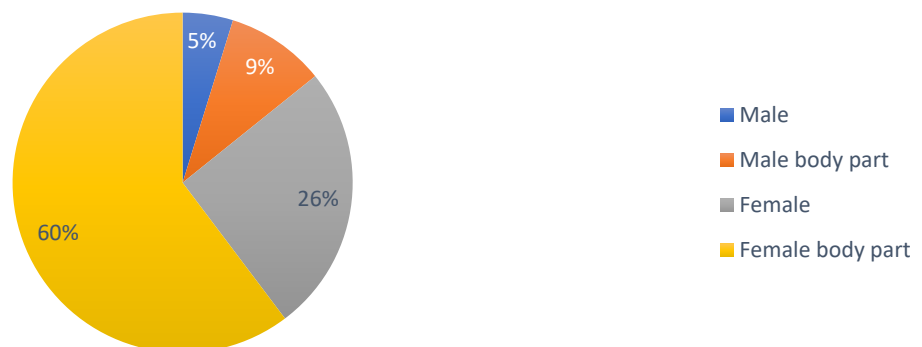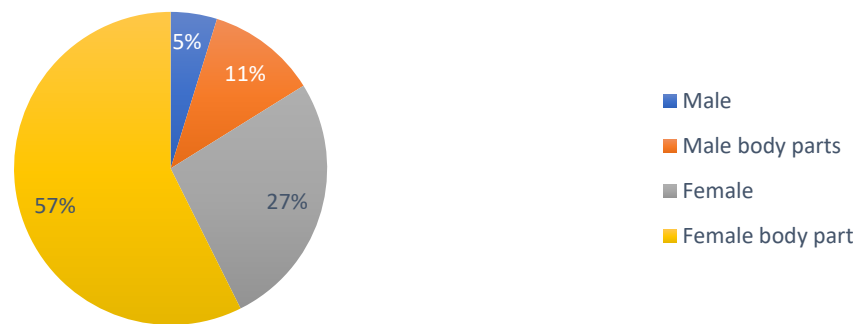
Figure 14, 15 and 16: (Fe)male and body parts in Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey, Grey

In *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, more than half of the instances where the couple have a physical interaction have the female body parts taking the role of the 'affected'. In *Dark Lover* it is less than half the instances and though the text likewise puts emphasis on female body parts, it is not to the same degree as *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. In order to determine whether there is any statistical difference between these patterns across the three books, an ANOVA test has been conducted:

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	3	98	32,66666667	70,3333333
Column 2	3	478	159,3333333	5894,33333
Column 4	3	248	82,66666667	76,3333333
Column 4	3	1042	347,3333333	38450,3333

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	171622,333	3	57207,44444	5,14324388	0,02849724	4,06618055
Within Groups	88982,6667	8	11122,83333			
Total	260605	11				

Table 5: ANOVA test

The one-way ANOVA test, which is what I have presented above, is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three (or more) independent groups. By comparing the means between each group, the ANOVA test determines whether any of those means are statistically significantly different from each other through a test of the null hypothesis. The numbers I have used in the calculation above are the same as in the pie charts. As F > F crit, (in the ANOVA test above, 5,14324388 > 4,06618055) we reject the null hypothesis, thus accepting the alternative hypothesis which means there is a statistical difference between the patterns across the three books – meaning it is possible to suggest that one of the books differ from the rest. Unfortunately, an ANOVA test is unable to determine which means (in this case, which book) is statistically significantly different, but still serves to prove that the patterns uncovered above are not the expected result.

2.5. *Verbs after direct speech in* Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey *and* Grey

As the questions of power and agency are foregrounded in this project, it is revealing to look at the use of verbs after direct speech. This section will account for, analyze and discuss the use of verbs after direct speech in conversations between the male and female protagonists in *Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. By comparing the verbs used after direct speech, it is possible to look for patterns which might reveal how gender, agency and balances of power are portrayed stylistically, which in turn enable a discussion and comparison of these aspects in the three texts. The discussion and comparison will include aspects such as gender theory, gender roles, the question of agency and what the use of verbs reveals about the protagonists' relationships.

In *Dark Lover*, the author's writing style facilitates a tendency to avoid using verbs after direct speech, which contributes to the low frequency and low number of verbs in Appendix 10, where a table outlining the rank and frequency of verbs used after direct speech can be found.

However, it is still possible to discuss the semantic connotations of the different verbs used by Beth and Wrath. The top 10 most frequent verbs can be seen below:

Beth to Wrath after direct speech			Wrath to Beth after direct speech		
Rank	*Frequency*	*Word*	*Rank*	*Frequency*	*Word*
1	48	said	1	67	said
2	19	asked	2	14	asked
3	16	whispered	3	9	whispered
4	9	murmured	4	7	demanded
5	4	called out	5	5	murmured
6	4	yelled	6	4	drawled
7	3	breathed	7	4	muttered
8	3	demanded	8	4	said softly
9	3	moaned	9	3	growled
10	3	mumbled	10	2	bit out

Table 6: Top 10 most frequent verbs in conversations between main characters in *Dark Lover*

 They both have neutral verbs at the top of their lists, both favoring 'said' and 'asked'. 'whispered' is third on the list for both Beth and Wrath and although it carries the semantic connotation of secrecy, this can very well be contributed to the supernatural themes of the book. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that Beth's 'whispered' has a frequency of 16, while Wrath's frequency for the same word is only 9. Likewise, the fourth on Wrath's list is 'demanded' which carries dominant connotations, while Beth's is 'murmured', which appears more subdued. However, Beth's top 10 most frequently used verbs also includes verbs such as 'called out', 'yelled' and 'demanded', whilst Wrath's top 10 includes verbs such as 'murmured', 'muttered' and 'said softly'. The list in Appendix 10 showcases that while the two main protagonists of *Dark Lover* do utter verbs that can

be connected semantically to traditional gender roles, they likewise employ verbs which may be contributed to the other gender, proving that their balance of power in relation to gender is not unequal. All in all, the verbs used after direct speech in *Dark Lover* are fairly neutral, and Beth and Wrath use verbs with both dominant and inferior semantic connotations, proving that their uses of verbs do not adhere to traditional, stereotypical gender roles. Additionally, Wrath use verbs 143 times and Beth 138 times, which likewise emphasizes their equal relationship.

In *Fifty Shades of Grey* it is clear the author favors the use of verbs after direct speech, which can be seen in the high frequencies and diversity of verbs in Appendix 11. The top 10 most frequent verbs can be seen below:

Anastasia to Christian after direct speech			Christian to Anastasia after direct speech		
Rank	*Frequency*	*Word*	*Rank*	*Frequency*	*Word*
1	80	whisper	1	108	murmurs
2	46	murmur	2	68	whispers
3	33	ask	3	66	asks
4	20	breathe	4	63	says
5	16	mutter	5	56	breathes
6	7	reply	6	24	orders
7	6	beg	7	16	says softly
8	6	say	8	13	growls
9	5	snap	9	12	commands
10	4	groan	10	12	says

Table 7: Top 10 most frequent verbs in conversations between main characters in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

Anastasia's most frequently used verb is 'whisper' (80 instances), while Christian's most frequently used verb is 'murmurs' (108 instances). Appendix 11 both reveal that Christian has the largest

diversity of verbs, while also the most instances of verbs after direct speech. This can be contributed to the fact that he is the most active participant in the conversations between him and Anastasia, which portrays him as the most dominant of the two. Likewise, Christian's list includes verbs such as 'orders', 'growls', 'snaps' and 'shouts' within its top 20 most frequently used verbs. It is interesting that verbs with the semantic connotation of coercion and aggression are often foregrounded when Christian speaks. It is likewise interesting that Anastasia's top 20 most frequently used verbs includes verbs such as 'beg', 'mumble', and 'squeak', as those verbs carry the semantic connotation of inferiority and passivity. However, it is also vital to note that Christian's list also contains verbs such as 'whispers', 'breathes' and 'says softly' high on the list; likewise, both 'breathe' and 'whisper' have a high frequency on Anastasia's list. The use of verbs such as 'whisper(s)' and 'breathe(s)' can be linked to the genre of the book, as descriptions of sex scenes and their aftermath – and descriptions of the conversations the participants might have – often favor verbs with soft, tender connotations; this can especially be seen in text sequences regarding the end of sexual intercourse. It is generally possible to observe in Appendix 11 that Christian is often described as using verbs with the semantic connotations of aggressiveness, superiority and even intimidation. In contrast to this is Anastasia, who – through the use of verbs after direct speech – is presented as passive, inferior and submissive. By foregrounding these connotations, a certain set of qualities are associated with the male and female protagonists, which further underlines *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s use of traditional gender roles. In addition to this, it is interesting to note that while Christian's highest frequency is 108, Anastasia's highest frequency is 80. If all the frequencies are added together, it becomes evident that while Christian's direct speech is followed by verbs 648 times, it is only the case 330 times when Anastasia is the one speaking. This showcases that not only is Christian highlighted as the dominant in their relationship through the semantic connotations of the verbs in their conversations, but likewise in the number of times they

are described speaking. Of course, by only looking at the verbs used after direct speech, this analysis does not account for all the times Anastasia and Christian are speaking in the book, as the author sometimes chooses not to follow direct speech with a verb. However, unlike J.R. Ward, E.L. James favors the use of verbs after direct speech and it is thus possible to speculate about patterns revealing a tendency to foreground Christian, both in terms of emotional and physical supremacy in the narrative, but likewise in his sheer volume of presence within the text, narrative aside.

Grey differs from both *Dark Lover* and – interestingly – from *Fifty Shades of Grey*. In *Grey*, both Anastasia and Christian have rather neutral verbs at the top of their lists; Anastasia's most frequently used verb is 'says', while Christian's most frequently used verb is 'ask' (see Appendix 12). Their top 10 most frequent verbs can be found below:

Anastasia to Christian after direct speech			**Christian to Anastasia after direct speech**		
Rank	*Frequency*	*Word*	*Rank*	*Frequency*	*Word*
1	190	says	1	92	ask
2	70	asks	2	64	whisper
3	42	whispers	3	25	mutter
4	9	mutters	4	22	order
5	8	breathes	5	20	warn
6	8	snaps	6	19	murmur
7	7	answers	7	14	growl
8	7	teases	8	12	add
9	6	adds	9	10	say
10	6	begs	10	10	tell

Table 8: Top 10 most frequent verbs in conversations between main characters in *Grey*

In addition to this, their most frequently used verbs account for a large number of their total verbs; in fact, Anastasia's most frequently used verb (190 instances) appears as many times as her rank 2 through 16. Christian's verbs are more diverse than Anastasia's, but the frequency drops drastically around rank 14. However, it is still possible to see a grouping in the semantic connotations of the verbs. In relation to Anastasia, verbs like 'whispers', 'mutters', 'breathes' and 'begs' appear in her top 10 most frequently used verbs, whereas Christian's top 10 list includes verbs such as 'order', 'warn' and 'growl'. This emphasizes, like in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Anastasia's submissive role, which stands in contrast to Christian's dominant and superior role.

2.6. *Comparison of verbs of direct speech*

Firstly, this section will compare *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, as they contain the same narrative and the analyses above reveal engaging discrepancies and lastly, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* will be compared to *Dark Lover*.

A brief look at the two appendices regarding verbs after direct speech in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* reveals that there is a larger diversity of verbs in *Fifty Shades of Grey* than in *Grey*. This is largely influenced by the fact that *Fifty Shades of Grey* contains a great deal more of the formula 'verb + adverb/adjective' than *Grey*, where the latter only has 23 instances of this formula, compared to *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s 125 instances. It is important to keep in mind that the author may have chosen to insert descriptions regarding the tone of an utterance another way than the 'verb + adverb/adjective'-formula, but the large variation between *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* in this aspect is still quite intriguing. It is possible to look at this tendency and pattern in relation to gender roles, as *Fifty Shades of Grey* is written from a female point of view and *Grey* is written from a male point of view. By favoring the use of adverbs and adjectives when describing direct speech between the main protagonists in *Fifty Shades of Grey* – and largely omitting this in the male point of view text, *Grey* – the author facilitates a view on gender that appears very traditional. Women are

emotional, sensitive and delicate, while men view the world as a much simpler place, as they are logical and rational. This is quite clearly reflected in the use of verbs after direct speech, as *Grey* showcases that the gender of the narrator in the text has immense influence on how the different characters are presented. Christian, the male, views the world more straightforwardly and reasonably than Anastasia, the female, who in comparison is consumed by her feelings, constantly adding moods, affections and reactions to the utterances spoken by the two protagonists – and most frequently adding them to Christian's utterances.

In comparison to *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, *Dark Lover* presents a more equal use of verbs, in terms of the semantic connotations which may be tied to specific verbs. Although both Beth and Wrath use a few of the verbs highlighted above as either subdued or dominant, they do not strictly employ only one type, but rather use words from both categories. This ensures that their relationship appears to be more in balance, in terms of traditional gender roles and agency, than Christian and Anastasia's does in both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. Christian and Anastasia's verbs after direct speech are often dominated by semantic connotations facilitating a certain view on gender, namely that of traditional and stereotypical ideas about how men and women should behave.

2.7. Descriptions of male and female protagonists in Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey and Grey

This section will engage with an analysis and discussion of how the main protagonists are presented in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, both in terms of physical appearance and character traits. An analysis and discussion of these descriptions enable this project to use elements of feminist and gender theory to conduct a stylistic investigation of the protagonists' characterization and depiction. In *Dark Lover*, it is possible to discuss whether the characterization of Beth and Wrath differ and in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* it is fascinating to discuss both how Anastasia

and Christian describe themselves – but also how they describe each other and whether this description differs from their counterpart's.

Appendix 13 contains all the descriptions of the main protagonists, Beth and Wrath. As *Dark Lover* is written from a 3rd person point of view, the descriptions in the appendix are both from the point of view of Beth and Wrath, but likewise from other characters in the novel, such as Darius, Butch or Havers. Below is a table with all the adjectives and stylistic devices used to describe Beth:

Adjective	*Semantic connotations and context*	*From who's POV?*
tall	Wrath is blind and therefore only has limited access to descriptions of Beth's physical attributes	Wrath
[her hair was] black	=0=	Wrath
gorgeous	positive term, often associated with women	Butch
long, thick black [hair]		Butch
impossible bright blue [eyes]		Butch
skin like pale cream		Butch
Long [legs]		Butch
small [waist]		Butch
perfectly proportioned [breasts]	Alliteration used to describe Beth's breasts	Butch
smart [and] funny	Relating to her character	Butch

[sit-forward-in-your-chair] beautiful	positive term, often associated with women	Butch
lovely [lines of her body]	positive term, often associated with women	Butch
[her] long, exquisite [neck]		Butch
[her] perfect, perfect [lips]		Butch
white [female]	Within the register of law enforcement, as Butch is issuing an APB on Beth	Butch
long black [hair]		Butch
dark-haired [beauty]		Marissa
[set off her hips] beautifully	positive term, often associated with women	Butch
[her ankles looked] fragile [and] lovely	both adjectives associated with women; depending on the context, fragile can have both a negative and positive semantic connotation; in this case, it is positive	Butch
dark-haired [shellan][3]		Havers
dark-haired [Beth]		Havers

Table 9: Descriptions of Beth in *Dark Lover*

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[3] 'Shellan' means 'wife' in the "Old Language" the vampires speak in The Black Dagger Brotherhood series. The origin and grammatical structures of the language are never revealed, but it is described as sounding Russian.

It is interesting to note that a) most of the adjectives used to describe Beth relate to her physical appearance and b) that these descriptions are mostly based on thoughts or observations from Butch, the local detective who has a crush on Beth, but is later in the series' narrative line introduced to his own love interest, Marissa (who is the former wife of Wrath). This can be tied to the fact Wrath is blind and therefore has great difficulty describing Beth's physical appearance. Nonetheless, it leads to the interesting case of a women not being objectified by her love interest. When the roles are reversed, things look a bit different, which can be seen in the table below:

Adjective	Semantic connotation(s), context and thoughts	From who's POV?
[his hair was] long [and] black	Description of hair	Darius
aristocratic		Darius
brutal	Violent and/or dominant connotation	Darius
dark [shape]		Beth
tremendous		Beth
[his shoulders were] wide [as beams]	Physical appearance	Beth
[his legs as] thick [as her torso]	Physical appearance	Beth
colossal		Beth
long [legs]		Beth
gorgeous	Positive connotation	Beth

[his jaw was a] straight [shot of bone]		Beth
[lips] full		Beth
[the hollows under his cheeks casting] heavy [shadows]		Beth
[his hair was] straight [and] black		Beth
[dark] beard		Beth
[his] carved [face]		Beth
arching [brows]		Beth
thick [lashes]		Beth
high, regal [cheekbones]	2nd adjective referring to royalty	Beth
huge		Beth
[his abdomen was] ribbed		Beth
[his legs were] thick [and] corded		Beth
[his sex was as] big [and] magnificent		Beth
smooth [skin]		Beth
hard [muscle]		Beth
black [hair]		Wrath

[two] smudgy [eyebrows]		Wrath
white [male]	Butch's APB; description of Wrath's race	Butch
shoulder-length black [hair]	Butch's APB	Butch
raw [power of his arms]	'Power' connotation	Beth
[he looked damn] comfortable		Beth
long black [hair]		Beth
sexy	Positive connotation	Beth
wide, bare [shoulders]		Marissa
[his hair was] so soft		Marissa
hard [male]		Marissa
soft [hair]		Marissa
dark [waves of hair]		Marissa
[Wrath's] towering [height]	Threatening connotation	Marissa
[his] cold, hard [features]	Negative connotations	Marissa
[his] awesome [presence]		Marissa

Table 10: Descriptions of Wrath in *Dark Lover*

As it was the case with Beth, most of the adjectives used to describe Wrath relates to his physical

appearance. In addition to this, Wrath is described from numerous points of view; Darius, Marissa,

Beth and Butch. What is mostly highlighted are his physical attributes, such as his height, build and similar aspects – and these aspects are often described in comparison to Beth's smaller frame, which further emphasizes his physical dominance. In addition to this, his hair is often mentioned and described, perhaps because it is unusual for men for have long hair, making Wrath's haircut noteworthy. Unlike Beth, Wrath is sometimes described using adjectives with violent or threatening connotations – and this is further emphasized with quotes from Appendix 13 such as "he moved like a predator" and "[his sunglasses] made him look like a hit man". All in all Appendix 13 and the table above showcase that Wrath is often described by his physical features, which can appear threatening due to his large size and the nature of the adjectives used, but especially the full quotes in Appendix 13 showcase that his aggression and dangerous connotations are not targeted at Beth. In a comparison of the descriptions of Beth and Wrath it is interesting to note that they are sometimes referred to by the same adjectives – examples could be "long [legs]", "black [hair]" or "tall". However, the semantic connotations of the adjectives used to describe the two differ. Below is a table outlining adjectives used to describe Beth and Wrath which contains certain semantic connotations:

Beth	*Wrath*
gorgeous	aristocratic
beautiful	brutal
lovely	tremendous
long, exquisite	colossal
perfect, perfect	gorgeous
beautifully	big [and] magnificent
fragile [and] lovely	sexy

	hard
	towering
	cold, hard

Table 11: Adjectives and adverbs describing Beth and Wrath in *Dark Lover*

This table proves that Beth is largely referred to by adjectives relating to her beauty and femininity; this is especially clear in the adjectives 'beautiful', 'lovely', 'exquisite', and 'fragile'. Likewise, Wrath is painted as the dominant and brutal male, which is underlined in the table above. This proves that *Dark Lover* still adheres to traditional gender stereotypes in the way they present the male and female protagonist. This is likewise clear within the supernatural themes of the book, as the vampires in the *Black Dagger Brotherhood* universe are described as extremely masculine – and, likewise, the female vampires are often described as extraordinarily feminine, though this mostly relates to their physical appearance and not their personalities, as the women of the *Black Dagger Brotherhood* universe often showcase the same interpersonal qualities and attributes as the men.

Appendix 14 showcases that both Anastasia and Christian are described in large quantity in *Fifty Shades of Grey* – at least in comparison to *Dark Lover*. For that reason, this analysis of descriptions of main characters will be conducted differently, as I will rather outline a table with the adjectives and adverbs used to describe Anastasia and Christian, including the frequencies of the adjectives/adverbs. The adjectives appear in the order they are introduced in Appendix 14. When an adjective/adverb refers to a specific body part multiple times, I have added the noun in brackets after the adjective/adverb. The table can be found below:

Anastasia	*Frequency*	*Christian*	*Frequency*
pale	2	long-fingered	1
brown-haired	1	gracefully	1

blue [eyes]	1	perfect	1
gawky	1	gray [eyes]	14
uncoordinated	1	long [finger]	5
mousey	1	attractive	3
beautiful	6	confident	2
brave	1	commanding	1
flawless [skin]	1	arrogant	1
hot	1	autocratic	1
stunning	1	cold	1
bright	1	intimidating	1
		focused	1
		intense	2
		young(er)	2
		courteous	1
		formal	1
		stuffy	1
		bold	2
		outdoorsy	1
		warm	1
		husky	1
		good-looking	2
		breathtaking	1
		amused	1

		handsome	1
		powerful	2
		urbane	1
		hot	4
		sculptured [mouth/lips]	3
		smoky	2
		unruly	1
		tall	1
		broad-shouldered	1
		slim	1
		yummy	2
		long-legged	1
		sexy	3
		straight [nose]	1
		kind	1
		caring	1
		bossy	1
		dominating	1
		strange	2
		kinky	3
		dazzling	1
		lovely [face]	1

		pouty [lips}	1
		rich(er)	3
		divinely formed [body]	1
		captivating [eyes]	1
		intelligent [eyes]	1
		deep [eyes]	1
		dark, dark [eyes]	1
		dominant	1
		creepy	1
		good-looking	1
		sad	1
		gorgeous	1
		serious	1
		self-contained	1
		poor	1
		fucked-up	1
		philanthropic	1
		glorious	1
		patronizing	1

Table 12: Adjectives and adverbs describing Anastasia and Christian in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

The table above clearly demonstrates that Christian is described in much larger detail than

Anastasia but given the nature of the narrative – Anastasia being the narrator – it is not unexpected,

which will also be showcased in the analysis of *Grey* below. Appendix 14 – in addition to

containing the full quotes – displays from who's point of view the description is from. Of course, given that Anastasia is a 1st person narrator, access to other characters point of view can only be allowed through direct speech. It is interesting to note that out of the 16 quotes describing Anastasia's appearance, only six of those are from her own point of view; the rest of the descriptions mainly derive from direct speech from Christian and Kate (her roommate and best friend). In contrast to this are descriptions of Christian's appearance, where only a few are from the point of view of characters beside Anastasia. The adjectives and adverbs used to describe Anastasia centers around her specific appearance ('brown-haired', 'pale', 'blue [eyes]) and her clumsy nature ('gawky', 'uncoordinated'). They also denote her as 'beautiful', 'hot' and 'stunning'. There are a few adjectives used to describe her character, 'brave' and 'bright'. Christian's list of adjectives and adverbs focus on both his physical appearance and his character traits. A table outlining his physical features and character traits can be found below, where they have been grouped into semantic groups:

(Semantic group)	Physical appearance	Character trait
Neutral	long-fingered • gray [eyes] • long [finger] • young(er) • outdoorsy • sculptured [lips] • tall • broad-shouldered • slim • long-legged • straight [nose] • pouty [lips] • deep [eyes]	intense • formal • husky • amused urbane • kinky • rich(er) • serious
Positive	attractive • good-looking • breath-taking • handsome • hot • smoky • yummy • sexy dazzling • lovely [face] • divinely formed [body] • captivating [eyes] • intelligent [eyes] • good-looking • gorgeous • glorious	gracefully • perfect • confident focused • courteous • bold • warm kind • caring • philanthropic
Negative	unruly • dark, dark [eyes]	arrogant • cold • stuffy • strange creepy • sad • self-contained • poor • fucked-up

Dominant	Ø	commanding • autocratic • intimidating • powerful • bossy • dominating • dominant • patronizing
Subordinate	Ø	Ø

Table 13: Adjectives and adverbs used to describe Christian in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, sorted according to semantic groups

Of course, the semantic groups above are subjective and another writer might have divided them differently, but it proves to emphasize the points that a) there is a focus on Christian's physical appearance and b) that his character traits contain a large number of adjectives and adverbs relating to semantic connotations of dominance. In addition to this, some of the adjectives contradict each other ('cold', 'warm'; 'arrogant', 'kind'), which further underlines Christian's unpredictable nature. It is also intriguing to note that Christian is often described using adjectives/adverbs with dominant connotations. Through the use of adjectives such as "commanding', 'autocratic', 'intimidating' and 'patronizing' Christian is presented as dominant and superior, which follows the characterization this analysis has previously made. All in all, the use of adjectives/adverbs used to describe the main characters in *Fifty Shades of Grey* further emphasizes the general characterization argued in this analysis, which is that of Christian being the dominant and Anastasia the inferior. This is now evident, not only in their actions and interpersonal relationship, but likewise in the way they are described within the narrative.

In *Grey*, the focus is on descriptions of Anastasia. Where Appendix 14 contains 66 quotes from *Fifty Shades of Grey* describing Christian, Appendix 15 contains 113 quotes describing Anastasia. A table outlining the adjectives and adverbs used to describe Christian and Anastasia in *Grey* and their frequencies can be found below. Like the table outlining this from *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the adjectives and adverbs are ranked by their appearance in the appendix:

Anastasia	Frequency	Christian	Frequency
long [hair]	2	handsome	1
chestnut [hair]	2	pretty [face]	1
pale [body]	3	intimidating	1
slim [shoulders]	2	cool [eyes]	1
clear [eyes]	1	gray [eyes]	2
unembarrassed [eyes]	1	domineering	1
powder blue [eyes]	1	graceful	1
guileless [eyes]	1	fucked-up [son of a bitch]	1
small [face]	1	big [eyes]	1
sweet [face]	1		
flawless [skin]	2		
attractive	5		
slight	2		
dark [hair]	1		
submissive	2		
bright [meaning clever]	3		
full [lips]	2		
candid	1		
unassuming	1		
quiet	1		

delicate [brow]	1		
ingenuous [eyes]	1		
big [eyes]	3		
shy	2		
awkward	2		
beautiful	20		
blue [eyes]	7		
long [legs]	3		
narrow [waist]	1		
perfect [tits/breasts]	2		
sweet	4		
polite	1		
shapely [legs]	1		
honest [eyes]	1		
innocent [eyes]	1		
young	5		
innocent	5		
inexperienced	1		
beautiful [eyes]	3		
honest	1		
soft [skin]	3		
formal	1		
distant	1		

challenging	5		
stunning	5		
lovely	7		
gorgeous	3		
enticing	1		
wild [hair]	1		
uncoordinated	1		
perfect [ass]	1		
bright [eyes]	1		
sensual	1		
fantastic	2		
bossy	1		
exquisite	2		
impossible	1		
funny	3		
intuitive	1		
amazing	2		
perfect	1		
glorious	1		
charming	1		
casual	1		
relaxed	1		
brave	1		

magnificent	1		
angry	1		

Table 14: Adjectives and adverbs describing Anastasia and Christian in *Grey*

As the table above and Appendix 18 clearly showcase that Anastasia is described in great detail in *Grey*. Christian is only briefly described and mostly through the words and thoughts of other, where he is referred to as 'handsome' and 'graceful'. His own thoughts about himself are limited to the observation that his eyes are 'gray' and that he is a 'fucked-up son of a bitch'. Anastasia also describes him as 'intimidating' and 'domineering', which fits into his general character description. Below the adjectives and adverbs used to describe Anastasia have been sorted into categories, based both on whether they describe her physical appearance or her character, and which semantic group they belong to:

(Semantic group)	Physical appearance	Character trait
Neutral	long [hair] • chestnut [hair] • pale [body] • slim [shoulders] • clear [eyes] • unembarrassed [eyes] • powder blue [eyes] • small [face] • slight • dark [hair] • full [lips] • delicate [brow] • big [eyes] • blue [eyes] • long [legs] • narrow [waist] • honest [eyes] • young • wild [hair] • bright [eyes] •	candid • unassuming • quiet • shy • honest • formal • challenging • sensual • intuitive • casual • relaxed
Positive	sweet [face] • flawless [skin] • attractive • ingenious [eyes] • beautiful • perfect [breasts] • shapely [legs] • beautiful [eyes] • stunning • lovely • gorgeous • perfect [ass]	bright • sweet • polite • enticing • funny • fantastic • exquisite • funny amazing • perfect • glorious • charming • amazing • perfect • glorious • charming • brave • magnificent

Negative	Ø	awkward • distant • uncoordinated • impossible • angry
Dominant	Ø	bossy •
Subordinate	guileless [eyes] • innocent [eyes] •	submissive • innocent • inexperienced

Table 15: Adjectives and adverbs used to describe Anastasia in *Grey*, sorted according to semantic groups

Christian's physical appearance is heavily emphasized in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and in similar fashion, the table above showcases the same tendency in descriptions of Anastasia in *Grey*. Most of the adjectives and adverbs used to describe Anastasia's physical appearance belong to the semantic group 'neutral', as they mostly refer to physical, tangible properties of her body. A large part of the descriptions of Anastasia are likewise positive and in general, there is great emphasis on her body and body parts, which is both evident in the table above and in Appendix 15. In addition to this, both her physical appearance and her character are described with subordinate traits, though (unlike Christian's opposite traits), she also has one word in the dominant category ('bossy'). Her character traits are mostly described in positive terms, with adjectives such as 'charming', 'perfect' and 'magnificent'. All in all, *Grey* greatly favors and emphasizes descriptions of Anastasia and those descriptions are mostly focused on her physical attributes and, in key with her general characterization, she is also escribed as being subordinate, though these features are not as foregrounded as Christian's dominant features described in *Fifty Shades of Grey*. The emphasis on Anastasia's appearance might be contributed to two things; firstly, it seems that the author of the book is under the impression that men are always think about women in terms of their bodies (as this is Christian's key focus from the beginning of their relationship) and secondly, because it is

pointed out numerous times through the narrative that Anastasia does not believe she is beautiful. By having Christian constantly make observations about Anastasia's physical appearance (some observations appearing cruder than others), the author has made sure to underline that while Anastasia does not possess the necessary confidence to believe she is attractive, her own perception is not correct. Her male love interest holds the key to the true perception of her and it is only possible for Anastasia to believe this – though it is made clear throughout the narrative that she is a physical attractive – because Christian validates it. This indicates that Anastasia is only able to feel attractive, if she is encouraged to do so by her dominant romantic partner, which is not a representation of an equal balance of power.

2.7.1. *Comparison of descriptions of male and female protagonists in* Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey *and* Grey

The analyses of the descriptions of the male and female protagonists reveal a tendency in all three narratives to adhere to stereotypical gender roles. However, the quantity of descriptions in the *Dark Lover*-universe and the *Fifty Shades of Grey*-universe differ greatly. Beth and Wrath are established as characters through descriptions of their physical appearance (their hair color, height, build and so forth). In *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* Anastasia and Christian, respectively, are describing their partners in great detail and largely omitting descriptions of themselves. Of course, as *Dark Lover* is written from a 3rd person point of view and the *Fifty Shades of Grey* books are written from a 1st person point of view, it is natural that the latter contain more descriptions of the 1st person point of view's partner than themselves. However, it is clear that the *Fifty Shades of Grey* books heavily favor descriptions of the main protagonist's partner, which shows that both Christian and Anastasia are objectified by their partners. In addition to this, once again Christian is shown to be a dominant partner, as he has been in previous analyses.

2.8. Sex and language in **Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey** *and* **Grey**

As this project wish to explore erotic literature through a stylistic lens, it is compelling to look at how sex acts, genitalia and sexual pleasure are described in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. The following section will contain a qualitative, comparative analysis of how genitalia is described in the novels and what it might suggest. Later on, this project will engage in an analysis of specific sex scenes and agency in relation to the above-mentioned concepts.

In *Dark Lover*, the female protagonist, Beth, is described as having had sexual encounters with men in the past, though she discovered early on that she seemingly had no interest in sexual relations (or men in general). Within the narrative, this is attributed to her half-vampire nature, as vampires experience little to no sexual interest before they go through their transformation. Likewise, the male protagonist, Wrath, is not explicitly described as having had sex before, but it is generally assumed, as he is presented as the one of the two with the most knowledge about sex and he is several hundred years old. In *Dark Lover*, a variety of different words describing female genitalia is used; the exact method for extracting this data can be found in the methodology section. The list below denotes the words used to describe female genitalia:

- Her core
- Her sex
- Her[4]
- Her softest skin
- Her heat
- Between her legs
- Her body

---

[4] The personal pronoun 'her' is here used in the place of a noun, example: 'he had to taste her' (Ward, 2005, p. 70), which an analysis of the context reveals refers to the fact that he wishes to put his mouth on her vulva.

'Her sex' is the only anatomically correct reference to female genitalia, as the rest of the terms are either only revealed as terms for female genitalia through contextual analysis or by semantic connotations (for instance, 'her core') or a combination thereof ('her softest skin'). The descriptions of male genitalia follow the same pattern; a list can be seen below:

- His erection

- His arousal

- Himself

- His thick tip

- Hard-on

- His length

- His sex

Only 'his erection' and 'his sex' are anatomically correct references to male genitalia, but the other terms are less metaphorical (e.g. in need of a lesser degree of contextual analysis and knowledge of semantic connotations) than the terms used to describe female genitalia. Likewise, both Beth and Wrath's genitalia are on occasion referred to as their whole bodies, meaning they to some degree are reduced to their genitalia, rather than being presented as whole individuals.

In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, (and *Grey,* which will be analyzed later in this project) the sexual past of the two protagonists differ greatly from that of *Dark Lover*. Christian has been sexually active since the age of 15, only engaging in sexual acts within the sphere of BDSM, while Anastasia is exceedingly wide-eyed when it comes to sex, as she has never masturbated or participated in sexual acts or intercourse. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* a variety of different terms denoting female genitalia can be found:

- Me, intimately

- Me[5]

- My sex

- My vagina

- *There*

- Clitoris

The intriguing observations one can make on the basis of this list relate both to the contrast to *Dark Lover* and the contrast within the list itself. Firstly, *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s terms for female genitalia present as more anatomically correct than *Dark Lovers'*, as the list features both 'my sex' and 'my vagina'. However, it is equally as interesting to look at the contrast between the term 'my vagina' and '*there*'. 'My vagina' is an anatomically correct term for female genitalia, while '*there*' represents a non-way to describe Anastasia's vulva. The use of '*there*' as a term for female genitalia it gives the impression that Anastasia is both surprised and ashamed of her genitalia, not even being able to name them in her own, internal discourse. On the other hand, Anastasia refers to her own genitalia as 'my vagina' more than once. This stark contrast furthers a narrative where the female protagonist is torn between her naïve, virginal and innocuous identity, whilst simultaneously naming her own genitalia with the anatomically correct terms. Male genitalia are likewise termed in a variety of ways in *Fifty Shades of Grey*:

- His erection

- Himself

- His girth

- He

- Him

---

[5] In certain scenes in the book it is clear that 'me' refers to 'Anastasia's vulva'

Most of these terms equal Christian's penis to his whole person, as both 'himself', 'he' and 'him' are personal pronouns used to refer to an anatomical body part. This furthers a discourse where Christian is largely reduced to his body parts, even equating his person with his genitalia. The way both Christian and Anastasia's genitalia are referred to showcases an impossible conflict between Anastasia's different identities, while concurrently emphasizing Christian's identity as being tied to his penis.

In *Grey*, the terms used to describe male and female genitalia differ greatly from both *Dark Lover* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. *Grey* is written from Christian's point of view and he refers to his own genitalia as follows:

- Penis

- Cock

- Erection

- Dick

- I[6]

Grey's terms for male genitalia do not require the knowledge of semantic connotations, only a contextual analysis when the personal pronoun 'I' is in place of 'Christian's penis'. Likewise, both 'penis' and 'erection' are anatomically correct terms for male genitalia and 'dick' and 'cock' are what might be considered crude slang, but nonetheless it is extremely clear what they refer to. Female genitalia are referred to as follows:

- Vagina

- Vulva

- Her

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[6] Example: "One thrust and I'm inside her" (James, Grey, 2015, p. 85)

- Her body

- [her] sex

- Clitoris

Like male genitalia, female genitalia are mostly referred by its anatomically correct names ('vagina', 'vulva', 'clitoris'); however, slang for female genitalia is not included (examples could be 'pussy' or 'cunt'), as is the case with male genitalia. It is interesting to consider why that might be; is Christian more comfortable talking about his own genitalia using slang than Anastasia's? Is he using it to distance himself from her, which would fit into his general characterization? Whatever the answer might be, a stylistic analysis reveals that *Grey* mainly refers to genitalia by anatomically correct names, though it only favors the use of slang when naming male genitalia. Michael Swan argues, however, that 'dick' and 'cock' rate two stars out of three in terms of offensiveness, whereas 'cunt' is the only three-star word (2016, p. 335). This further emphasizes the different discourse when discussing male and female genitalia, which is likewise highlighted by Mills (Mills, 1995, p. 75)

2.9. Comparison of sex and language

Dark Lover uses more euphemisms and metaphorical words to describe male and female genitalia, often requiring the reader to carry out a contextual analysis and have a large knowledge of semantic connotations relating to the words used. Opposite this is *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, which both use more anatomically correct words to refer to genitalia. However, a difference can be seen in the way *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* refer to male and female genitalia. *Grey* emphasizes the use of anatomically correct words to a larger degree than *Fifty Shades of Grey*, even including slang to refer to male genitalia. This can be tied to the narrator of the story, as *Grey* is told from a male point of view. As it has been pointed out previously in the analysis, both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* facilitate traditional gender roles and it is only made that much clearer when one compares the two.

By analyzing the differences in vocabulary in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, it becomes clear that the author has gone to great lengths to present the narrator as inherently male – playing into many stereotypical characteristics and behaviors, such as using the words as 'dick' and 'cock' numerous times, when they are absent from its female counterpart. In addition to this, no slang relating to female genitalia appear, which suggests that male and female genitalia are treated differently.

2.10. *Agency and sex scenes in* Dark Lover, Fifty Shades of Grey *and* Grey

The last analysis in this project will be a qualitative analysis of agency in selected sex scenes in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. The analysis will revolve around the use of verbs, adjectives and general reflections on agency, as these aspects are presented in the sex scenes.

In *Dark Lover*, Wrath and Beth engage in a sexual relationship the second time they encounter each other. Originally, Wrath sets out to meet Beth as her vampiric father Darius asked Wrath to look over and help Beth through her possibly nearing transition. It is not his intention to sleep with her, but as Beth is both attracted to Wrath, and nearing her transition, she openly encourages intercourse. Wrath experiences some ethical and moral struggles with her suggestion, as Beth is influenced by the mildly sedative 'red smokes'[7], but ultimately he realizes they cannot be the source of her sexual arousal, as they are not an aphrodisiac. The first sex scene is on page 67-71 (Ward, 2005). Before this analysis delve into specific sentences and their meaning, some basic statistics will be provided below:

	Beth	*Wrath*
Actor, physically	14	14
Actor, verbally[8]	7	0

---

[7] Their exact properties and ingredients are not revealed, but within the narrative 'red smokes' are described as being similar to joints containing marihuana

[8] When conducting an analysis about the verbal actor, it is based on the amount of times a character uses imperatives

Table 16: Statistics, first sex scene in *Dark Lover*

As the table above showcases, Beth is the most aggressive participant in their first intercourse. Verbally, she is the most dominant actor ("pull up my shirt", "touch me" (Ward, 2005, p. 68)), as she actively encourages Wrath to touch her numerous times. Likewise, they are equally active in terms of physical interactions, as they are both the actor 14 times during their first sexual encounter. All in all, it is clear that both Beth and Wrath have sexual agency during their first sexual encounter and that a positive-sexuality discourse is promoted. Though Wrath is initially unsure whether he should pursue intercourse with Beth, it is only because he is concerned about whether she is able to consent. Her enthusiastic and unashamed willingness to engage in sexual relations with Wrath is not shamed or stigmatized within the narrative nor by its characters.

In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the characters meet several times before they engage in intercourse for the first time. Anastasia and Christian are immediately attracted to each other, but as Christian only engages in BDSM-relationships, he introduces Anastasia to his fetish and subsequently presents her with a contract outlining their possible Submissive/Dominant relationship. However, much to his horror, Anastasia reveals herself as a virgin. Christian then decides to participate in 'vanilla sex'[9] for the first time in his life, in order to ensure Anastasia knows what she is agreeing to, should she choose to engage in a relationship with him. However, an interesting thing to note is that he both refers to their forthcoming intercourse as 'making love' (a term he aggressively shied away from earlier in their conversation) and as 'starting her basic training', which refers to her training to be his submissive – these two terms strongly contradict each other, within the narrative. As with *Dark Lover*, some statistics will be presented below, based on the first time they have sex, page 97-106 (James, 2011):

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[9] 'Vanilla sex' is a term used within the kink-community (here among BDSM practitioners) to refer to "conventional sex that conforms to the very basic expectations with a culture" (Pillay, 2010)

	Anastasia	*Christian*
Actor, physically	7	79
Actor, verbally	1	21

Table 17: Statistics, first sex scene in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

It is obvious that Christian is the most dominant in their relationship, both in terms of being a verbal and physical actor. He dominates their first sexual encounter, both touching Anastasia more than she touches him and by telling her what to do ("keep still", "open your mouth", (James, 2011, p. 105)). Anastasia is also nervous and self-consciousness about her appearance, which seems quite normal, as this is her first time having sex. It is also interesting to note that she refers to her genitalia as 'there' three times doing her first time, which furthers the notion that she is both naïve and unable to properly name her genitalia. Though the sex scene generally delineates a positive-sexuality discourse, it is possible to argue that Anastasia's continuous use of the word 'there' to refer to her own genitalia denotes a gender-specific double standard discourse, as it suggests the text differentiates between male and female genitalia. Through the use of 'there' it is suggested that female genitalia are something to hide away and not name the correct way, as it is shameful, embarrassing or indecent. In terms of agency, it is made exceedingly clear that Anastasia possesses little to no agency during their first sexual encounter. She did consent to have sex with Christian and she does not regret this decision, but it is still Christian who is the most active participant. He decides what they do and how they do it, which all in all proves that Christian has all the agency.

Lastly, the first time they have sex in *Grey* obviously follows the same narrative structure as *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It is, however, interesting to look at how access to Christian's point of view may reveal aspects hidden in *Fifty Shades of Grey*. As statistics have already been provided above and the sex scene in *Grey* will only differ slightly in terms of physical interaction, it is much more interesting to discuss how Christian's inner monologue might influence the agency presented in the

scene. Firstly, it is made even clearer that Christian is not happy about the fact that Anastasia is sexually inexperienced: "Anger lances through me. *What can I do with a virgin?* I glare at her as fury surges through my body." (James, 2015, p. 78). Anastasia is devalued due to her position as a virgin and Christian is angry that she did not disclose this information earlier. However, as he reflects upon her virginal state, both during the scene and continuously throughout the narrative, it is clear he enjoys the fact that she was a virgin when they first met, as this means she is 'pure' and 'untouched'. Christian positions himself as the antithetical opposite to Anastasia's maidenly character, as he in contrast becomes overtly sexually aggressive and dominant:

> "I stalk toward her like she's my prey. *Oh, baby, I want to bury myself in you*. Her breathing is shallow and quick. Her cheeks are rosy…she's wary, but excited. She's at my mercy, and knowing that makes me feel powerful. She has no idea what I'm going to do to her" (James, 2015, p. 81)

Expressions such as 'she's my prey', 'she's at my mercy' and 'she has no idea what I'm going to do to her' strongly insinuate that Anastasia is helpless and without influence in their sexual relation. Likewise, his sexual behavior suggests that he is controlling, even to the degree of disregarding her comfort during her first time:

> "I position myself so I can take her at my whim. […] Should I be gentle and prolong the agony, or do I go for it? I go for it. I need to possess her. "I'm going to fuck you now, Miss Steele. Hard." One thrust and I'm inside her" (James, 2015, pp. 84-85)

Here, the verb 'possess' strongly emphasizes Christian's domineering character, as he sets aside Anastasia's well-being for his own needs. As it was the case with *Fifty Shades of Grey*, it is clear that Anastasia possesses very little agency during their first time, which is only further highlighted, as Christian's thoughts are revealed in *Grey*. As to which sexual discourse *Grey* promotes, it is clear

that having sex is not presented as shameful or 'dangerous', thus ruling out the abstinence discourse. However, there are salient features from the gender-specific double standard discourse, as Christian is overtly enthusiastic about the fact that Anastasia is a virgin and he is the first man to ever touch her sexually. She is, within the narrative, praised for not having had sex earlier, as this allows Christian to 'fully possess' her, but to the contrary, Christian is not shamed for having had numerous sexual partners before Anastasia. It is easy to imagine that this double standard is tied to their genders, thus emphasizing the features of the gender-specific double standard sexual discourse within the narrative.

When comparing the first sex scenes in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* it is clear that they represent two very different representations of agency and sexual discourse. *Dark Lover* present a sexual relation between Beth and Wrath where they both have agency, as well as it promotes a positive-sexuality discourse. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* Anastasia's agency is constantly undermined and in addition to this, female genitalia are presented as something shameful, which furthers a gender-specific double standard sexual discourse.

In *Dark Lover*, the second sex scene this project will engage with takes places as the characters have established a familiar relationship. Beth has just comforted Wrath's Black Dagger Brotherhood brother, Rhage, as he was wounded in battle and Wrath is grateful for her care. After this, he reveals the story of how his parents died, which is a great cause of shame for him. In order to show Wrath that he is still desirable, Beth initiates intercourse; the scene takes place on page 248-250 (Ward, 2005). Some basic statistics are provided below:

	Beth	*Wrath*
Actor, physically	13	0
Actor, verbally	0	1

Table 18: Statistics, second sex scene in *Dark Lover*

As the table above illustrates, Beth is very much in control during their sexual intercourse. On numerous occasions Wrath attempts to touch Beth, but she physically rejects his touch, as she wishes to please him. Her dominance in their intercourse is reflected in this quote: "In a silky rush, her tongue entered his mouth. Penetrated him. Slid in and out as if she were fucking him" (Ward, 2005, p. 249). The gender roles of Beth and Wrath seem to be reversed, as she mimics the movements typically made by a man during intercourse, which is highlighted in verbs such as 'penetrated' and 'fucking'. Beth has a great amount of agency during this scene, which she uses to dominate Wrath, who willingly agrees to this new balance of power.

The second sex scene within the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative takes place in Anastasia's apartment. In similar fashion to the scene from *Dark Lover*, Anastasia is being presented as the aggressor, as Christian allows her to be in control: ""I want to be inside you. Take my jeans off. You're in charge"" (James, 2011, p. 246). The sex scene takes place from page 244-248 (James, 2011). Below will follow some basic statistics:

	Anastasia	*Christian*
Actor, physically	19	22
Actor, verbally	2	13

Table 19: Statistics, second sex scene in *Fifty Shades of Grey*

Though Anastasia is explicitly told that she is in control by Christian, the table above clearly showcase sthat he may have promised more than he could deliver. Though Anastasia is the actor more times than in the first sex scene, it is still interesting to note that Christian is the actor more times than she is. Additionally, she is the actor verbally two times, compared to Christian's thirteen times. She even reflects on the discrepancy between his promise ("you're in charge") and his actual fact behavior: ""If you imagine for one minute that I think you ceded control to me, well you haven't taken into account my GPA." I smile shyly at him. "But thank you for the illusion.""

(James, 2011, p. 248). This further underlines the fact Christian is always the dominant, always in charge, even when he seemingly hands over his control to his partner. Anastasia even acknowledges that she is granted the illusion of agency rather than actual agency.

As it was the case with the first sex scene, statistics for the second sex scene in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative have already been provided and this section will discuss how agency is presented through the eyes of Christian. Though he verbally expresses that Anastasia should be in control, it is clear he has very specific plans for their sexual encounter and expects those to come true. Before he cedes control to Anastasia by uttering "You're in charge" (James, 2011, p. 246), he thinks "I want her on top." (James, 2015, p. 183). This proves that Christian has an excessive need to always be in control, be it in his personal life or during sexual encounters. He even dictates the pace, the positions and sexual acts they do together. All in all, it shows that even in situations where Christian tells Anastasia she can be the decision maker during a sexual encounter, he never cedes his control over her, proving she still has little agency.

Comparing the second sex scene in *Dark Lover* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, it is once again made clear that while Beth has agency over her own body and within her sexual encounters, that is not the case for Anastasia. Even when Christian (seemingly) allows her to be in control, both his use of imperatives and his inner monologue reveal that this is never truly the case. Christian is not willing to allow Anastasia to have agency during their sexual encounters, which proves that although the narrative to some degree furthers a positive-sexuality discourse, it adheres to stereotypical gender roles, where the man is the decision-making participant.

3. Discussion

This discussion wishes to explore different aspects uncovered by the analysis. First, a discussion on how the portrayal of agency and gender are presented in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* will be presented. This will utilize the findings from the analyses above in a comparative discussion on how these aspects are interconnected, as well as how they differ from each other. Second, I will discuss how a comparative analysis of certain aspects in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* may enable a discussion of the way Christian's masculinity is portrayed – what type of masculinity is presented in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* and where might it originate from? Lastly, I will debate why it is important to be aware of the way language in used erotic literature, subsequently discussing the significance of applying stylistic analytical tools to erotica. This discussion will be based on both general ideas of language's influence and impact, as well as how the written word might affect its readers. Subsequently, a specific discussion of how *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* possibly can be suggested to have influenced its readers through stylistic devices will follow.

3.1. *""I want to do you," Beth whispered" – Agency and gender in the three works*

Agency and gender have been the key focus of this paper and this section wish to provide a comparative discussion of how these two aspects are presented in the three works, *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*. Though the analyses have always foregrounded the comparative element, it still proves appealing to engage with a comparative discussion of the findings concerning agency and gender. This is done by looking at the results wielded from the analyses above and the total sum of those analyses enables a discussion of how agency and gender are portrayed in the texts.

As pointed out in the introduction, *Dark Lover* presents a universe where extreme femininity and extreme masculinity are foregrounded (Leavenworth, 2009). This is mostly tied to the narrative's presentation of vampires, where the Black Dagger Brotherhood members are the result of thousands of years selective breeding, which has resulted in a superior race; physically, the

brothers are all tall, broad, capable of killing – and emotionally, they are stoic and rarely discuss their feelings. Male vampires in *Dark Lover* are even compared to animals, as they are sometimes slave to their natural instincts, even if those defy their rational thoughts or frame of mind. Females are presented as inherently attractive and it is only in relation to their 'mates' the men of the Black Dagger Brotherhood universe allow themselves to openly express their feelings, often centered on love and adoration for their partners. However, as the analyses above have proved, extreme femininity and extreme masculinity is not what has been uncovered during the stylistic investigation of *Dark Lover*. In terms of gender representation, the analyses above proved that while the male is favored more than the female, a moderately equal relationship between the genders is still present. This is especially visible in the analysis of verbs after direct speech, where both Beth and Wrath use verbs from both the 'dominant' and 'subordinate' semantic grouping, which might serve to highlight that the two protagonists are not only presented as inhabiting characteristics from their stereotypical, traditional gender role. Likewise, though Beth is described in terms of her physical appearance, it is not by her romantic interest, but rather by a third character. Wrath does not objectify Beth or her body in *Dark Lover*, which foregrounds a certain representation of romantic relationships. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the representation of gender differs greatly from that of *Dark Lover*. The male is favored excessively, as uncovered by the analyses above, and Christian is presented as the superior and dominant. The male is foregrounded in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and combined with the emphasis on presented Christian is dominant, there is a gender bias. This focus on the male, and Christian in particular, suggests that Anastasia's entire world revolves around him, as she is the narrator. In *Grey*, a similar focus can be seen on the female. The analyses above uncovered an extensive focus on Anastasia – and as it is the case in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, it seems Anastasia is Christian's only focus, disregarding both friends and family. Conclusively, this means that while *Dark Lover* does favor the male to same extent, a comparison to *Fifty Shades of Grey*

shows that the latter largely abstains from explicit mentions of the female. *Grey* goes to the other

extreme, as the female is greatly foregrounded. Neither *Fifty Shades of Grey* nor *Grey* present a

proportionate relationship between the genders – and the shift in focus from the male to the female

dependent on the narrator's own gender suggests that both Anastasia and Christian are entirely

consumed by each other.

In terms of agency, the analysis of transitivity choices uncovered that though Wrath is the

main instigator of physical interactions between himself and Beth, it is only slightly skewed. That is

not the case in both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, where Christian is the actor 86 % and 84 %

(*Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, respectively) of the times Anastasia and Christian have a physical

interaction. However, this is not uncommon within the realm of erotic fiction. Lischinsky (2018)

concluded, based on corpora derived from online erotic fiction, that "narratives tend to represent

sexual intercourse as an asymmetric engagement between an agent and a patient, rather than as a

joint collaborative activity" (Lischinsky, 2018, p. 156). He furthermore concluded that males are

linguistically presented as the agent in the majority of the texts in the corpus (Lischinsky, 2018, p.

168). This means that though *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* heavily favor the male as the agent –

and this suggest a skewed balance of power between the two main protagonists – it aligns with the

results above. Lischinsky offers an in-depth discussion of whether this is to be considered

problematic which this project will not engage with, but nonetheless it is intriguing to consider that

Fifty Shades of Grey and *Grey* adhere to certain traits of the genre – and how *Dark Lover* in

comparison does not, to the same degree. However, in terms of agency, it is clear that Anastasia

possesses very little agency, especially in comparison to Beth from *Dark Lover*. Anastasia is never

the master of her own universe, always taking the passive role in their physical relationship. There

are even times in the narrative where she attempts to initiate physical interaction, but is either

rejected verbally, physically or is physically restricted. Her sexual agency is also frequently called

into question, as she is rarely in charge during sexual encounters – and this is especially clear through the eyes of Christian. *Grey* reveals that he has often planned out their entire sexual encounter before it has happened and even when he verbally offers her agency, his gesture is undermined by his inner monologue revealing she is never truly in charge. In addition to this, Anastasia's way of thinking about her own genitalia reveals a certain type of sexual discourse. The use of the word 'there' (which is emphasized by the use of italics in-text) to refer to her vulva on numerous occasions suggests that she is unable to exercise her own sexual agency, as she is uncomfortable even discussing sex – and this extents to her inner monologue. It can be argued that this might stem from the author's attempt to portray Anastasia as sexually inexperienced (as intercourse with Christian is her first sexual experience), but nonetheless the use of 'there' to refer to female genitalia supports a discourse on sex and women that suggests women should not be sexually aware or promiscuous. This gender-specific double standard sexual discourse is further emphasized in *Grey*, where Christian often feels pride in or joy over the fact that he is the only one who has ever touched Anastasia sexually – in first own words, he does not "have to worry about every dick she's slept with" (81). This implies that women who have had numerous sexual partners are cause of worry and not as valuable as women who have had none or few – this discourse is commonly referred to as 'slut-shaming' and though it is prevalent in public discourse (Webb, 2015), it is not to be expected in a work engaging with unusual and 'kinky' sexual practices.

3.2. "''Anastasia, I'm not a hearts and flowers kind of man''" – Christian's masculinity

As it has been outlined in the section above – and in the analysis – both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* present a certain form of both femininity and masculinity. This can be seen in the specific ways gender is foregrounded, in descriptions of male and female characters and in the way certain gender expectations become evident through stylistic analyses, such as the question of transitivity

choices and verbs after direct speech. An in-depth discussion of how Anastasia is presented – and whether some of her characterization is problematic – would be interesting to engage with, but as this project has worked with both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, I find it much more intriguing to look at Christian's characterization. An analysis of both books allows access to two points of view of the same narrative, it serves to highlight how Christian – and, perhaps thus men – are presented in this story.

The characterization of Christian is not a new discussion subject within works written about *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Arthur Chu wrote a review of the first *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie with the title "Fifty Shades of Gilded Cages: The Luxury Branding of Domestic Abuse" in which he accuses Christian of being abusive and controlling (Chu, 2015), Meg Barker argues that Christian lays the responsibility of consent on Anastasia's shoulders, despite her knowing nothing of the BDSM scene he considers his sexual sphere (Barker, 2013) and Bonomi, Nichols, Carotta, Kichi and Perry conducted a study in which they explored young women's perception of the relationship portrayed in *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Bonomi, Nichols, Kiuchi, & Perry, 2016). They concluded that though most women expressed that they would welcome the adventure and the gifts, they expressed grave concerns over Christian's "stalking, controlling, manipulative, and emotionally abusive behavior, anger in sexual interactions, and neglect of Anastasia's needs" (Bonomi, Nichols, Kiuchi, & Perry, 2016, p. 1). His role, behaviors and actions in the relationship between him and Anastasia has frequently been criticized from a variety of different points of view. Consequently, this section will rather discuss Christian's characterization in *Grey* in contrast to his characterization in *Fifty Shades of Grey* – or, more specifically, how the access to Christian's point of view might uncover how he is portrayed as male and what assumptions the text subsequently makes about his gender. Though the access to Christian's actions when he is not with Anastasia in *Grey* further underlines the themes of stalking and controlling behavior outlined above, the access to his inner monologue reveals a

variety of things about the ways his gender is presented. The way Christian is presented and established as man is clear in the comparison of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, which will form the basis for the discussion below. A set of assumptions about men – through the presentation of Christian – can be made on the basis of the analyses conducted previously in this project; the assumptions and the analysis they are based on will be presented and subsequently initiate a discussion of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*'s presentation of men.

In both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* the analysis of transitivity choices proved that Christian is most often the actor in their physical interactions. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Christian is the actor 86 % of the times they have a physical interaction and in *Grey* the percentage is 84 %. As Christian is almost always the aggressor, initiator and 'doer' in their physical interactions – and to such a great extend – the assumption that "(1) men are physically dominant and touch women more than vice versa" can be made. Another interesting aspect highlighted by the comparison of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* relates to the use of verbs after direct speech. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* Anastasia's direct speech is followed by 95 different verbs and Christian's direct speech is followed by 129. In *Grey*, however, Anastasia's direct speech is followed by 67 different verbs and Christian's is followed by 70 different verbs. This shows there is less diversity in the verbs used in *Grey*, which leads to another assumption about men: as *Grey* is written from Christian's point of view, thus allowing the reader access to his inner world and monologue, the lack of diversity in verbs used after direct speech suggests that "(2) men think about the world in a simpler way than women". In terms of how sex and language are presented in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, a comparison of the two analyses regarding this aspect shows a discrepancy. Though Anastasia thinks about her own genitalia using anatomically correct terms, she likewise employs metaphorical language – both when thinking about her own and Christian's genitalia. In comparison, Christian primarily uses anatomically correct terms to refer to both his own and Anastasia's genitalia, even

including slang words ('dick', 'cock') to refer to his own genitalia. The difference in how genitalia are named in *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* suggests another assumption: "(3) men are more straightforward and often think of sex and in a different way than women". The last assumption that can be made on the bases of the analyses above relates to description of the main characters. Both Anastasia and Christian frequently use a variety of adjectives and adverbs to describe their partner, but Christian uses a larger diversity of adjectives as well as more frequently than Anastasia does. In addition to this, he often focuses on her physical traits rather than her character. This leads to the assumption that "(4) men are consumed by looks and physical appearance".

All in all, I have uncovered through my stylistic analyses that *Grey* (and, of course, *Fifty Shades of Grey*) portray a certain type of man. This is done through the foregrounding of certain salient features of masculinity, which in turn presents a set of assumptions about men: they are dominant, they are controlling, they view the world less nuanced than their female partners, they are highly focused on physical appearance and sex, and they are almost always the instigator. The portrayal of Christian is not flattering in those aspects and to a large degree adhere to traditional notions of how men should behave and think. It is compelling to initiate a discussion of why Christian is portrayed this way and to discuss the problematic aspects of his characterization. And in addition to this, what does it say about the narrative's internal view on men? The author of both works is a woman – is her representation of Christian and his masculinity an expression of her own view on men? Is it due to her desire to truly establish the difference in narrator, as she switches from one gender (Anastasia, *Fifty Shades of Grey*) to another (Christian, *Grey*)? Or is it perhaps because she is responding to an imagined perception of what her readers (which are primarily women) might constitute as a 'man' – or, perhaps, even her imagined perception of what her readers might constitute as the 'ideal man'? Whatever the reasoning is behind *Grey*'s characterization of Christian, it is clear he is established as male according to stereotypical gender roles. Consequently,

his performance of masculinity is based on the assumptions outlined above. This performance is emphasized numerous times throughout the narrative; when he thinks of Anastasia in a distinctly sexual way upon meeting her for the first time ("(3) men often think of sex"), in the way his speech is presented ("(2) men think about the world in a simpler way than women") and how he establishes dominance by most often being the instigator of physical interaction ("(1) men are physically dominant"). All in all, the access to Christian's point of view uncovers a stereotypical, perhaps even toxic, representation of masculinity, which often emphasized by the narrative's focus on having Christian perform the assumptions about men above. By ingraining these assumptions into Christian's behaviors, thoughts and inner world, *Grey* makes sure that the reader never forgets that the book is written from the point of view of a (perceived) 'real man' or 'ideal man'.

3.3. "*"And descriptive linguistics is a hard limit for me""* – Erotic fiction and language

Lastly follows a discussion of erotic fiction and language. In order to venture into a cautious examination of the impact the findings above may have on readers, another discussion has to come first: how and to what extent does language impact its users? As this is a rather large subject of frequent discussion, this section will account for different perspectives on language and its impact, but ultimately not conclude anything final, as this is not within the sphere or scope of this project. It is compelling to look at the notions above, as I wish not only to discuss what I have learned about the three novels by analyzing the language, but likewise what can be learned about language by analyzing the three works.

Lera Boroditsky's article "Does Language Shape Thought?" examines how language can be a factor in shaping the way we think and ultimately concludes, based on uncovering the differences between the way time is perceived by English and Mandarin speakers, that language is a powerful tool "in shaping thought about abstract domains" (Boroditsky, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, discourse

analysts have examined how identities are constructed linguistically, as they treat identity as a

dynamic element, that is created by the continuous interaction with other people or objects (Aronoff

& Rees-Miller, p. 454), meaning identity is impacted by the language its user is utilizing or being

exposed to. A branch of linguistic anthropology, Language Socialization, engages with the impact

language use has on the socialization of values, norms and similar sociocultural knowledge. Hence,

language can be a contributing factor in socialization. Halliday, whose ideas have been utilized

earlier in this project, treats language as social action and as social forces determine language,

language has an impact on society (Mills, 1995, p. 10). Mills furthermore argues that Halliday

"demonstrates his awareness of the social quality of language, that language and texts are integrated

into our social world and that they serve purposes in the world" (Mills, 1995, p. 10). This all

suggests that language is quite impactful in constituting ideas, thoughts and even identities in its

users. However, as this project is engaged with literature – and not 'real life' language use – it is

appropriate to expand this discussion to include fictional texts. In *Feminist Stylistics*, Mills accounts

for Michel Pecheux's experiment, in which he hoped to prove conceptual frame works' influence

and impact. By exposing his test subjects to a certain set of pre-defined ideas about what the text

they were going to read entailed, he managed to prove that by introducing a conceptual framework,

readers can gain vastly different things from the same text. This means that not only can language

impact its users, but its users' pre-notions of a text can influence the perceived impact. In a specific

discussion on how my findings might influence its readers, it serves to highlight Lischinsky's

interesting point about the impact the use of specific verbs might have on the reader of a given text.

He argues that though those choices are not obvious, perhaps not even salient to the human eye,

they play a "key role in readers' meaning-making by shaping the connotations attached to terms"

(Lischinsky, 2018, p. 164). If one accepts this as true, the analyses above have provided an

overview of different linguistic patterns, which might not be obvious, but nonetheless impact the

readers, as they can contribute in shaping the connotations one associates with them. So, for instance, how have *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*'s depictions of relationship and power dynamics between the genders influenced its readers? It is impossible to give one, clear answer to that, but a study from 2016 suggests that it may have fostered – or reinforced – a certain set of beliefs in its audience. The article "Sexist Attitudes Emerging Among Adult Women Readers of Fifty Shades Fiction" argues that stereotypical representations of women and men in popular culture reinforce a rigid set of traits associated with each gender. Furthermore, Altenburger, Carotta, Bonomi and Snyder argue that the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series is a popular cultural mechanism that "includes pervasive stereotypical traditional gender representations" (2016, p. 1). The authors conducted a study which examined the associations between readers of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series and underlying sexist beliefs in women aged 18-24. Their analysis revealed associations between *Fifty Shades of Grey* readership and sexism, which they measured through the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. Women who reported they had read some of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series had high levels of benevolent, ambivalent and hostile sexism – and the women who reported they thought the series was 'romantic' had even higher levels of ambivalent and benevolent sexism (Altenburger, Carotta, Bonomi, & Snyder, 2016, p. 1) (1). The study cannot ultimately conclude whether the readers of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series may have been attracted to the narrative because they possessed those qualities before engaging with the series or whether the series depiction of a romantic relationship initiated those qualities. However, Altenburger et al. do claim that their findings support "prior empirical studies noting associations between interacting with aspects of popular culture, such as television and video games, and individual beliefs and behaviors" (Altenburger, Carotta, Bonomi, & Snyder, 2016, p. 1). If this is coupled with the reflections on the impact language has on its user or reader, it is possible to cautiously suggest that the way agency and gender is depicted stylistically in, for instance, *Fifty Shades of Grey* may have an impact on its

readers, as it subtly introduces certain associations into the readers' meaning-making. In relation to *Dark Lover*, the comparative analyses and discussion have suggested that *Dark Lover* and the two works within the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative differ in terms of their portrayal of relationships. *Dark Lover*'s depiction of romantic relationships and gender roles align more with a general perception of 'healthy relationships' and 'healthy gender roles', where partners of the opposite genders are presented as cooperating, equal participants, rather than allowing one gender to disproportionately position itself as dominant. However, *Dark Lover* still favors the male and portrays a slightly skewed dispersion of actor/affected between the two genders, meaning it can still be suggested that its stylistic depiction of a romantic relationship, to some degree, adheres to traditional gender roles.

4. Conclusion

This project set out to investigate how gender and sexual agency are portrayed stylistically in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* and additionally, how the stylistic portrayals of relationships, gender roles and sexual agency are influenced by the gender of the author. Quantitatively, my analysis proved that there is a tendency to favor the male in *Dark Lover* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. However, a comparison highlights that while there is a moderate tendency to favor the male in *Dark Lover*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* heavily favors the male. *Grey*, with the same intense emphasis as on the male in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, favors the female. This intense focus on the narrator's opposite gender stylistically suggests that Anastasia and Christian are entirely consumed by each other, not sensing the world or people around them. Additionally, my analyses of transitivity choices in each book proved that while Wrath was the primary instigator during physical interactions between him and Beth, Christian in both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* proved to be the instigator almost exclusively during his and Anastasia's physical interactions. My analysis of the use of verbs after direct speech uncovered that Beth and Wrath are presented as equals, as they both employ verbs from a variety of different semantic groups. Christian favors the use of verbs with dominant connotations, which stands in opposite to Anastasia's favoring of verbs with subordinate connotations. The descriptions of Beth and Wrath largely adhere to traditional expectations of men and women and the descriptions of both Anastasia and Christian showcase an emphasis on physical appearance – more so on Anastasia than the other way around. Qualitatively, the analysis of sex and language and sex scenes proved that while *Dark Lover* favors the use of more metaphorical language to describe genitalia, it grants both the male and female protagonist a great deal of sexual agency. Opposite this is *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey*, where the naming of genitalia appears more anatomically correct, but nonetheless shame women. Additionally, Anastasia is presented as having little to no sexual agency, which is only further emphasized by the access to Christian's point of view. All in all, *Dark*

Lover favors the male, but not excessively and grants a great deal of sexual agency to both the male and female protagonist. *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* favor the gender of the narrator's love interest and the male's sexual agency is always foregrounded, even at the cost of the female's sexual agency. The access to the same narrative from both a female and male 1st person point of view narrator proves that the *Fifty Shades of Grey* narrative presents a certain view on gender – and men in particular, as Christian's characterization constructs a set of assumptions about masculinity, even further highlighting the narrative's subscription to traditional gender roles and balance of power in relationships. Additionally, the access to the male protagonist's point of view further emphasizes Anastasia's lack of agency, as it is made clear Christian never intended to grant it to her to begin with. Conclusively, *Dark Lover* works within a heteronormative frame that dictates certain views on men and women, but still manages to present equality at some points and heavily favors equal sexual agency. *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Grey* likewise work within the same heteronormative frame, but do not manage to escape this, as the narrative facilities a stereotypical, traditional view on gender and relationships, where the man is the most dominant at all times.

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6. Appendices

See separate file.